## YEAR PLAN

### MSU SRA Engineering

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### 2021-2022

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OFFICE OF THE ENGINEERING CAUCUS LEADER INTRODUCTION

**The coming year will be an unprecedented challenge, for students and for the MSU. While much of the university’s operations are being conducted virtually, higher education remains unaffordable and unnecessarily inaccessible for most students. The goals outlined in this plan work to expand the freedom of higher education: advocating for free, adaptable and accessible educational resources, and empowering students to understand and stand up for their housing rights. At McMaster, education is inaccessible and housing quality is low. Both of these facts can and should change.**

GOALS

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| **Objective 1** | **Gather data on OER use at McMaster** |
| Description | The university has a pilot program of grants available for faculty to adopt, adapt or create OER (Open Educational Resources), but many instructors are not aware of the resources available to them. There is no good data on student and faculty attitudes towards OER, so surveys of students and faculty should be run to collect this information. |
| Benefits | Better understand the McMaster-specific needs related to educational material, both from students and faculty. Raise awareness of the availability of OER. |
| Difficulties | Getting responses from students, and more challengingly, faculty. |
| Long-term implications | Could be the start of a long-term campaign to make the OER grants available indefinitely, and to expand their size. |
| How? | Run surveys of the McMaster community:   * + Of students, regarding attitudes towards OER and the use of textbooks   + Of instructors, regarding use of OER, their concerns about its feasibility, and their attitude towards it compared to traditional textbooks   Model the survey off a similar survey run at University of Guelph, and look to others around the world. Reach out to department heads and individual faculty, to try to get as many survey responses as possible. |
| Partners | McMaster OER Committee, AVP UA, MES VP Academic, Department Heads |

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| **Objective 2** | **Housing Rights Workshop** |
| Description | Many students (particularly first-time renters) don’t understand their rights as tenants or how to exercise those rights. We should organize workshops targeting first-year students who will be house hunting for the next year, where they can learn about their rights under the Residential Tenancies Act, the Ontario Standard Lease, and how to resolve conflicts with their landlords. |
| Benefits | Increase awareness of the resources available to students, and their rights as tenants. |
| Difficulties | Getting the target demographic to attend the workshops - promotions and logistics, including getting speakers. |
| Long-term implications | Potentially develop long-term relationships with organizations we partner with to provide housing rights education to students. |
| How? | Partner with external organizations with expertise in housing rights – HCLC, ACORN, Steps to Justice, etc.  Run in-person workshops (while live-streaming them) in the fall, as students are starting to house-hunt. Make resources (recordings, educational material) available online. |
| Partners | AVP MA, VP Ed, Mac Off-Campus Housing Society, HCLC, Hamilton ACORN, Steps to Justice. |

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| **Objective 3** | **Outreach and Social Media** |
| Description | The Engineering SRA caucus is historically very bad at outreach and engaging with students. This should be improved by actively pushing to involve and educate constituents about the MSU’s activity. |
| Benefits | Improve Engineering engagement with the MSU. |
| Difficulties | MSU is unpopular with many students, and most are disinterested. |
| Long-term implications | Develop an outreach strategy, and pass it on to the next year’s Eng caucus. |
| How? | Create/take over social media accounts for SRA Engineering, and start posting regularly. Engage with MSU Comms team to try to maximize outreach.  Host monthly ‘town-hall’ style events to get feedback from students. |
| Partners | MSU comms team, MES |

**Long-term planning**

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| Overarching Vision 1 | *Education Accessibility and Affordability* |
| Description | The engineering caucus should work to make higher education more free. This means reducing costs to students where possible, and ensuring educational materials and practices are accessible to all. |
| Benefits |  |
| Year 1 | OER advocacy and research, through surveys targeted at both students and instructors. |
| Year 2 | Advocacy to the university to make McMaster’s OER grant pilot program permanent, and expand its size. |
| Year 3 | Research and advocate for more part-time positions for students, both at the university and within the MSU, to make studying at McMaster more affordable. |
| Partners | AVP UA, VP Education, McMaster OER Committee, faculty and program societies |

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| Overarching Vision 2 | *Empower students to stand up for their housing rights* |
| Description | Exploitation of student renters by unscrupulous landlords is a startlingly common issue in Hamilton. This is especially true for new renters (i.e. first or second year students), and for international students who may be hesitant to take their landlord to court.  Students should be educated to understand their rights when it comes to housing, and the processes by which they can exercise those rights. |
| Benefits | Reduce student poverty, improve housing condition by raising the bar for landlords, and prevent students from being financially exploited. |
| Year 1 | Run housing workshops with an external organization, to educate students on their rights as they are beginning to house hunt. |
| Year 2 | Conduct research (potentially through surveys) on the most prevalent housing-related issues in the McMaster community. |
| Year 3 | Expand the MSU’s engagement with housing rights groups, and seek to have resources available on-campus or virtually to students (for help reviewing leases, referrals to legal clinics, etc.) |
| Partners | AVP MA, VP Education, Maureen Wilson, Hamilton Community Legal Clinic, Hamilton ACORN |

GOALS to strive for

List 5 things that you would like to have prepared for the beginning of September

* Developed the questions that will be present on the OER survey.
* Engage with the MSU Comms team to plan the roll-out of the survey.
* Engage with internal and external partners to play the housing rights workshop.
* Create an Instagram page and try to take over the Facebook page, and start posting.
* Further flesh out this year plan, and adapt it to the goals of the other caucus members.

List 5 things you would like to have completed during the fall term (1st)

* Roll out the OER survey, to students and to faculty.
* Run the housing rights workshop(s), using social media to promote them and distribute resources after the fact.
* Engage with the Comms team and other campus groups to improve social media engagement
* Gather feedback from the housing rights events.
* Research municipal policy that affects landlord-tenant interactions within Hamilton.

List 5 things you would like to have completed during the winter term (2nd)

* Plan more events with the partner organization.
* Analyze the results of the OER survey, use them to update policy regarding OER implementation.
* Explore further avenues for housing rights education within the university and beyond.
* Prepare a transition document for next year’s engineering caucus.
* Consolidate the SRA engineering social media accounts, and prepare them for transfer to the next year’s SRA.

**Master Summary**

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| May | * Training, prepare year plan. |
| June | * Prepare year plan, with consultations. |
| July | * Figure out the process to follow to plan the workshop. * Get in touch with internal partners for the workshop. * Review OER surveys from other universities, create a draft of the questions. * Try to get control of the SRA Engineering Facebook page, and create an SRA Engineering Instagram page. |
| August | * Start formally planning the workshop, and get in touch with external partners. * Bring the draft questions to the OER committee for review, and bring it to the comms team to prepare it for circulation. * Connect with MSU comms and other SRAs with good social media presence for advice. |
| September | * Prepare the OER survey for circulation, contact departments and other campus groups for help. * Start promoting the housing rights workshop, with help from other campus groups. * Start regularly posting on the SRA social media. * SRA Caucus Report |
| October | * Run the housing workshop. * Circulate the OER survey. * Plan monthly ‘Town Hall’ meetings, and start promoting them. * SRA Caucus Report |
| November | * Review feedback from housing workshop, and create guidelines/plans for future events. * Continue promoting OER survey, engage with faculty members to encourage them to take the survey. |
| December | * Run a second housing workshop, to help students who are starting to house-hunt for next year. * Continue promoting OER survey. |
| January | * Continue promoting OER survey. * SRA Caucus Report |
| February | * Collect data from survey, prepare it for presentation to OER committee and university stakeholders. * Create plan for next year’s house hunting and housing events. * SRA Caucus Report |
| March | * SRA Caucus Report * Create transition document for next year’s engineering caucus. |
| April |  |