

YEAR PLAN

MSU SRA Health Sciences
Taaha Hassan & Nicholas Lum
2022-2023

June 21st, 2022



OFFICE OF THE HEALTH SCIENCES CAUCUS LEADER INTRODUCTION

Dear Health Science Students,

Here we are. We realize it may come as a surprise to you that the court jesters got voted in to be your SRA reps. Trust us, we were just as shocked. However, we are also eternally grateful to have been entrusted with this responsibility and opportunity to create positive change in our community. Both of us are coming into this role with a lot of enthusiasm for the upcoming year and how we can make the students of our faculty part of the solution.

Before we begin outlining our year, we would like to welcome the 2026s, as many of them will be visiting campus for the first time. From endless Zoom meetings to the cancellation of social events, we recognize that the past years have been particularly difficult and we are incredibly proud of your perseverance. As we start to transition back into normalcy, we hope to support the transition of incoming students so that they too can share the life-changing experiences and memories that we were so fortunate to have.

The 2022-2023 year will mark the first full year that students will be on campus since the start of the pandemic. Therefore, our focus will be to ensure that the students are returning to an environment that is far improved from pre-pandemic conditions and built with their needs in mind. With projects aimed at promoting mental health, inclusivity, transparency, student support, and new infrastructure, we are optimistic about the upcoming year.

With that in mind, engagement from students will be crucial in making sure this year is a success. With both of us heading into our final year, we're a bit older and out of touch. Please, don't be a stranger. What do you want to see from us? How can we best help you? Always feel free to reach out to us, and don't be afraid to say hello if you see us on campus. As you read through our year plan, try to think of how our plan fits into your vision for the upcoming year, and how you can make yourself part of bringing that vision to life.

Best of luck next year,

Taaha Hassan & Nicholas Lum

SRA Health Sciences Caucus 2022-2023

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GOALS

Objective 1	Proposing a Moratorium on Major Assessments Following Reading Week
Description	<p>Following weeks of classes and assessments, the accumulated stress and schoolwork can often take a heavy toll on the mental health of students. With the existence of a reading week, students are presented with the valuable opportunity to rest, catch up on schoolwork, and reconnect with members of their support system. However, with midterms and deadlines for assignments being occasionally placed on the days immediately following reading week, many students are guilted into studying during this period.</p> <p>To ensure that students will have the opportunity to choose whether they would like to use this period as a time to study or to rejuvenate themselves, we will be proposing a three-day moratorium on major assessments (midterms and assignments) following reading week.</p>
Benefits	With the assurance that there will be no major assessments immediately following reading week, students will be able to choose how they would like to spend this period of time without any feelings of guilt or pressure. Subsequently, students may feel more willing to use this time to rejuvenate themselves after several weeks of intense studying.
Difficulties	In order for a moratorium on major assessments to be implemented, it must be approved and enforced by the University. Additionally, there may be some resistance from professors and faculty members as a moratorium may cause disturbances to their scheduling.
Long-term implications	By ensuring that students are able and willing to use reading week in whichever ways that suit their needs, we hope that this will help relieve the stress of students and ultimately improve their overall mental health.
How?	We will be reaching out to important members of the University, specifically the Associate Vice-Provost (Faculty) and Associate Vice-President (Students and Learning), and proposing the idea. With their approval, we will collaborate together to develop a pilot project in the following year.
Partners	Associate Vice-Provost (Faculty) Associate Vice-President (Students and Learning) VP Education

Objective 2	Updating the Pulse Fitness Centre Dress Code
Description	According to the McMaster Athletics & Recreation website, the current dress code at the Pulse Fitness Centre does not permit “Halter tops, sleeveless tops, tank tops, crop tops or shirts revealing the midriff”. Some of our constituents have expressed concerns that this dress code is too strict, and they are not allowed to wear clothes that they feel comfortable working out in. Additionally, since there are various other universities in Ontario that permit these types of clothing, we wish to update the Pulse Fitness Centre dress code.
Benefits	By revising the Pulse Fitness Centre dress code, students will be able to better express themselves through clothing and feel more comfortable while using these facilities. Additionally, these changes will allow McMaster University to maintain its reputation as a progressive and inclusive community.
Difficulties	Since the future of the Pulse Fitness Centre dress code is ultimately at the discretion of the department of Athletics & Recreation, they must be willing to accept the provided suggestions. Whether any or all of the suggestions will be accepted is uncertain.
Long-term implications	The revised Pulse Fitness Centre dress code will promote a more progressive and inclusive environment where students are able to comfortably work out and express themselves through clothing.
How?	First we will be contacting the Fitness & Wellness Coordinator and determine the reasoning behind the dress code. Afterwards, we will then be in contact with members of WGEN to better understand what kind of regulations would reflect the wants and needs of McMaster students. With this information, we will then collaborate with the Fitness & Wellness Coordinator (and potentially members of WGEN) to create a more inclusive dress code at the Pulse Fitness Centre.
Partners	Fitness & Wellness Coordinator Director of Athletics and Recreation WGEN

Objective 3	Supporting the Transition Back to Campus Life
Description	As vaccination efforts continue across Ontario, the University has expressed its intention to transition back to complete in-

	<p>person school. However, as variants of SARS-CoV-2 (the virus causing COVID-19) continue to spread throughout the globe, many students are nervous about returning fully to campus.</p> <p>To help ease the nerves of students, we will be advocating for the addition of social distancing circles on BSB Field, increased facilities for outdoor eating (e.g. picnic tables), and social distancing stickers wherever lines may exist (e.g., near cash registers). Furthermore, we will be launching an information campaign to help communicate to students about what precautions have been taken.</p>
Benefits	<p>By taking additional efforts to help ensure the safety of campus and adequately communicating the precautions that have been taken, students may feel more comfortable returning to an in-person environment. Furthermore, the additional efforts would also reduce the possibility of an outbreak and could help slow the spread of COVID-19 cases on campus.</p> <p>Additionally, by supporting the transition of the 2024s and 2025s, we could make up for any lost social interactions and improve their familiarity with campus life. Ultimately, this could help relieve some anxiety and promote new connections within the McMaster community.</p>
Difficulties	<p>Since a large portion of this initiative requires funding, we will need to apply for the Student Life Enhancement Fund as well as the SRA project fund. Whether or not we will be able to receive funding is uncertain and we may not be able to implement all the changes that we initially had in mind. Moreover, since some of the changes involve adding or altering things on campus (e.g., social distancing circles in the field), we will need to seek approval from the University. Lastly, the extent to which the Transition ad hoc committee can operate is largely dependent on public health guidelines set by the Provincial government and the University.</p>
Long-term implications	<p>The reception and effectiveness of these changes could serve as a framework for the University's response to future epidemics and pandemics. Additionally, since some aspects of this objective, such as increased outdoor eating, could remain for several years to come, students could also enjoy these facilities in a non-pandemic setting. Furthermore, the social bonds and connections promoted by the transition for</p>

	the 2024s could help foster a stronger community among McMaster students.
How?	To receive funding for these projects, we will be applying for the Student Life Enhancement Fund and the SRA project fund. We will also be in contact with Sean Van Koughnett to request approval for such changes. To explore options for outdoor eating, we will also be in communication with members of the Bistro staff.
Partners	MSU President WWAC co-chair VP Finance AVP Finance Campus Events Director Dean of Students MUSC Director Bistro Chef Manager Bistro Associate Manager BHSS Second Year Representative

Objective 4	Accommodations to Support Student Wellness
Description	<p>The importance of student wellness has become increasingly apparent over the past year. Because of this, we would like to review the Student Accessibility Services (SAS), and how it can better support student learning. For example, the current SAS policy regarding extensions for students with accommodations is currently vague, and does not clearly outline how extensions should be awarded in different circumstances. This presents a barrier to students obtaining optimal accommodations.</p> <p>In addition to this, there are areas for advocacy within the Academic Advising Office and the Administrative-Academic Support Offices on behalf of international students. As many international students may not be returning to Hamilton in September, it is important to recognize the barriers that may arise as we transition our resources back to campus.</p>
Benefits	With the rise in mental health struggles imparted on students by the pandemic within the past year, it is imperative that the university work to alleviate some of the stresses wherever possible. By improving SAS, McMaster can show its commitment to student health as well as facilitate a learning environment that fosters the same enthusiasm as

	was once had before online learning began. In addition, by elevating the concerns of international students, we can ensure that those that don't return are not left behind.
Difficulties	<p>Lobbying to create a change in the Student Accessibility Services requires a change in a university policy that has been the status quo for a number of years. Therefore, creating a change in the SAS accommodations policy will require time, data collection, and back and forth communication between all parties in order to ensure all concerns have been heard out.</p> <p>In addition, different faculty offices have different policies regarding international students, meaning broad advocacy statements may not apply to each faculty.</p>
Long-term implications	By improving the Student Accessibility Services offered by McMaster, students will have better opportunities to engage in the coursework in which they are enrolled. The overall result is an improvement in both health and academic outcomes.
How?	<p>In order to implement these goals, we will be meeting with the Director of Student Accessibility and Case Management for the SAS. Here we will explain the benefits of such changes and how they can be implemented within the shortest possible time frame.</p> <p>In addition, such changes will require conversations with faculty members about their respective international student policies, and how they can be improved.</p>
Partners	<p>Student Wellness Centre Student Accessibility Services International Student Services Faculty Offices Academic Advising Office BHSc Assistant Dean</p>

Objective 5	Improved Committee Transparency
Description	The MSU has a myriad of committees, each of which are filled with students that do exceptional work for their peers and help to make McMaster a better environment for learning and living. However, these changes often go unnoticed and cannot be taken full advantage of because, under the current system, students are not privy to the

	<p>various goals and activities taken on by the committees. Because of this, we feel that publication of committee meeting minutes to the MSU Website would be a worthwhile solution in order to increase transparency and enhance student engagement with the MSU.</p>
Benefits	<p>As AVPs already take meeting minutes for their respective committees, such a change would be not only plausible but require no additional work that is not within the current expectations of each committee. In addition, the student union already has a centralized location wherein students can expect to receive updates on such matters - the McMaster Student Union website - and therefore such a change has the potential to reach a number of people with ease.</p>
Difficulties	<p>While making meeting minutes public on the MSU Website is an important step, many students receive the majority of their updates on the MSU from either Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter. Additionally, meeting minutes may contain excessive and unnecessary details on the meetings which will detract from the important components and results of each committee.</p>
Long-term implications	<p>As students are more aware of what committees actually accomplish, they themselves may feel compelled to participate in the MSU in a more direct way. This will lead to better student engagement in the MSU and, overall, an enhanced student experience.</p>
How?	<p>Students who are interested in committees are likely to visit https://msumcmaster.ca/governance/committees/ in order to learn more about the committees. Here, there are dropdown text boxes which contain summaries of each of the committees. By speaking with the MSU Communications Officer, we would hope to implement hyperlinks to meeting minutes within these dropdown text boxes for ease of access.</p> <p>In addition, we would meet with the AVPs of the standing committees in order to understand the current scope of the meeting minutes and how this can be optimized in order for students to better interpret what each committee's goals are.</p>
Partners	<p>Standing Committee AVPs Communications Officer VP Administration</p>

Objective 6	Update and Improve The Faculty of Health Sciences Student Home Base
Description	For a variety of reasons, including the pandemic, the Student Home Base has become out of date. In its role as a hub for student resources, safety items such as extra masks and hand sanitizer should be included within the space. In its role as a reflection of the student society, it must be updated to reflect the 2024, 2025, and 2026 cohorts who have not had a chance to leave an impression on the space. Finally, in its role as a centre for socialization and group interaction, furniture should be updated to reflect the modernization of the university as a whole, and cleaned to encourage use of the space.
Benefits	As socialization has been difficult during the pandemic, one of the easiest ways to connect students is to provide them with a central location where they can expect to find their peers. In its current state, the Student Home Base is not an attractive location for younger students as its design and decoration best reflects previously graduated classes. By encouraging younger students to make use of the space, they will have opportunities to connect with each other, an opportunity that was restricted by online learning.
Difficulties	The Student Home Base will not be opened until at least the winter term, delaying progress on its improvement for at least another 6 months. In addition, any improvements that require a reasonable amount of time to complete will not be feasible considering such changes could only occur during the summer, however the Home Base is currently closed. Finally, many changes will require student groups, such as the BHSS, to use faculty money to support such interests.
Long-term implications	An improvement to student spaces and thus an improvement to student connection will foster a greater sense of community within the faculty. In addition, an improved common space is one of the only opportunities for students in different graduating years to interact with each other. One of the strengths of the faculty of health science is that the older students provide insight for the younger students and help them along their journey. An improved community between different years can only lead to better chances of students achieving their goals.

How?	<p>After speaking with the chair of the BHSS, it is clear that there is common interest in improving the space, and that there will be money available to make said change happen. In addition, SRA Nursing, who also uses the space, has expressed interest in improving the Home Base and is willing to help facilitate any changes. Finally, Debbie Martin, the Chief Facility Services Officer, can also be of service in recommending changes and avenues for improvement for the Home Base.</p>
Partners	<p>BHSS Chair SRA Nursing BHSc Assistant Dean Chief Facility Services Officer</p>

Long-term planning

Overarching Vision 1	<i>Improving the mental wellbeing of all McMaster Students</i>
Description	Throughout the year plan, we have emphasized our focus on mental health and promoting student wellbeing. From the moratorium on major assessments to the review of the Student Accessibility Services (SAS), our goal is to help make post-pandemic McMaster into a much more supportive institution. Since many students will continue to face overwhelming amounts of stress and anxiety after we return to campus, we hope that our efforts will lay a solid foundation for the many years to come.
Benefits	As we have experienced over a year of the COVID-19 pandemic, the effects of online learning and isolation have taken a significant toll on the mental health of students. By ensuring that students are receiving very much needed accommodations, such as those for students in different time zones, we can try to minimize the additional stressors associated with online learning. Furthermore, by enforcing a moratorium on major assessments following reading week, we allow students the opportunity to choose how they can best spend this period of time. Whether that be catching up on classes or spending time with friends and family, this important period can help alleviate stress and strengthen bonds between peers.
Year 1	Communicate with members of the Student Wellness Center and International Student Services to gain a better understanding of students needs. We will then be proposing our ideas to the Student Accessibility Services and other members of the university, specifically Associate Vice-Provost (Faculty) and Associate Vice-President (Students and Learning). With approval, we will collaborate with one another to develop a solid framework for our projects.
Year 2	If approved, the moratorium and changes to SAS will likely take effect this year. We will be releasing a survey to assess the success of these projects and gauge the thoughts of students. Through this feedback, we will make the appropriate adjustments and communicate our findings with the university.

Year 3	Ensure that the changes will remain permanent and communicate with future SRA members about this project so that they are aware how to make further adjustments if needed.
Partners	Associate Vice-Provost (Faculty) Associate Vice-President (Students and Learning) VP Education Student Wellness Centre Student Accessibility Services International Student Services BHSc Assistant Dean

Overarching Vision 2	<i>Providing Better, Safer, and More Accessible Learning Environments for Those With Female Assigned Reproductive Systems</i>
Description	As mentioned above, it is clear there is work to be done pertaining to women's issues on campus. While other universities have progressed to keep up with the demands of students, certain aspects of student life at McMaster do not reflect the progressive nature the university purports to have. To reflect McMaster's values, no student should feel constricted by the barriers of outdated dress codes at gyms that make participating in activities more difficult and less accessible. Furthermore, costs pertaining to menstrual products are an issue that impacts a large fraction of the undergraduate population. Given menstrual products are a basic need, McMaster must play a role in ensuring all students have equitable access to the resources they require.
Benefits	By eliminating policies that disproportionately impact women, students on campus will be able to exist in an environment that is less stressful and conducive to better health: one that does not judge them for who they are and the choices they make. Such an environment is imperative to any institution that claims to be a safe haven for learning, as the accessibility of its resources should be broad and equal for all students.
Year 1	After conversations with stakeholders, we aim to have a plan of what the project will specifically entail after the first year. This will include projections for both costs and benefits, as well as individual impacts on a variety of different students with different needs.

Year 2	Based on the project outline created in year 1, a pilot project will commence, which will serve the purpose of providing information and data which can inform the final outlook of the project.
Year 3	After revising the project based on insights gained from the pilot project, the project will be implemented in its full capacity. This will be monitored closely to see if improvements can be made beyond its first full year of operation.
Partners	VP Finance Director of Diversity Services Campus Facility Services WGEN MSU Pride

GOALS to strive for

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

- Improvements to support the integration of 2026s into campus life
- Formalizing the publication of standing committee meeting minutes on the MSU website.
- Update photos and information on SRA Health Sciences social media accounts.
- Proposing the idea of a moratorium on major assessments following reading week to the University.
- Launching the information campaign to help communicate what safety precautions have been taken by the University to prevent future outbreaks.

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

- Increasing engagement with students and informing incoming first years of the role of the SRA within the MSU.
- Shifting the Pulse dress code to be less strict and include more inclusive and comfortable attire to better reflect student concerns.
- Applying for SLEF and the SRA project fund to finance our objectives.
- Ensuring SAS policy changes and clarity for students seeking extensions, as well as accommodations for students in different time zones.

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

- Updating The Faculty of Health Sciences Student Home Base
- to reflect current cohorts and resource needs.
- Prepare for the integration of menstrual product subsidy in the 2023-2024 school year.
- Promoting SRA and committee elections to increase engagement for the 2023-2024 school year.
- Ensuring a smooth transition for incoming Health Science SRA Representatives by providing transition materials and reports.
- Finalize reading week moratorium plan to allow successful integration into 2023-2024.

Master Summary

May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Update social media to reflect the new establishment. ● Promote MSU Seats on committees and VP elections.
June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Meet with BoD and Committee AVPs to gain insight on the year plan and goals for the upcoming year. ● Gain constituents' perspective on pertinent social issues. ● Meet with the MSU Board of Directors regarding changes to the Pulse dress code.
July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Devise a year plan and refine goals for the upcoming year, speaking with relevant stakeholders. ● Post our summarized year plan on all our social media accounts. ● Speak to AVPs regarding enhancing the transparency of committees. ● Compiling research, data, and feedback from similar projects at other universities to prepare for advocacy efforts for large-scale changes (e.g. reading week moratorium).
August	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Meet with the Director of Student Accessibility and Case Management regarding improvements to the SAS accommodations policy. ● Gathering feedback pertaining to the menstrual product equity project. ● Meet with members of the University, MUSC, and Bistro to help promote social distancing and increase outdoor eating facilities. ● Highlighting the safety precautions taken by the University on social media accounts to alleviate the stress associated with returning to campus.
September	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Organize an intro to the MSU and SRA presentation for first-year BHSc classes to increase student awareness and engagement. ● Increase the use of social media to enhance our reach and accessibility to different students that are newly arriving at the university. ● Propose the idea of a moratorium to the Associate Vice-Provost (Faculty) and Associate Vice-President (Students and Learning).

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assist with the efforts led by the Transition ad hoc committee.
October	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply for the Student Life Enhancement Fund and SRA project fund to finance projects.
November	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet with FHS faculty members, SRA nursing, and relevant student societies regarding improvements to the Faculty of Health Sciences Student Home Base.
December	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Release an anonymous response survey to constituents to gather feedback on how the Health Sciences caucus can be improved. • Review the use of social media from the past semester to gain insight into how engagement with students can be enhanced.
January	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin implementation of changes to The Faculty of Health Sciences Student Home Base. • Increase engagement on social media to alert students of new opportunities as more students return to in-person learning in the winter term.
February	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote SRA elections on social media accounts and hold drop-in sessions to educate the tasks and responsibilities of SRA representatives • Finalize the framework for the reading week moratorium pilot.
March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote SRA elections on social media accounts and hold drop-in sessions to educate the tasks and responsibilities of SRA representatives
April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin the transition with the next SRAs • Initiate long-term projects such as SAS policy changes, reading week moratoriums, etc.