



REPORT

From the office of the...
Vice-President (Education)

TO: Members of the Student Representative Assembly
FROM: Elizabeth Wong, Vice-President (Education) & Corporate Officer
SUBJECT: SRA 22I Report
DATE: October 24th, 2022

Dear Members of the Assembly,

It's been a while since I reported to the SRA so I have quite a few updates. I do apologize for not being there in person to present my report in person, as I will in plenary for OUSA's General Assembly. Before getting into the bulk of my report, I wanted to speak to how my progress may differ from the rest of the executive team. After being in my role for a few months, I realize how dynamic the advocacy portfolio is and how I often find myself pivoting and getting priorities done as they come.

I've put a lot of focus into building connections with internal staff as well as strengthening connections with other universities. I have been making direct efforts to try and support internal events and be more present within the MSU. I have also continued to keep connections with other student unions. This has helped with connecting the MSU to other universities and having access to a larger base of information. It's been such a pleasure to find friends and colleagues across Canada that I consistently speak to about different initiatives and projects.

Progress on Yearplan

I will outline a few areas of my year plan progress here. A lot of work has been integrated into the work I do with our external lobbying bodies as well. I have listed a few of the points from my year plan but these are very much integrated into big projects and some of the work of the rest of the exec team as well. I won't address these points directly but you will see them through all the projects and events I will touch upon in my report.

- Tuition and Financial Aid
- Support for International Students
- Community Engagement
- Communication & Connection
- Review of the Education Team

Past Events, Projects, & Activities

International Students – Visa Issues

- In July and August, there were issues with International Students not being able to receive visas to come and study in Canada. This was flagged through our federal lobbying body UCRU, we ended up sending a letter to the Honourable Sean Fraser, Minister of Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship. We addressed how the backlog requires better resources to match administrative capacity and that lack of action has prevented students from participating in education. We pointed out that this failure to process visas harms educational institutions and international students directly. I myself had conversations with McMaster's Government Relations department as well.

Judge for Alumni Creative Contest

- I had the opportunity to participate in a creative writing contest hosted by Alumni Engagement. The theme for this contest was Nostalgia. There were multiple entries where I was a judge and voted on different short stories written by student and McMaster alumni. It was great to contribute back to the McMaster community in a different way. It was also fun to break out of the VP Education role for a bit and judge some cool creative short stories. Big shoutout to Christine Kennedy from Alumni who coordinated the contest.

MacVotes Campaign

- The MacVotes Campaign has been running since the beginning of October. Working with the Communications Team, we created a social media campaign to get students engaged in the Municipal Election. This campaign consisted of any awareness around the municipal election. The main point of information where students could learn the who, what, when, where, why, and how was through msumcmaster.ca/macvotes - where we posted different links to resources where students could learn more about the election.
- We had graphics made that focused on election awareness and we amplified messaging from the city as well for the polling booth on campus.
- We created a video as part of the campaign as well where I spoke to the different dates and relevant information to the upcoming election. We did this to visually highlight some initiatives we were running for the municipal election.

Ballot on Demand Polling Station

- We worked in collaboration with the city to have a polling station on campus on October 18th from 10AM – 7PM.
- The ballot station is a ballot on demand station which allows individuals wherever they reside in the city to vote for the candidates running their ward. This model of "bringing the vote" to the people is especially useful for students as having a centralized location for students on campus makes voting more accessible as students do not need to travel off campus. We also recognize that many of our students are not as familiar with the area and polling stations can be more daunting to vote at as many students have not had the opportunity to traverse off campus to be familiar with the surrounding areas.
- The ballot station came about from a partnership between the City of Hamilton and the McMaster Students Union to promote student engagement in the municipal election. We have been very grateful to have been able to work with

the city on getting the ballot station on campus tomorrow. For many years, the McMaster Students Union has been asking for a ballot station on campus based on the Elections Canada model that has been used in federal elections. We were approached by the city early in the cycle about having this ballot station on campus. We have been working in partnership with the city for these past few months to plan and organize this ballot station as well.

- We do not currently have the numbers from this polling station but will get them soon once polling data is released. We are quite optimistic about the results and hope that this shows that recognizing students during elections time is important and should be a priority.
- I want to give a huge shoutout to the people who volunteered for shifts to raise awareness of the polling station on the day it was running. I want to give a big thank you to VP Administration, Mitchell German for reaching out to Services as well. Thank you to the service volunteers, SRA volunteers, MSU members, and anyone else who volunteered. As a token of appreciation, I will be sending out a gift to all the volunteers for helping out and helping us to raise awareness of the polling station on campus!

Election Awareness Event

- As part of the MacVotes Campaign for the Municipal Election, we also partnered with the city to run a small elections awareness event. We had individuals from the city come to MUSC to table on general elections information. This was the first event that was held out of the newly branded Campus Connection space. The people from the city came with a banner and literature that could be handed out to students. Engagement wasn't as high as expected but we were able to catch a few students and engage them in chatting about what is happening with Municipal Elections.

Mayoral Debate

- We also held a mayoral debate on campus in MUSC on October 17th from 2-4PM. We sent out invitations to some mayoral candidates and asked them to join us in participating in the debate. We were able to secure 4 candidates: Keanin Loomis, Ejaz Butt, Michael Pattinson, and Solomon Ikhuwu. Big thank you to the candidates who took the time out of their busy schedules to come and participate.
- The debate was fairly successful with students being in the audience and many people watching from the sidelines and other floor levels. We of course would always like more turnout but considering this was the first day back from reading week, I would say that the turnout was quite good.
- We had a selection of questions that touched upon mayoral priorities, transit, housing & infrastructure, climate change & environment, policing & bylaw, and economic prosperity. We also gave students the opportunity to ask questions during a Q&A portion towards the end as well.
- The debate was livestreamed and the livestream is available on our Facebook page for anyone who may want to check it out.
- I wanted to give a big thank you to Michael Wooder, Director of Marketing & Communications; MSU Communications Team; Paula Scott, Underground

Manager; Underground Graphic Designers; Simranjeet Singh, President (for moderating); AvTek for doing all the set up; and the volunteers that helped out at the event.

Fall Valedictorian Selection

- I also had the pleasure of working with the Fall Valedictorian Selection Committee. For Fall Valedictorian, the individuals chosen are from a pool of undergraduate and graduate students. Judges had to go through two rounds of selection where we ranked applicants based on their applications. It was an interesting process to say the least. I had a great time reviewing applicants and touching base with the rest of the committee. We still have one round left before the final decision is made.

JIACG

- One of my responsibilities is to participate in JIACG Meetings which is the Indigenous Strategy Meeting where stakeholders within the university come together to develop action plans and isolate priorities for the next coming years. Participating was a very enlightening experience where I was able to get a better idea of how we as the MSU can better work to support Indigenous groups and students on campus.

OUSA Delegate Hiring

- As you all saw in my memo from an earlier meeting, OUSA Delegate Hiring for OUSA's Fall 2022 General Assembly has concluded! I wanted to give a big shoutout to AVP Provincial and Federal Affairs, Kiran Bassi who worked with me during the hiring process. It was a tedious process interviewing over 10 candidates.
- The AVP PFA and myself altered the hiring process from previous years to make the process less tedious and more accessible. We cut down the interview questions and gave applicants the opportunity to share more about their passions for advocacy. We found that this made applicants more willing to apply and open up during the interview. We will continue our altered interview style for the next upcoming general assembly as well.
- We hired a total of 7 candidates who will be going to Laurentian this weekend to represent McMaster students at OUSA's 2022 Fall General Assembly. We are quite excited to be participating in General Assembly which has not be held in person for two years. There will be lots of areas for developing skills and advocating for McMaster students at the provincial level. There will be more details when I bring forth a report on events at GA.
- I do encourage unsuccessful candidates to please reapply again for the Spring 2023 General Assembly that will be held in early March.

Upcoming Events, Projects, & Activities

OUSA Fall 2022 General Assembly

- While SRA is happening, we will be finishing up our last day of OUSA's Fall 2022 General Assembly. We will be in plenary while you are reading this report. OUSA's GA will be happening from Thursday October 27th – Sunday October

30th. As mentioned above, we will be bringing 7 candidates, MSU will overall be bringing 10 delegates altogether.

- At OUSA GA, we will be discussing three papers: tuition, ancillary & incidental fees, and student employment. We will have breakout sessions where we will be discussing edits to the papers. These discussions will lead to suggested changes to the authors and will impact the final draft paper. The goal of the MSU delegates is to provide perspectives from a McMaster student lens to ensure that the papers are reflective of MSU students.
- The delegates will have the opportunity to meet with other delegates from other OUSA member schools. This will give them the opportunity to expand their circle of connections and to learn about what other student unions are doing!

OUSA Student Advocacy Conference

- We have OUSA Student Advocacy Conference coming up November 14-17th. During this conference, the President and myself will be meeting with MPPs across Ontario to discuss student issues. We will be joined by other OUSA member schools who will be grouped with us to have these conversations with the MPPs. I will be going to Toronto earlier to do prep for this conference as well. The conference will be taking place at Queen's Park in Toronto.
- Sim and I are quite excited to have this opportunity to directly interact and have meaningful conversations that can contribute to the betterment of student life. We will be doing preparations on our end as well to ensure we are prepared and ready for these conversations.
- This will be a great opportunity for us as well because we will be meeting with several MPPs at McMaster's Provincial Reception on November 1st as well. Since we are meeting some MPPs first, it will allow for even more fruitful conversations for the MSU as we would have already formed that initial connection.

Federal Lobbying Week

- UCRU is currently preparing for Federal Lobbying Week which will be held from November 28th – Dec 2nd. Sim and I will be headed to Ottawa for the week to lobby at Parliament Hill. When we go to Parliament Hill to lobby, we will be split into different groups and will be lobbying to different MPs about issues that concern students.
- The UCRU Board of Directors is currently reviewing the list of MPs and ensuring that we are meeting with MPs that reflect the values of our organizations. This process is a bit more tedious than initially anticipated as there have been some conflicts about where each school's boundaries lie. Nonetheless, we continue to whittle down the list.
- Our four lobbying priorities are: Student Employment, Financial Aid, Mental Health, and Indigenous Education. We have working groups for each of these priorities. I will be working on the student employment and financial aid briefs. I have currently been working on research and recommendations for the briefs. I will also have the AVP PFA supporting the mental health brief as well.

MSU Advocacy Instagram Account

- I'm very excited to announce that the MSU_Advocacy account is now active again. One of my goals for this year was to start utilizing the account again to bring more attention to advocacy and the work that the VP Education does with external lobbying groups.
- The Advocacy Outreach & Logistics Coordinator, Shrey Acharya has been working with myself and the Director of Communications, Michael Wooder to create a social media strategy for this social media account. We will be coming out with a giveaway very soon so please keep an eye out on the account. I also ask that all SRA make sure that they are following MSU_Advocacy on their SRA instagram accounts.
- During election night, we covered the event through MSU_Advocacy and had our main account repost our stories. We will continue to post stories and cover different events we are attending. We want to open the social media up to students so that they can see what we are doing to advocate on their behalf. I will be posting more stories whenever we attend events. I will be covering GA as well.

Current Challenges

- Unfortunately, the Executive Director of OUSA resigned from his position and the OUSA Executives are currently in the process of looking to hire a new ED. Eddy was a great asset to OUSA as he had past student union and OUSA experience and has worked for the organization for the past 4 years. It is sad to see someone with so much historical context leave but I of course want to send my well wishes. Eddy has been a great asset to the MSU and a resource to myself.
- Due to changes in leadership at UCRU, we have a very tight timeline to get our policy briefs done so I will be quite busy with traveling and contributing to policy brief creation as well. I'm a bit concerned with timing, but I believe everything will work out.

Best,



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