

Year Plan

MSU Macademics

Taya Linton

2021–2022

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# Introduction

Dear Members of the McMaster Student Union,

My name is Taya Linton and I’ll be the MSU Macademics Coordinator for the 2021-2022 year! I’m excited to be leading Macademics through its sixth year as a service, and to share with you all what I have planned for my time as MSU Macademics Coordinator.

Despite the uncertainty that currently surrounds the upcoming school year, I am confident that as a service, Macademics will be able to continue its current projects and begin new ones that will be built upon in the years ahead. This year, in addition to our annual projects, I will be focusing on promoting our current resources and creating new resources to better reach the members of the MSU. My hope is that by introducing new resources to our Resource Hub and working to make current resources more accessible, Macademics is able to more effectively aid students in a way that aligns with the service’s three branches. These branches are accessibility of academic resources, recognizing and promoting excellence in education, and bridging the gap between pedagogical research and implementation at McMaster.

In order to support our efforts to increase the resources that Macademics makes available to the McMaster community, I also plan to focus on growing our social media presence. In doing so, I believe that our current and future resources will become more accessible, due to increased visibility, and therefore will be able to assist more undergraduate students.

I look forward to working towards these goals in the year ahead. If you have any questions, comments, or ideas regarding this year plan or Macademics as a whole, myself and my team are always open to suggestions! If you would like to reach out, I can be contacted at macademics@msu.mcmaster.ca.

Best regards,

Taya Linton

# Vision for MSU Macademics

Macademics has always been known for the teaching awards. Most of our energy goes towards promoting and evaluating the teaching awards as well as planning the ceremony; however, this is not the only thing that Macademics does. In addition to the teaching awards, we create resources that are centered around our service’s three branches.

Currently, the two main resources that we focus on are the Resource Hub and our blog posts. While I believe that the material available has the potential to be an invaluable resource to all undergraduate students, I feel that it is not living up to its potential at this point in time. I have found that many students are unaware of what Macademics does exactly, and the role we play in the McMaster community. Therefore, they are also unfamiliar with the resources we have to offer. I feel that this year it will be important to focus on promoting Macademics as a service and introducing students to all the resources that are available to them. I believe that increasing our visibility is an important step Macademics must take in order to best serve the McMaster community.

In addition to promoting our resources this year, I also want to build on the resources we already have. While the information we currently publish is important material, it only covers some of the branches of our service. In order to best serve the community, I feel that we need to expand the types of resources that we have available to students. My goal is to produce a long-term plan for creating resources to add to the Resource Hub. I feel that focusing on a different type of resource each year will allow the service to build a library of guidebooks and information that spans a wide range of topics. This, in turn, will help us expand as a service and become a more established resource for academic information.

Overall, I believe that Macademics truly plays an important role in the McMaster community. We are in a unique position where we are able to give students by giving them tools that they can use to reach their goals. With all the uncertainty that is currently attached to the year ahead, I want students to feel that as a service, Macademics will be there to help them to succeed, and to celebrate their achievements.

# Projects/Events

## Continuous Activities

**RESOURCE HUB**

Currently, the Resource Hub contains the Undergraduate Resource Guidebook, which was completed at the beginning of 2020. This guidebook can be accessed through a link on the MSU Macademics’ webpage on the MSU website. I feel that this is a resource that could be very useful for students, especially first and second-year students; with that being said, I feel like this guidebook is not well-known among undergraduate students and, therefore, is not as helpful to students as it could be. My goal moving forward would be to focus on promoting this guidebook and ensuring that it reached as many students as possible. This will be achieved through a social media campaign promoting the guidebook, ideally with the help of the AVP University Affairs.

Additionally, I have found that it can be difficult to promote the guidebook since it is a large document that cannot be easily sent or uploaded. In order to make this resource more accessible to students, I want to create a website or webpage that relays the information to students in a simplified way. My vision for this webpage is to have it set up similarly to a flowchart, where students are able to find the best resource for them based on their program and the type of assistance they are looking for. This would require the help of the Director of Marketing and Communications and his team.

Finally, I would like to begin to expand the resources available within the Resource Hub. My plan is to start by creating resources for undergraduate and first-time teaching assistants. Upon reviewing past year plans, I’ve noticed that MSU Macademics has been relaying pedagogical research as it applies to students through regularly scheduled blog posts, but we do not have many resources for implementing pedagogical research as an instructor. Since undergraduate teaching assistants are often members of the MSU, I’d like to focus on supporting them as instructors. To create these resources, I am going to rely on previously established relationships that the service has with individuals and organizations that focus on pedagogy, including the MacPherson Institute and Dr. Joe Kim. I would like this resource to act as an introductory guide for new teaching assistants and provide best practices, as well as advice and tips and tricks.

**BLOG POSTS**

Blog posts are researched and written by the Research and Resources Subcommittee. These posts are released monthly and cover a wide variety of academics and student-related topics, including studying, note-taking, goal setting, summer school. These blog posts have also been used in the past year as a tool to promote the Teaching Awards and congratulate the winners. I think these posts do a great job of condensing pedagogical research for students and discussing how they can implement these strategies into their current study methods. I believe the main issue with these blog posts is that they don’t reach many undergraduate students. Therefore, this year I want to focus on promoting the blog as an academic resource for students, rather than only promoting individual posts. I plan to do this by introducing students to the blog as a whole through a large social media campaign at the beginning of the year and by promoting this resource during Welcome Week to first-year students with the help of a variety of MSU and faculty partners. By doing this, we can create a base audience for the blog, which would to more successful blog posts compared to just advertising individual posts.

## Repeating Projects/Events

**TEACHING AWARD NOMINATIONS**

Nomination periods occur once each semester, in November and then again in February. These periods last approximately two weeks, during which undergraduate students are able to put forward their instructors and teaching assistants for our nomination-based awards. Last year, we received significantly more nominations than we have in previous year; since last year’s promotional strategy was quite successful, this year’s promotional plan will build on last year’s strategy.

For the Fall semester, I’m planning on promoting the teaching awards solely online. Some of the promotional strategies used last year that I want to do again include Instagram takeovers, posting graphics to the MSU Macademics social medias, classroom talks, asking professors and faculties to discuss the awards with their students, and contests. In addition to this, I would also like to collaborate with other services to promote nominations and utilize online advertising space, such as banner space on the MSU website.

In the Winter semester, I will use a similar strategy to the Fall semester and make adjustments to the promotional plan based on how successful the first nomination period is. Additionally, I would like to book tables in MUSC for in-person promotions, if COVID-19 restrictions allow for it.

## Annual Projects/Events

**TEACHING AWARD EVALUATIONS**

Once the nomination period is complete, the Volunteer and Logistics Coordinator, with the help of myself and the executive team, will begin to evaluate the nominations to determine which instructors and teaching assistants have the highest percentage of nominations based on their class size.

The top instructors in each faculty, as well as the top teaching assistants, will move on to the in-class evaluation stage. During this period, the nominees will be asked to share a link to a survey with their class, so that we can gather more information about each nominee. Macademics volunteers will also be sent to each class to explain the evaluation process to the students and encourage them to complete the survey. This survey will contain both quantitative and qualitative questions; each nominee’s score for the quantitative questions will be averaged and winners will be determined based on the results of the in-class evaluation. One instructor will be chosen from each faculty, as well as one general winner for the teaching assistant award per semester.

**TEACHING AWARD CEREMONY**

Since the delivery method of the Winter semester is currently unclear, I will be planning for an online Teaching Awards Ceremony, but also create a contingency plan in the event that I am allowed to hold an in-person ceremony. I will be reaching out to the Provost and the Dean of each faculty to ask them to speak or give out awards at the ceremony; all nominated instructors and teaching assistants will be personally invited to the ceremony, however, it will be open to the public so all members of the McMaster community may attend.

## Other Projects/Events

**VOLUNTEER SOCIALS**

Currently, I have four socials planned for the volunteers throughout the year: one in October, one in December, one in January, and one in March. I want to have socials early in the semester and regularly during the school year to form a strong team dynamic and maintain high morale over the course of our term. I am planning for the first two socials to be online; during these socials, we’ll be doing group activities online to give the volunteers and executives the opportunity to bond with each other. In the Winter semester, I’m hoping that we may be able to host in-person socials. If this is the case, I will decide with the executive team which activities may be best, keeping in mind COVID-19 restrictions and the volunteer’s individual levels of comfortability.

**SOCIAL MEDIA CONTESTS**

I believe that holding social media contests, especially on the Macademics Instagram, will be a great way to help grow our social media accounts. I also feel that these contests will help promote Macademics as a service and inform students of the resources that Macademics has to offer. Currently, I plan on running four contests over the course of the upcoming year. There will be one contest for each teaching awards nomination period, one at the end of the Fall semester, and one at the end of the Winter semester. The teaching award contests will also hopefully lead to an increase in awareness for the teaching awards, and therefore, an increase in nominations.

# Project/Events Timeline

## Spring/Summer Term

**JUNE**

* Hire the executive team

**JULY**

* Hold the first executive team meeting
* Discuss and finalize plans for the Resource Hub with the Research and Resources Coordinator
* Complete communications training with the Director of Marketing and Communications
* Participate in the MSU Spark webinar series
* Reach out to the Underground to begin working on materials for our Welcome Week social media campaign promoting Macademics and our services
* Reach out to Welcome Week groups to collaborate with them during Welcome Week to promote Macademics

**AUGUST**

* Hold one-on-one meetings with each executive team member to discuss plans for the upcoming year
* Reach out to the Communications team to begin discussing the creation of a webpage for the Undergraduate Resource Guidebook
* Introduce the executive team on social media through Instagram takeovers
* Release Welcome Week social media campaign to promote Macademics, blog posts, and the Resource Hub
* Finalize blog post schedule with the Research and Resources Coordinator
* Finalize volunteer hiring plan with the Volunteer and Logistics Coordinator
* Create the teaching award nomination forms

## Fall Term

**SEPTEMBER**

* Continue Welcome Week social media campaign into the first two weeks of the Fall semester
* Complete volunteer hiring and training
* Publish September blog post
* Set up weekly executive team meetings
* Reach out to our contacts regarding the creation of Macademics teaching assistant resources
* Finalize promotional materials for the teaching awards nomination period
* Reach out to potential sponsors with the help of the Volunteer and Logistics Coordinator

**OCTOBER**

* Publish October blog post
* Begin teaching award nomination campaign
* Open teaching award nominations for two weeks in the middle/end of October
* Begin discussing ideas about the Teaching Award Ceremony with the Teaching Award Coordinators and their subcommittee
* Finalize plans for the teaching assistant resources
* Finalize plans for the Undergraduate Resource Guidebook webpage
* Hold a social media contest related to the teaching award nominations
* Plan and hold volunteer social

**NOVEMBER**

* Publish November blog post
* Tally and evaluate teaching award nominations
* Complete in-class evaluations for top nominees in each faculty
* Finalize initial plan for the Teaching Awards Ceremony
* Work with executive team and subcommittees to reach out to previous Teaching Award winners for advice as well as tips and tricks to include in the teaching assistant resources
* Follow-up on next steps for the Undergraduate Resource Guidebook webpage
* Finalize plans for the end of semester volunteer appreciation social

**DECEMBER**

* Publish December blog post
* Hold a social media contest
* Host the volunteer appreciation social
* If the Teaching Award Ceremony is in-person, book space for the event and contact AVTEK

## Winter Term

**JANUARY**

* Publish January blog post
* Reach out to remaining Teach Award winners regarding advice for the teaching assistant resources
* If possible, hold the first in-person Macademics social
* Finalize promotional materials for the teaching awards nomination period
* Reach out to potential sponsors for the Teaching Awards Ceremony
* If the Teaching Awards Ceremony is in-person, begin discussing catering options and get quotes from McMaster Catering Services
* Reach out to Watson’s Engraving regarding an initial quote for Teaching Award plaques
* If the Teaching Awards Ceremony is in-person, reach out to the Underground to begin designing programs for the ceremony
* Reach out to the Provost and Deans of the faculties to request that they speak and/or present awards at the Teaching Award Ceremony

**FEBRUARY**

* Publish February blog post
* Aggregate all information collected for the teaching assistant resources
* Reach out to the Communications team and the Underground to begin creating final versions of the teaching assistant resources
* Depending on the mode of delivery for the ceremony, confirm catering, plaques, AVTEK, programs and final details for the Teaching Awards Ceremony
* Finalize promotional materials for the Teaching Awards Ceremony
* Begin teaching award nomination campaign
* Open teaching award nominations for two weeks in the beginning of February
* Hold a social media contest related to the teaching award nominations
* Tally and evaluate teaching award nominations
* Complete in-class evaluations for top nominees in each faculty
* Finalize teaching award evaluations and choose winners
* Invite all teaching award nominees to the ceremony

**MARCH**

* Publish March blog post
* Finalize plans for the design and promotion of the teaching assistant resources
* Hold volunteer and executive training sessions for the Teaching Awards Ceremony
* Promote the Teaching Awards Ceremony
* Hold the Teaching Awards Ceremony
* Plan end of year volunteer and executive appreciation social
* Hold end of year volunteer and executive appreciation social
* Send the final list of winners to Watson’s Engravings

**APRIL**

* Publish April blog post
* Hold a social media contest
* Send out Teaching Award plaques to winners or have them pick up the plaques from the MSU offices
* Hire and begin transitioning the new Macademics Coordinator

# Finances & Equipment

## Budget Projection

This year, the total Macademics budget is $6,450.00 and has been broken down into six sections. A finalized budget plan will be available as of July 9th.

**OFFICE SUPPLIES - $100.00**

If a portion of this year is in-person, this section will be spent on general office supplies such as paper and pens, as well as printing and copying fees. If there is no in-person portion, this section of the budget likely will not be spent.

**ANNUAL CAMPAIGNS - $1,000.00**

This section of the budget will be used for our start of the year campaign and subsequent campaigns that promote the Undergraduate Resource Guidebook and blog. It will also be used to create campaigns to promote the new teaching assistant resources once they are released.

**AWARDS AND MEETINGS - $2,200.00**

The majority of this section will go towards the Teaching Awards Ceremony. If the ceremony is online, this will likely only include plaques and programs, however, if it is in-person this will also include catering, equipment rentals, and photographers.

**VOLUNTEER RECOGNITION - $750.00**

This portion of the budget will be dedicated to apparel for the volunteers and executives. Additionally, any fees associated with the volunteer appreciation socials will also be taken from this section.

**ADVERTISING AND PROMOTIONS - $1,900.00**

This section will be used for teaching awards promotions (outside of the ceremony itself) and promotions for the blog posts. If a portion of the year is in-person, the fees associated with creating a new banner and stickers for tabling events will also be taken from this section.

**ACADEMIC RESOURCES - $500.00**

The majority of this portion will be used to produce the new teaching assistant resources. Additionally, this section will be used for any collaborative events/campaigns with other services.

## Inventory

Within the Committee Room in MUSC, Macademics has promotional materials, including banners, posters, stickers, and care packages. With that being said, the current banner is not usable, so if there are in-person events, a new banner will be needed. Macademics also has boxes in the Committee Room that contain supplies from previous Teaching Award Ceremonies.

## Contacts

**THE UNDERGROUND**

The Underground will need to be contacted if a new banner or any new promotional materials are needed.

**VP FINANCE**

The VP Finance will be an invaluable resource when budget planning as well as managing the budget and completing purchases.

# Promotions

## Service Webpage

The Macademics webpage on the MSU website will remain relatively static. The main aspect of the webpage that will be changing is the teaching awards section. Since this section includes links to nomination forms, it will need to be updated twice over the course of the year. To ensure that these changes occur smoothly, both myself and the Teaching Award Coordinators will be in contact with the Director of Marketing and Communications.

Additionally, as the Resource Hub is updated and built upon throughout the year, this section of the webpage will also need to be updated. These resources will become a static part of the webpage.

## Social Media

This year, I will be focusing on growing our Facebook and Instagram accounts, as these accounts are an easy way to access all Macademics resources. I plan to do this by holding social media contests, collaborating with other MSU services, and running social media campaigns regularly. Many of the social media campaigns I would like to run will be promoting specific resources that Macademics provides and generally informing students of Macademics’ role in the MSU. I feel that this will be especially important in the upcoming year because I have found that while Macademics has, and is coming out with more, great resources for undergraduate students, many are not aware that these types of academic support are even available to them. By focusing on growing our social media presence, I believe that Macademics will further become an integral part of undergraduate academics at McMaster.

## Merchandise & Apparel

In the upcoming year, I plan on creating Macademics apparel for both the executive team and our volunteers. Last year, since the Teaching Award Ceremony was online, we were able to dedicate more of our budget to volunteer appreciation. This year, however, the delivery method of the Teaching Award Ceremony is still undetermined; therefore, the type of apparel chosen this year will depend on what portion of the budget needs to be reserved for the Teaching Award Ceremony. As of now, I am planning on purchasing either t-shirts or sweatshirts for the executive team and volunteers.

If we are able to book space in MUSC for tabling at some point in the year, I would also plan to create stickers for the volunteers and executives to give out while promoting the teaching award nominations and/or Macademics as a whole.

## Contacts

**DIRECTOR OF MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS**

The Director of Marketing and Communications will be able to help myself and the Teaching Awards Coordinators update and make changes to the Macademics webpage.

**THE UNDERGROUND**

The Underground will be needed when running social media campaigns to create the required graphics.

**VP FINANCE**

The VP Finance will be a useful resource when determining what percentage of the budget can be dedicated to merchandise and apparel to thank the Macademics executive team and volunteers.

**COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER**

The Communications Officer will be contacted to discuss creative projects that are out of the scope of the Underground. They will most likely be contacted to discuss photographers and videographers for the Teaching Award Ceremony if it is in-person.

# Onboarding & Administration

## Hiring

### 

### PART-TIME MANAGER

In March/April, applications will open to hire the next Macademics Coordinator; the application will likely consist of a CV and a cover letter. I will assist the VP Administration in hiring my successor and will take part in reviewing applications, as well as the interview process. The new PTM will ideally be hired by the end of April.

### EXECUTIVES

Executive team hiring is taking place in June and possibly into July. Applications were open for two weeks from May 28th to July 14th. Once CVs and cover letters are reviewed, chosen applicants will be invited to interview for the position they applied to. Interviews will be conducted with a hiring team consisting of myself and the outgoing Macademics Coordinator. Successful applicants will be contacted in late June/early July. The executive team will include: one Volunteer and Logistics Coordinator, one Research and Resources Coordinator, one Promotions Coordinator, and two Teaching Award Coordinators.

### VOLUNTEERS

This year, Macademics will be hiring approximately fifteen volunteers. These volunteers will be split among the three subcommittees: the Teaching Awards committee, the Research and Resources committee, and the Promotions committee. Volunteer hiring will take place in September and will be overseen by myself as well as the Volunteer and Logistics Coordinator. Applicants will be asked to include their CV and answers to pre-written questions in their application. Applicants who move on to the interview stage will be invited to a short (approximately 15-minute) informal interview. These interviews will give the hiring panel a chance to get to know the applicant in order to decide if they would be a good fit for the team. The hiring panel will consist of myself, the Volunteer and Logistics Coordinator, and the head of the committee they are applying for. Successful applicants will likely be contacted in mid/late September.

## Training

### PART-TIME MANAGER

Once a new PTM is chosen, I will facilitate their transition into their new role. This will include a transition meeting (or meetings if required), transition report, and transferring all my documents to the incoming Macademics Coordinator. Overall, I will ensure that the new PTM has all the information and tools necessary to succeed in their role.

### EXECUTIVES

All executive team members will be required to complete MSU-wide executive member training. They will also be given Macademics-specific training at the first executive team meeting. During this meeting, I will review the service’s philosophy, as well as its role within the MSU. In addition to this, I will also be discussing the responsibilities and expectations associated with each of their roles, the goals I’ve set out for the service this year, and how they can go about creating the year plan for their subcommittee.

Additionally, the Promotions Coordinator and I will be meeting with the Director of Marketing and Communications to complete communications training in July.

### VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers will attend all MSU-wide volunteer trainings before they begin their roles. Additionally, myself and the Volunteer and Logistics Coordinator will organize a Macademics-specific volunteer orientation. This service-specific orientation will include an overview of Macademics, what their specific role will entail and the expectations that are associated with it, and time to meet the executive team and the other members of their committee. This orientation will likely take place in late September/early October.

## Year Plan

### EXECUTIVES

The executive team will be provided with information regarding year plans for their specific subcommittee during our first executive team meeting. They will be given an outline for their year plan that is similar to the structure of the service’s year plan, as well as a copy of their subcommittee’s year plan and transition report from last year. Executive members will be encouraged to include ideas about improving the management of their subcommittee and new initiatives for their subcommittee. I will also share the Macademics year plan with them and discuss my vision for the year so that we are able to cohesive plan for the upcoming year.

## Reports

## 

Macademics will submit Executive Board reports over the Spring/Summer term on June 7th and August 3rd. I will be reporting to the Executive Board during this term on June 11th and August 5th. The Fall and Winter reporting schedules have not yet been released.

# Appendix

## Full Contact List

Name: Christina Devarapalli

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Name: Michael Wooder

Title: Director of Marketing and Communications

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Name: Hargun Kaur

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Name: Dr. Joe Kim

Title: Professor and Primary Investigator of the ACE Lab

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