



MEMO

From the office of the...

MSU President

TO: Student Representative Assembly (SRA)
FROM: Simranjeet Singh, President & CEO
SUBJECT: Bylaw 12 (First Year Council) Modifications
DATE: Sunday, July 17th, 2022

Hello to the SRA, I hope you are all well. As you are all aware, the First Year Council Coordinator, Fayth Frank, was hired this year about three months earlier than is the norm. While this initially was an oversight by the previous Board of Directors, this has created a pleasant consequence in that I have been able to work closely with Fayth to learn more about her role, the vision of First Year Council, as well as how we can increase the impact of the body on the McMaster community.

FYC is of course a representative body for first-year students to give vital leadership opportunities, promote mentorship, allow for advocacy to take place, and for events to be held. Thus, akin to the SRA, its scope is quite broad, generally up to the determination of the elected individuals. These initiatives may also require significant ancillary support depending on the aims of the involved individuals.

First-year students come to McMaster with often little to no knowledge of the community which exists, what resources are available, or what tools they must use to achieve their goals. Furthermore, even if that information is known, having supporting forces that can give guidance, give structure to a year, and cogently support initiatives when they are proposed will go a long way to increasing the scope of impact of the FYC on the first-year and greater McMaster student community, will give first year students greater opportunities to take part in campus life, and help offer more varied and insightful mentorship opportunities.

The changes outlined in the edited bylaw, if implemented, will create an environment in which there are greater volunteerism opportunities for first year students, will allow stronger leadership in first-year student advocacy efforts, will allow for more ambitious planning of first-year led events, and will create a more noteworthy mentorship opportunities for upper-year students to support first-years. Our vision is for these changes to be trialed for the upcoming year to determine if they make a worthwhile, positive contribution to FYC. If so, they can be continued as core elements of the body, though if the changes are found to be ineffectual, they can be reversed.

First and foremost, to better reflect how FYC has in fact been functioning and ensure greater direct involvement of first-year voices, I propose modifying First Year Council to contain not 4, but 19 voting members. These would be composed of the Chair and three Vice-Chairs who are current voting members, as well as representatives from each of the residences, and off-campus/commuting student representatives. The proposal

involves one individual from each first-year residence (13), plus two for off-campus or commuting first year students. Essentially, the former Residence Activity Council has been modified to include off-campus and commuting student voices, and then combined with the Chair and Vice-Chairs to create the new proposal for the First Year Council voting body. This will meet once monthly, akin to the previous meeting schedule for the Residence Activity Council. A new body, the First Year Council Core Executive, is essentially a continuation of the former First Year Council framework. It will be composed only of the Chair and three Vice-Chairs meeting at the current biweekly schedule with the same scope of responsibilities. The aim of this change is to focus on fostering greater first-year leadership, representation of diverse voices, and increase capacity for advocacy efforts to be led.

Aside from the reorganization of the elected body, there is the addition of three executive positions as well. These positions will be volunteer positions to be occupied by upper year students to serve as supports for both the FYC Coordinator and the elected representatives. The three positions, FYC Advocacy and Awareness Executive, FYC Promotions Executive, and FYC Events Executive will give elected representatives of FYC the necessary logistical, organizational, and knowledge resources to allow them to plan more ambitious, unique, and influential initiatives. Thus, the inclusion of these positions will firstly promote greater advocacy efforts, by giving FYC representatives direct access to resources that can help support the development of their ideas. A secondary benefit will be the mentorship opportunities which will be offered by upper year students as they support first-year representatives in their pursuits. This is a novel mechanism of mentorship support, as it will allow upper-year student executives to support first years during events the first-years are leading, offering a unique opportunity for growth and collaboration. These executive positions will be hired by a panel composed of the FYC Coordinator, MSU President, and three outgoing FYC representatives, thereby ensuring previous FYC representatives still have majority opinion in a decision for hiring new executives. In the future, we will investigate other means of hiring for executives if the proposed changes are made permanent for future years.

Finally, the success of the changes will be assessed in a report to be written by the FYC Coordinator during February and March of 2023. This report will be informed by the views of FYC representatives to determine whether or not the changes were successful. After approval of findings by FYC, a formal recommendation to maintain changes or revert to previous changes will be brought forth to the SRA by the FYC coordinator near the end of the 2022-2023 term.

To summarize, the unique connections formed, knowledge gained, and relationships developed by the newly proposed structure of FYC will allow the governance body to be more well organized while also giving it greater agency to achieve ambitious goals. When combined with the unique opportunities for upper-year students to mentor first-year students, these changes are key to helping FYC continue its mandate and improve its ability to improve student life for first-year students in the McMaster community.

Best regards,

Simranjeet Singh, President & CEO
president@msu.mcmaster.ca