



# REPORT

*From the office of the...*

## Vice-President (Education) and The President

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TO: Members of the Student Representative Assembly  
FROM: Abigail Samuels, Vice-President (Education) & Corporate Officer  
SUBJECT: SRA 23L Report – University Affairs  
DATE: Monday December 18<sup>th</sup>, 2023

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Hello SRA Assembly <3

I hope you all are keeping well, congratulations on completing the Fall semester and surviving exams! I hope the holiday season has been kind and to you. I look forward to seeing you all again in January & stealing Jovan's spotlight with a long(ish) report. I'm very pleased to share progress within the university affairs portfolio, and highly encourage joining the University Affairs Committee should any of these topics peak your interest or if you have an idea you'd like to bring forward.

Please reach out to me if you need to have anything clarified, have any questions or feedback.

### **Business Items:**

#### Undergraduate Council: Ad HOC Committee on Relief for Student Absences

This committee will review and propose revisions to the Policy on Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work. Alongside the representative from the Graduate Student Association, my role is to provide the student perspective, and relay the concerns of the student body at large. As it currently stands, the policy is overly complex and requires simplification and clarification. The ad hoc committee, governed by a majority of members from McMaster's Undergraduate Council and supported by the University Secretariat, is tasked with continuing the review of the policy. The Committee shall consider and recommend revisions to the Senate Policy on Relief for Missed Academic Term Work and other policies as required to facilitate implementation.

#### Ancillary Fees

McMaster is planning to set the ancillary fees for the 2024-2025 school year early in the new year. With a newly updated OUSA paper and standing MSU paper on Ancillary fees, I will be consulting with appropriate university admin to share updated information and discuss any budgetary changes or fee increase/decreases.

#### Student Accessibility Services (SAS) Review

Earlier this year, the former VP Administration Vits and I consulted with student accessibility services during their review of their service. The report has since been finished, and PDF can be found online. Results have indicated a **significant** increase in the number of

students accessing SAS services, reflecting increased access, retention, and graduation rates for students with disabilities. With the help of the university affairs committee and the recommendations provided the review, I'm planning to hold a campaign to further share and educate the student population on (non-exhaustive list):

- Resources offered by SAS,
- Eligibility criteria
- Disability stigma
- Mental health and disability focused advocacy efforts

### SSAC/SLEF Progress

The the student life enhancement fund (SLEF) provides “seed capital and financial support” for student-led and university-based service providers to expand their programming, infrastructure and/or operations. The student services advisory committee (SSAC) closed the application portal on Dec 4<sup>th</sup> and has reviewed submitted project ideas. The committee will select a shortlist of projects to be included on the presidential ballots.

### Athletics

Discussions surrounding better funding for athletic teams to secure coverage for basic fees. Currently student athletes participating in OUA sports must pay basic fees associated with scheduling and playing their games, whereas U-Sports athletes do not. Jovan will be meeting with relevant stakeholders to discuss these items after the deadline for SRA documents – details relevant meeting held will be provided as necessary during the SRA meeting.

### **Past Events**

#### CFMU Discussions with Dr. Kim Dej and SVK

Hosted by Sharang Sharma at CFMU, Dr. Kim Dej (Vice-Provost Teaching and Learning), Sean Van Koughnett (AVP Students and learning and Dean of Students), Jovan and I discussed topics that students are most concerned about, re: housing costs, mental health, student engagement, academic accommodations, AI within the classroom, and commuting students.

#### AI Town Hall

After co-hosting a town hall with the interest of hearing both university admin and student perspectives on AI in higher education learning, we regret to report a very underwhelming student presence at this event. We hope to brainstorm further ideas on how to engage the student population in these conversations, as the student voice is integral to creating a sustainable and fair AI policy.

### **Upcoming Events and Projects**

#### *AI POLICY PAPER*

Given the emerging presence of AI within higher education, McMaster's leading role in creating provisional guidelines for AI use in the classroom and strong lobbying efforts within the MSU, I am recommending an AI policy paper to be added to our database. This paper will be written by the Education Team, based on recommendations from the UA committee. The two other papers being revised this term will be:

- Sexual Violence Prevention and Response
- Student Engagement and Retention.

### ***Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance (OUSA) Visit on Campus***

Although OUSA is our provincial lobbying organization, they will be on campus in January to engage with the McMaster student body and hold meetings with relevant university administration. The finalized date will be announced at our January meeting, and I highly encourage you all to drop by, meet OUSA Home Office staff and collect some free OUSA merch!

### ***Volunteers***

If you would like to be part of University Affairs Committee, please send an email to me at [vped@msu.mcmaster.ca](mailto:vped@msu.mcmaster.ca) and the AVP UA [avpuniversity@msu.mcmaster.ca](mailto:avpuniversity@msu.mcmaster.ca). Please feel free to chat with me after our January meeting if you're interested in joining or have questions < 3!

### **Current Challenges**

Jovan and I are very excited to welcome the AVP UA to the team. So far, Jovan and I have enjoyed managing the UA portfolio ourselves, but look forward to having another set of hands that can help to accelerate & lead project timelines, run UA committee meetings and take on more initiatives that impact our lives here at home.

Warm Regards,

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