



REPORT

From the office of the...

President & Chief Executive Officer (CEO)

TO: Members of the Student Representative Assembly
FROM: Simranjeet Singh, President & Chief Executive Officer (CEO)
SUBJECT: SRA 22F Report
DATE: Sunday, September 11th, 2022

INTRODUCTION

Hello everyone, I hope you are well! In this report I will outline my activities, events I have taken part in, tasks completed, and the scope of my role in the last two months. This will then be followed by a summary of events planned in the upcoming weeks. I hope this report is an insightful window in the work that has been completed, progress made on goals, and how my initiatives as President have evolved. I will be covering several projects led by myself, as well as those in which I have collaborated closely with other parties within the MSU, McMaster, and the greater community. Further, as my progress in the areas of Equitable Education and Building a Stronger Hamilton Community have been more solidified, I am hopeful that I can focus strongly on the other three main themes, Student Wellness, Career Development, and Sustainability in the coming months of my term.

PAST EVENTS, PROJECTS, ACTIVITIES, & SUCCESSES

I have chosen to include successes within this section for conciseness and ease of communication. This section summarizes the main events, projects, activities, and successes, with smaller or less long-term tasks excluded for brevity. Nonetheless, if there are specific queries about events unmentioned in this report but discussed in Executive Board or in public MSU statements, I would be more than happy to speak to them.

In July, I had the pleasure of taking part in the MAC 101 Student Life Panel. This was a unique opportunity in which I and other student leaders, - including VP Education Elizabeth Wong, were interviewed by a panel and answered questions about campus life, the McMaster community, and shared insights about how incoming students to McMaster can both adjust to their time at Mac while also have the tools to succeed. This interview involved both sharing insights about my personal journey as a student from matriculation to graduation, as well as describing many of the wonderful resources and opportunities that are offered by the MSU and other groups. Through this event, I also had the pleasure of directly interacting with incoming students, a factor that I hope is a recurring theme as we return to a more traditional model of educational delivery.

July was also a noteworthy month for the MSU's advocacy within the development of the McMaster Campus Master Plan. Multiple Design "Charettes" (Feedback Sessions) were held, and I had the opportunity of meeting representatives of BDP Quadrangle, - the consultancy firm working with McMaster University on its Campus Master Plan. The focused discussion sessions focused on the topics of Energy & Infrastructure, Stormwater & Ecology, and Transportation, as all three are key tenets in the process of developing a more accessible, equitable, hospitable, and sustainable McMaster campus. Other Board members of the MSU also gave forth valuable insight in these discussions. Everything from affordable housing, greenery of McMaster's campus, the environment created by that, prevalence of automobile parking, accessibility concerns, and how to create a healthier, more activity McMaster community was advocated for by the MSU. Overall, our contribution was vital to ensuring strong recognition of student perspectives within the development of the plan. As the Campus Master Plan continues to develop and evolves into a more finalized document, I look forward to continuing to guide it in a manner most appropriate to the prosperity of the student body.

I had the pleasure of having a personal meeting with the Director of the Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Office, Lenore Lukasik-Foss to discuss collaborations between the MSU and SVPRO, as well as Review of the SVPR Policy that is taking place this year. This was a valuable meeting as it helped me gain an understanding of events being planned by the SVPRO for the upcoming year, overlap that exists with the MSU, and how some of my campaign goals also have relevance. We will plan specific areas of collaboration, including the potential for events in the coming weeks.

As July transformed into August, I had the privilege of being a consulted party in the development of a McMaster Campus Food Strategy. Here, I was able to give my insights regarding current strengths and weaknesses of McMaster's food system. This broad conversation including more specific areas, such as how the campus experience regarding making, obtaining, storing, learning about, consuming, and disposing food can be improved. The conversations had, and interactions with other community partners proved highly insightful, and I am hopeful it will allow for greater support of community members in their pursuit of Food Sovereignty.

The Ombuds Office is a key service that exists for students, staff, faculty, and other parties to receive fair, unbiased representation and support during disputes or claims of misconduct by others. Especially for undergraduate students who would have to otherwise navigate long and complicated policies and procedures individually, the Ombuds Office is a resource integral to ensuring their academic rights are respected. To help support the work of the Ombuds Office, the decision was made to conduct hiring of an Ombuds Assistant. This process involved applications, in which several dozen individuals applied, followed by a phone-call interview, and finally an in-person interview. These steps have all concluded, resulting in a much-needed addition to the support of the Ombuds Officer, Carolyn Brendon.

In early August, the MSU Board of Directors had a wonderful opportunity to travel to the Student Union Development Summit (SUDS), an annual conference hosted by the Alma Mater Society (AMS) of the University of British Columbia. Through this conference, the MSU BoD had the opportunity to network directly with more than 100 other student leaders from around Canada, understand the unique structure of different student unions, the variations in the types of services, resources, and opportunities offered by the MSU as compared to others, and gain an appreciation of how we can share knowledge so to mutually benefit. Helpful informational sessions, such as those relating to equity, diversity, and inclusion in media, lobbying to governments, collaboration with community partners, as well as inspirational speeches by keynote speakers were also valuable additions. Overall, SUDS was a wonderful experience not only due to the information learned, but also because of the opportunity it afforded me to unwind and temporarily disconnect from other obligations.

After my return from SUDS, I am happy to report that significant progress has been made relating to my Equitable Education-related goals. Open Educational Resources are tools by which researchers can collaborate, but also allow for the development of free or at least more affordable supplementary course resources for students. The aim of this proposal is to request faculties as well as central McMaster units to bring forth significantly increased funding for OERs and allow for there to be paid student research assistant positions to support in the development of these resources. Ideally, this will allow access to a far greater number of accessible, high quality OERs, increase awareness of them amongst students, faculty, and staff, while also allowing for prominent leadership and professional development opportunities for students. I am happy to report that the proposal has been completed and I have begun to circulate it to the various faculties and central McMaster units, with my hope that after I give my presentations, significant funding can be given by these bodies. The progress on this goal was the direct result of collaboration with the MacPherson Institute and McMaster Libraries, and I look forward to the positive impact it has on the McMaster community in the coming weeks and months.

On a related note, I also completed and submitted a proposal for a student-proposed assignment in BIOMEDDC 3C09 a course I took in my undergrad and one through which I am collaborating with a former professor, Dr. Felicia Vulcu. The aim of this is for there to be a model formed in which former students can directly contribute to the development of a course and modify/enhance it. This proposal is currently being critiqued, after which I hope to run the assignment in Winter 2022 and use feedback to create a template that can be proposed to central McMaster leadership as a mechanism that will allow students to have direct impact, a direct role, and the ability to directly modify courses so as to improve their content and delivery. This direct student engagement within courses is a key tenet of McMaster's Teaching and Learning Strategy, and I think by championing this project, it will allow for greater student agency as well as influence in our education. I am happy to report I have also gotten significant feedback from MacPherson Institute regarding the course assignment design and look forward to refining it in the coming weeks before implementation.

The third Equitable Education-related element is associated to my advocacy regarding LinkedIn Learning. I am currently collaborating with Jeannie An to develop steps to better promote existing resources, - one for which all students pay for through ancillary fees but only 42% have accessed, to the student body. One area of collaboration was to theorize ways by which we may have monthly initiatives to better promote the resource. To assist in this, I have submitted ideas for multiple monthly initiatives as well, which I hope will improve the educational quality of the monthly campaigns, ensure only the most relevant items are promoted to students, and will give Jeannie and myself a better understanding of next steps. I hope with the knowledge we gain, and the promotion done, a very large portion of the student body can begin to make use of LinkedIn Learning, and furthermore, I am hopeful that it can more directly be embedded in courses, to give students the capacity to better utilize a tool for which they already pay.

Furthermore, my Lab Sustainability Review Research Goal has continued to make progress. I am currently about to begin distribution of a more sustainable nitrile glove option in a lab I am collaborating with to receive feedback from lab members. These gloves are still for the most part traditional nitrile gloves but have modifications which make them much more

rapidly biodegradable and thus less impactful on the ecosphere. The purpose of this is to see the gloves' utility, determine if they are a viable alternative to traditional nitrile gloves, and if so, how I must embark on a strategy to promote them. If these steps are successful, I am hopeful that use of these gloves, as well as more generally, use of sustainable environmental practices can be promoted in scientific research labs and give undergraduate students exposure to less environmentally impactful methods of conducting research.

To shift into another realm, - that of Community engagement, I had the opportunity to attend a meeting of the McMaster President's Advisory Council for Community Relations (PACCR). This meeting and results conversations were an insightful opportunity to share progress on my goals, the many positive impacts of McMaster students on the Hamilton community and learn of both events taking place within the community as well as concerns of Hamilton community members. The fruitful conversations helped me garner an understanding of developments in the City of Hamilton as it prepares for Fake Homecoming "FOCO" as well as the implications of the Nuisance Bylaw that was recently passed by Hamilton's planning committee. This information is vital to determining the MSU's responses to both items and how it will ensure that student voices, rights, and perspectives are consistently championed. A wonderful consequence of PACCR was my introduction to a group called Hamiltonians for Housing at Manageable Rents (HAMR). Here, I was able to meet with wonderful community leaders who brought forth a proposal for modular, inexpensive, mini-apartment/townhouse-style housing units which could be implemented within Hamilton in the coming years. This proposal is very nascent, but it offers the opportunity to have easily constructable, inexpensive, and low environmental impact housing that can make renting significantly more affordable in Hamilton for both students and community members. I look forward to supporting this project as it develops and sharing with the SRA progress that is made.

As August transitioned in September, I was enthusiastic about a pivotal event that defines the experience of most new students at Mac, Welcome Week. It was a phenomenal experience to not only to experience Welcome Week once more, but take part in the programming of the events. As the first mostly in-person and traditionally run Welcome Week since 2019, it was also an event indicative of the transition the McMaster community was making back to a sense of normalcy after the COVID-19 pandemic. I had the honour of taking part in MacWelcome to formally address the first-year student body and was given the opportunity to present about what the MSU offers for groups of both Exchange and International students. The Student Services Fair also afforded a fabulous opportunity to promote what the MSU offers and how students can get involved, while engaging in fun, interactive events with first years. The MSU's signature events, such as Monday Night Lights, Headphone Disco, the concert, and Airbands all displayed a lively return to campus life and enthusiasm that I think many of us have craved, making it wonderful to witness. Overall, Welcome Week was a resounding success, and I am extremely grateful to all of the interactions I had with wonderful new students, upper year reps, and community partners who made it such an inspirational experience, as well as the fabulous work done by the Campus Events and AvTek team without whom none of Welcome Week would have been possible.

UPCOMING EVENTS, PROJECTS, & ACTIVITIES

As mentioned in the previous section, I have a near term goal to give a series of presentations to Faculty Deans and heads of McMaster central units regarding my OER Proposal. Similar presentations and requests for increased funding will follow when focusing on financial aid advocacy, increasing student wellness, sustainability in research, and potentially other topics. The first of these proposals relating to Open Educational Resources, - which currently is in the penultimate phase before it is completed, will likely serve as a model on which future proposals are based. Information from other student unions, - specifically the University of Saskatchewan Student Union (USSU), will also be used to guide these proposals as these other institutions have also made significant strides in student support at their specific institutions. I will specifically be reaching out to the USSU regarding a proposal which was successful, and secured several hundred thousand dollars from the University of Saskatchewan for vastly increased funding for mental health supports to determine if a similar such initiative has feasibility and can be attempted in the McMaster community.

Another goal which has become more long-term in nature revolves around the MSU's internal structure, I am working closely with the MSU General Manager John McGowan and the Director of Human Resources Renee McIntosh to review the internal structure and Human Resources practices of the MSU. As mentioned in my previous report, there is a sense that the MSU internal structure is overly flat, thus we feel these changes may help in creating a more pyramid-shaped hierarchy which will allow for employees to progress up the organization as they gain experience and seniority. These changes in-keeping with best business practices and we hope it will create a stronger organizational structure. There is a potential for Student Opportunity Positions (SOP) in the Human Resources department as well, which I feel is always a good opportunity to increase avenues for students to progress professionally and be more directly involved in the MSU's internal functioning. So far, Renee and I have reached out to dozens of other student unions regarding their Human Resources practices, with multiple responding. I look forward to collating our research and determining next steps in the coming months.

As a more general point, as I have made significant progress in three of the five themes on to which I was elected, Equitable Education, Building a Stronger Hamilton Community, and to a lesser extent, Sustainability. I will be bringing a focus to the other two themes, Career Development and Student Wellness, for the rest of my term to ensure I am appropriately distributing my time between my stated goals to the student body.

CURRENT CHALLENGES

No major challenges currently.

CONCLUSION

I would like to thank the other Board of Directors, General Manager John McGowan, Administrative Services Coordinator Victoria Scott, Director of Information Technology Pauline Taggart, Human Resources Generalist Renee McIntosh, Executive Assistant Daniela Stajcer, Clubs Administrator Nardos Tedros, Director of Marketing and Communications Michael Wooder, as well as all the other full-time, part-time, and volunteer staff of the MSU for their support. In addition, I would like to thank all McMaster University, Hamilton community, and other more wide-ranging partners for their willingness to collaborate and assist in my initiatives. Thank you for reading my Presidential Report! Feel free to ask me questions via email or in the SRA meeting.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Simranjeet Singh', written in a cursive style.

Simranjeet Singh, President & Chief Executive Officer (CEO)
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