



# REPORT

*From the office of the...*  
**President & Chief Executive  
Officer (CEO)**

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**TO:** Members of the Student Representative Assembly  
**FROM:** Simranjeet Singh, President & Chief Executive Officer (CEO)  
**SUBJECT:** SRA 22J Report  
**DATE:** Sunday, November 13<sup>th</sup>, 2022

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## **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.

## **PAST EVENTS, PROJECTS, ACTIVITIES, & SUCCESSES**

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 September, I had the pleasure of helping set up the MSU's Bike Auction in collaboration with Campus Events. This was a wonderful opportunity in which the MSU was able to provide students as well as the greater Hamilton community with low cost and high-quality bikes which had been lost and unretrieved. The event took place over three days and was done in collaboration with McMaster's Facility Services. It resulted in the sales of several dozen bikes and hopefully represents one small initiative to increase access to sustainable mobility in the McMaster community. Additionally, September was also a noteworthy time for forming new connections and collaborations. I had the pleasure of attending Walk a Mile in Their Shoe's event led by YWCA Hamilton. Here, I, as well as the MSU's IT Department walked in red high-heeled shoes to stand in solidarity with the rights of those who have experienced sexual misconduct. It was a delight to take part in the event, and it helped foster a strong relationship with YWCA Hamilton, an organization I hope to collaborate with in the future for events to promote inclusion and conversation on contentious social issues. As stated in my previous report, I also had the pleasure of meeting with the Director of the Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Office, Lenore Lukasik-Foss to discuss collaborations between the MSU and SVPRO. I hope to loop that group into any collaborations with YWCA as well.

As September continued, I collaborated closely with the Okanagan Committee and its sub-group, the MacMoves Committee to help organize MacMoves Week. This was an initiative to help promote physical health and wellness in the McMaster community. Together with the committee, we planned events for a period of one week, with each day led by different departments of McMaster University as well as the MSU. The MSU specifically decided to hold a friendly frisbee game in BSB Field. We purchased 100 frisbees, which

were distributed to MSU and McMaster staff, as well as students who attended the event and took part. It was a wonderful opportunity in which staff and students were able to take a break from their hectic and busy days to both relax and engage in some low barrier physical activity. The event was noted on socials as also being the most attended of all MacMoves events which I feel is a strong commendation of the positive community environment we are building.

Near the end of September, I had the opportunity to have continued conversations with Elizabeth Way of Student Aids and Awards and Celeste Licorish of the McMaster Access Strategy. The information they shared gave useful insights into the nature of how financial aid is distributed at McMaster, the various sources of funding, and how greater resources can be made available. I hope to follow-up soon with both Ms. Way and Ms. Licorish soon so we can plan a specific project/proposal that can make a positive impact on the student body.

Simultaneously, Campus Master Plan discussions have continued and developed over the last couple months. I am happy to say that the MSU's contribution were vital to ensuring strong recognition of student perspectives within the development of the plan. The Master Plan has become more concrete, with even interesting renders of space use having been developed as more specific uses of spaces have been finalized. Even with this, the Master Plan remains very high level and is mostly aspirational in nature. As the Campus Master Plan continues to develop and becomes more solidified, I look forward to continuing to guide it in a manner most appropriate to the prosperity of the student body.

As October began, VP Finance Sarphina Chui and I began planning for the Holiday Market, a new idea for a recurring annual event in late November to early December. This will basically be a winter festival in which students, staff, faculty, and community members can come and buy unique, holiday-themed products, gifts, and other items, while also engaging in a fun social opportunity to take pictures and watch performances of student groups. We are very hopeful that this year the event can be a rousing success, so it can be the first of many MSU Holiday Markets!

October was also the beginning of a lengthy process I took part in to help hire McMaster's new Director of Human Rights and Accessibility. In collaboration with an external consultancy group and more than 15 different administrators and leaders on campus, McMaster embarked on a multi-stage application and interview process where it screened dozens of applicants. The process finally concluded in early November, which a candidate who I feel will strongly defend student concerns regarding accessibility and human rights. I am hopeful the selected candidate enjoys their new role at McMaster.

In early November, I had the privilege of being a consulted party in conversations about how Hospitality Services can be improved for the future. 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. As an additional point, the conversations unveiled an openness for Hospitality Services to make modifications to its meal plan naming and payment schemes. I am hopeful further conversations result in changes that can make the process of purchasing and consuming food at Mac more equitable for all students.

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. As shared in my previous report, I completed a proposal for greater OER promotion and adoption and began the process of circulation to the various faculties and central McMaster units. From preliminary feedback received, it was shared to me that more has to be done to develop the idea, with specific uses of requested money also outlined. I have now completed a modified proposal, which outlines specific budgetary requests and spending items. The modified proposal includes specifics as to what proportion of funds will go to a specific staff member who can be hired, the nature of their salary, scope of their role, and how other funds will be used to plan for conferences, promotional materials, and other items to support OER development. As an additional point, an arrangement whereby money is requested from each faculty on a basis proportional to the number of faculty members was also created to ensure each division is providing funds in a fashion equivalent to its capacity to contribute. This modified proposal has been shared with a few select allies in the MacPherson Institute and McMaster Libraries. With finalized feedback from those groups in the coming days, I will share my proposal to more McMaster departments, faculties, and units, with the hope for funding guarantees by the end of the semester. The progress on this goal was the direct result of support from the MacPherson Institute, McMaster Libraries, and Vice-Provost (Teaching & Learning), so I wanted to recognize their contributions. I look forward to the positive impact this proposal has on the McMaster community in the months.

As also mentioned in my previous report, I 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. I received very positive feedback from Dr. Vulcu with whom I will be collaborating to running the assignment in Winter 2022. I am very happy this project is making headway, and I look forward to using the feedback received 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.

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. The first one of these initiatives is in November and focused on data analysis and programming. I had the pleasure of recording a video that will be share on the McMaster Library social media and boosted via MSU socials to promote the monthly initiative. The success/impact of this monthly initiative will inform later work on future monthly proposals. Hopefully with the success of these initiatives and the knowledge we gain, a much larger portion of the student body can begin to make use of LinkedIn Learning.

Furthermore, my Lab Sustainability Review Research Goal has continued to make progress, if much slower than initially hoped. 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. I hoped to have already completed this project at this time, but delays in responses from those I am collaborating with, combined with my prioritization of other goals have slowed progress on this project.

As described in my previous report, a wonderful consequence of a previous President's Advisory Council for Community Relations (PACCR) meeting 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 offers the opportunity to have easily produced, inexpensive, and low environmental impact housing that can make renting significantly more affordable in Hamilton for both students and community members. This project is developing with future meetings with newly elected Hamilton City Councillors and other potential allies that can support the initiative. I look forward to see how this project evolves and supporting it so hopefully, in the near future, there can be more access to affordable housing for students.

In early October, I had the pleasure of taking part in the Hamilton Youth Workforce Roundtable, a wonderful discussion in which I met leaders of various organizations in Hamilton who are helping promote employment opportunities, but also mental health and housing supports for youth in the city. This was an event organized by Workforce Planning Hamilton, and in addition to sharing information about what the MSU is and the impact it has, I had the pleasure of learning of various other groups that also bring forth remarkable initiatives in the community.

In preparation for the Hamilton Municipal Election, the MSU also worked closely with the City of Hamilton to hold a special poll on campus in which any Hamilton community members could vote for their own ward on campus. Furthermore, the MSU also organized a Mayoral debate, an event I had the pleasure of moderating. It was wonderful to collaborate with VP Education Elizabeth Wong, who led the organization of these projects. The special poll was a significant success, with many students, staff, faculty, and Hamilton community members coming out to vote. With the success of the special poll, we are hopeful we continue to have similar special polls for future elections. In addition, the debate was a prominent avenue which allowed the MSU to ask four leading mayoral candidates questions on topics ranging from housing, transit, sustainability, policing, student rights, and employment among others issues *de jour*. It was a unique event, one that hopefully gave students the knowledge to make an informed choice when voting.

During October, the MSU also collaborated with Student Affairs to launch and promote the Student Life Enhancement Fund (SLEF). SLEF gives students the opportunity to submit projects to enhance student life and make improvements to their experience at Mac by funding projects voted on by students. The topics can cover anything from sustainability, student spaces, student wellness, greater access to transit, and any other focus applicants wish to have. The MSU Board were delighted to create videos to promote the fund, and look forward to reviewing the applications and developing the ideas over the coming months so we can propose developed, thoroughly costed projects that will be voted on by students in January during the Presidential election. The winning ideas are funded, so we look forward to reviewing the wonderful proposals submitted by students!

Finally, near the end of October, VP Finance Sarphina Chui, VP Education Elizabeth Wong, seven other student delegates, and I had the pleasure of travelling to Laurentian University in Sudbury which hosted the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance (OUSA) General Assembly. OUSA is the provincial body of student unions the MSU collaborates with to conduct advocacy to the provincial government. At the event, we all had the opportunity to modify, edit, and debate changes to three main policy papers, Ancillary and

Incidental fees, Tuition, and Student Entrepreneurship, Employment, and Employability. It was also a wonderful learning opportunity in which gained an understanding of the unique perspectives of other students at other Ontario universities. The changes made by the MSU as well as the other student unions now represent the guiding vision on which we advocate to the Ontario government on the three topics discussed.

## **UPCOMING EVENTS, PROJECTS, & ACTIVITIES**

As mentioned in previous reports, I have a project 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. 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 this project has been deprioritized recently due to other factors, there has been less progress than I hoped, so I look forward to bringing my focus back to this project.

The conversation I took part in during the Hamilton Youth Workforce Roundtable also resulted in the formation of noteworthy connections, specifically with Jesse Williamson of Hamilton chapter of Ontario Youth. He will be connecting me with various partners that can support projects focused on sustainability, housing, and development of stronger connections between students and the greater Hamilton community. While our collaboration is very new, I am hopeful it will result in fruitful initiatives and help me re-launch some currently paused projects. I look forward to sharing with the SRA the results of our collaborations in the near future.

Elizabeth and I look forward to sharing the policy views of the MSU and OUSA with MPPs and their staffers at OUSA's upcoming Student Advocacy Conference (SAC) taking place from November 14<sup>th</sup> to November 18<sup>th</sup> in Toronto. In addition, we will be in Ottawa to advocate with the Undergraduates of Canadian Research-Intensive Universities (UCRU), the federal group of student unions the MSU collaborates with, for federal-level lobbying from November 28<sup>th</sup> to December 2<sup>nd</sup>. I hope that both of these lobbying events result in significant sharing of knowledge with government officials about student concerns and lead to new programs that improve student life at Mac.

Finally, as a more general point, as stated in my previous report, 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. However, this has led to less emphasis on other goals. Therefore in the coming months, 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.

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