



# REPORT

*From the office of the...*  
**AVP University Affairs**

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TO: Members of the Student Representative Assembly  
FROM: Hargun Kaur, Associate Vice-President University Affairs  
SUBJECT: Year End Report  
DATE: March 22, 2022

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Dear Members of the SRA,

I hope you are doing as great as you can be during what usually is an incredibly busy time of the year. I want to start by thanking you all for the leadership you have shown throughout the past year – you have all done a great job of representing your respective caucuses and I couldn't be more grateful to have worked alongside such a group of people.

It's bittersweet to be writing my last report as this year's Associate Vice-President University Affairs (AVP UA). I am grateful to have had the special opportunity to represent students and learn about McMaster in this role. Every step of the way, I learned how important advocacy is in shaping student experiences and just how deeply motivated and dedicated students are to being involved in supporting and contributing to a better experience for all. I remember when I was first entrusted with this role, I was worried I wasn't up for it or good enough – but I have been so well-supported by the Education Team and the UA Committee throughout this process. If any of you are thinking of applying for any AVP position, I would highly encourage that you do apply (and reach out anytime with questions)! It is a role with a lot of responsibility, but one through which you can achieve so much throughout the year.

The committee I have worked with over the past year has done excellent work. They've been here to support one another, support me, and grow together. I wouldn't have wanted to go through this journey with another group of people 😊 If any of you are reading this, I just want you to know that you have been an amazing bunch of people to work with – thank you for being patient with me when things got busy, being there for one another throughout projects, and doing some incredible things throughout this semester. I hope you know that your dedication *has* made McMaster a better place. To those who are graduating, thank you for giving me time from your last year and leaving McMaster in better shape than it was when you came. For those who are still here next year, I am beyond excited to see the amazing things you will do next year. Keep being you, reach out anytime, and take care of yourself first and foremost 😊

I will briefly outline our activities and other work committee members have been up to below. I've tried to capture everything – but please let me know if anything has been missed! None of the items below were completed or worked upon by me alone; everything was a team effort. Last of all, advocacy is an ongoing process – many of the projects that are marked as “completed” are just the beginning of addressing larger issues that warrant further attention. I look forward to transitioning next year's AVP UA and ensuring they are

well equipped for a successful year and continuing where this year's UA Committee has left off.

Thank you again, everyone! This role has been the highlight of my university experience and working with you has only made it that much better. Please remember to be kind to yourself this exam season and beyond and take care! Keep in touch 😊

### **Progress on Yearplan**

- **Exam Stress**
  - Committee members were recently involved in a meeting with Dr. Kim Dej's office and the Student Success Centre to share recommendations for better supporting students during this in-person exam session. The university was very receptive to implementing said changes during this exam season to ensure students from all years feel supported during the incredibly stressful time.
- **SUSTAIN 2SS3 Creating the MSU's Inaugural Sustainability Report**
  - Siobhan and I have been working with the SUSTAIN 2SS3 group this semester. I have attached the project description below for those interested
  - **Project Objectives:** The next steps, and goals for SUSTAIN 2SS3 students, will be to follow-up with each service to 1) support them in achieving their goals, where appropriate, 2) capture their progress on meeting and achieving their goals, and 3) prepare the MSU's first-ever sustainability report highlighting the work of the five key services.
- **Reading Week Moratorium and Date Change**
  - Will and Olsen, SRA Health Sciences, have completed their reading week survey and shared these results with Dr. Kim Dej to ensure reading week adjustments are created with student interests in mind. The recommendations were well-received and we are putting together a university stakeholder group to push forward our recommendations to the Associate Dean's group.
- **MSU/Okanagan Mental Health Collaborations**
  - I have been collaborating with the Okanagan Committee and their Mental Health Task Force since last year. They recently released their immediate and short-term recommendations to improve mental health and psychological wellbeing across campus. Committee members recently had a meeting with Lynn Armstrong, the administer of the McMaster Okanagan Committee, to chat about possible collaborations for this year and will be having a follow-up meeting with progress updates in a few weeks.
- **SUSTAIN 3S03: MSU Services Inventory**
  - Dr. Kate Whalen (Senior Manager: Academic Sustainability Programs), Siobhan Teel (VP Education), and I worked closely to develop a project championed by the MSU for the SUSTAIN 3S03 course. The student group developed a project plan, conducted consultations with 5 MSU services, created final summary reports, and presented to the SRA.
  - **Project Objectives:** The McMaster Students Union (MSU) has a goal to enhance sustainability of its services and operational units, with a focus on intersectionality, environmental, accessibility, and financial components of sustainability, as demonstrated in their Sustainability

Operating Policy. To support the MSU's sustainability goals, SUSTAIN 3S03 students will consult with approximately 5 MSU services and 5 operational units, as identified by the MSU and guided by the MSU's Sustainability Operating Policy, to identify the current progress and goals for the current year to further enhance sustainability in key areas across the MSU. The key deliverables will include a report of the MSU's current progress in relation to their Sustainability Operating Policy, a list of SMART goals for each service and operational unit, and a presentation to the MSU Student Representative Assembly. The outcomes of this consultation will be shared with SUSTAIN 2SS3 students in the Winter semester to report on progress made and advocate for further enhancement.

- **Student Accessibility Services (SAS) Collaborations**

- I have had regular meetings with Allison Drew-Hassling, Director of Student Accessibility and Case Management, regarding concerns brought up by students and committee members. These conversations have contributed to various outcomes including an audit of the SAS website to increase accessibility, increasing outreach to high schools about the accommodation process, contributing to a first-year orientation program for those registered with SAS, and being on the hiring committee and steering committee of the Student Urgent Response Team.

Recently, a committee member was able to join me on one of these meetings and really take a lead in sharing student concerns with the return to campus. Allison was incredibly receptive and is dedicated to making needed adjustments in SAS to ensure accessibility for all students.

- **Student Census/Experience Survey**

- We are actively collaborating with Arig al Shaibah, AVP Equity and Inclusion, and others at the Equity and Inclusion Office to discuss the dissemination and use of last year's student census/experience survey.

### **Past Events, Projects, & Activities**

- **[Peer Support Services Video](#)**

- In collaboration with SHEC, Diversity Services, PCC, Maccess, and WGEN and the MSU Communications team, we created a resource to increase awareness and simplify resource navigation of the MSU Peer Support Services. This was shared during Welcome Week events and the MSU Facebook pages. We are currently looking to disseminate this resource through other campus and community partners.

- **Orange Shirt Day Campaign**

- Members of the University Affairs committee, in collaboration with the Provincial & Federal Affairs committee, found resources for and contributed to the MSU's Orange Shirt Day campaign to raise awareness of residential schools and indigenous ways of being.

- **Second Year Welcome**

- Committee members were involved with the development and planning of the Second Year Welcome, led by Denver Della-Vedova (MSU President) and the presidents of each faculty society.

- **THRIVE Week**

- Various peer support services carried out incredible events for THRIVE Week! I hope you had a chance to drop by and support our services 😊
- **Methods of Assessment**
  - Committee members did a lot of amazing work on brainstorming and consulting with other organizations on alternate methods of assessment. This was presented in front of Dr. Kim Dej and was very well-received. Further collaborations have also been discussed.
- **iCent Application: MSU Information**
  - Michael Wooder, our Director of Marketing & Communication, updated the MSU information on this application following conversations with the committee about what should be added.
- **December 6<sup>th</sup>: Panel on the Impacts of COVID-19 on Gender-Based Violence**
  - The MSU was actively involved in planning this along with a university committee. Their panel was held on December 6<sup>th</sup> from 12:30 PM – 2:00 PM EST and had great attendance!
- **International Student Survey Results**
  - The results of the International Student Survey from last year were presented at the International Student Working group and EDI Implementation Committee to various university staff working on bettering the experience for international students. We were encouraged to conduct a follow up survey to help International Student Services better tailor their services to the evolving need for international students.
- **Showcase of Literature on Sexual Violence Prevention and Response**
  - An idea that arose from a conversation with Wil Fularczuk, Coordinator of Sexual Violence Prevention Education at the Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Office, committee members came up with a possible idea of highlighting literature on the topic in the library. We were able to coordinate with the Display Committee who has graciously offered to carry this out for this semester!
- **Disability Pride Campaign/Podcast with Diversity Services & Maccess**
  - A University Affairs committee member proposed holding a joint campaign with Diversity Services and Maccess on disability pride. We have had an initial meeting with Emunah, the Maccess director and Rebeena, a UA committee member and volunteer with Diversity Services, had taken a lead on this afterwards!

### **Upcoming Events, Projects, & Activities**

The following are projects that have been started and are currently being further developed by committee members. Many projects are championed by a small number of committee members, with opportunities for others to contribute as they'd like.

- **International Student Survey**
  - We are planning a follow-up survey to last years to determine how the international student experience has changed as we return to in-person learning. This survey will be run in partnership with International Student Services and the results will be used to inform their services to create a better experience for international students.
- **Indigenous Student Representation in the MSU**

- We are hoping to set up meetings with Indigenous student groups and Indigenous Student Services which has been a bit difficult with everyone's busy schedules as we near the end of the year. This will be something
- **Echo360/Transcripts Resources**
  - The committee has shifted their focus from student resources to a focus on faculties to understand barriers to the implementation of Echo360. Members of the committee are currently working on drafting a survey to be sent out to faculty members to assess challenges with implementing Echo360 in their classes.
- **Peer Support Hub**
  - I am working with Student Accessibility Services and the MSU Peer Support directors to set up an introductory meeting. This collaboration will be focused on creating a support hub for all peer support directors and potentially volunteers along with university administration.
- **MSU/McMaster Academic Accommodations & Mental Health Resources**
  - In collaboration with Dr. Kim Dej, Acting Vice-Provost (Faculty), the MSU is working on creating a joint communication on the academic accommodation process beyond the first MSAF and mental health resources around campus to increase awareness of supports for students in need.
- **International Student Task Force**
  - We are hoping to organize a larger task force meeting to help kickstart this task force before the incoming AVP UA takes over. We will begin developing a list of projects for this year. We will also be creating a terms of reference to ensure this committee will continue beyond. Data from this task force will be provided directly to International Student Services to improve their operations.

## **Successes**

There have been many successes over the past year. Some key areas include engagement of committee members in bringing new ideas and taking the lead on projects, active collaboration with the Board of Directors and other AVPs, as well as building and strengthening relationships with community and campus partners. They have started taking on a larger role within the committee as they begin to self-organize and lead their own projects as well as take the lead in meeting with community stakeholders.

## **Current Challenges**

The scheduling of meetings remains a challenge, with school getting busier and being unable to find a meeting time that works for everyone in the committee. especially as committee members get busier with school. We have been trying less regular, smaller group meetings to finish up projects as the year ends, but this has been difficult to coordinate with changing schedules as well.

## **Volunteers**

I would like to thank Olsen Chan, Lindsey Zhang, Callista Liu, William Pereira, Simran Dhindsa, Maya Mabalay-Bynoe, Ezra Nadler, Rebeena Subadar, and Aisha Baig for

their contributions to the work of the University Affairs Committee. They have all been eager and excited to contribute ideas and time to the committee's ongoing projects. Since July, we have been meeting, and many members are taking on increasing responsibility to be involved with consultations, advocacy meetings, and preparing materials for campaigns. They have all been a pleasure to work with and very patient for the start this semester.

To this year's UA Committee: I can't thank you enough for everything over the past year. Thank you for joining me on this wild ride. Thank you for bearing with me throughout this semester. Thank you for bringing your amazing, inspiring selves to each and every interaction we had. You have made this an incredible experience for me. Reach out anytime – I'd love to grab a coffee and catch up!

Best,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Hargun Kaur', with a large, stylized initial 'H' and 'K'.

Hargun Kaur  
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