

BRENDA LIN

**FOR VP**

**ADMINISTRATION**

---

2024-2025



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# Dear Members of the Assembly,

My name is Brenda Lin (she/her) and I'm running to be your VP Administration for the 2024-2025 school year! From starting university during the COVID-19 pandemic, it's been an absolute pleasure to see what MSU has done through the last year for student engagement and rebuilding the foundations of student life. I'm very excited to have the opportunity to continue the fantastic job that the MSU has done this year to further improve student life at McMaster and better support students in their leadership roles.

I've been involved with the MSU ever since my third-year as a volunteer for SWHAT. Since then, I've gotten involved with other services such as the FCC and have been privileged to work closely with the MSU as the Chief Returning Officer (CRO) for the Elections Department this year. I've achieved a lot in the role this year, most notably with improving Presidential Election voter turnout (up 56% from the previous year!), event planning, and engagement within the Elections Committee. With my involvement with different services within the MSU, I've gotten a sense of how they can be better supported and more engaged in. Outside of the MSU, I've also been involved with various clubs, most notably with the McMaster Chinese Students Association (CSA). I see cultural clubs as pockets of the school where student life really thrives the most, and CSA is no exception. Even through the pandemic, we maintained a tight-knit community that has only grown stronger since returning to in-person campus life. I've modelled a lot of my leadership style through experiences in this club .

As the CRO, I've also had the opportunity to get to know SRA members through elections and present reports at SRA meetings. I have done some policy work as the CRO of both the MSU and the McMaster Science Society (MSS) and have a general idea of its governance and the bylaws/policies behind it. Through conversations with AVPs and current members of the SRA, I've gotten a sense of things that can be done to help them feel better supported in their roles.

Thank you for taking the time to read through my platform, I know it's long but I really wanted to create a platform that included not only my own experiences, but also all of the valuable insights from all of the lovely individuals that I met with through this process. Feel free to reach out to me if you have any questions, comments, or concerns!

With love,  
Brenda Lin

# RELEVANT QUALIFICATIONS

## MCMASTER STUDENT UNION (MSU)

### Elections Department

- Chief Returning Officer

2023-2024

### Food Collective Centre (FCC)

- Volunteer

2023-2024

### Student Walk Home Attendant Team (SWHAT)

- Dispatcher (2023-Present)
- Walker (2022-2023)

2022-2024

## MCMASTER UNIVERSITY

### Community Volunteer Circles (CVC)

- Long-Term Care Home Volunteer (2022-Present)
- Let's Get Moving Program Volunteer (2021-2022)

2021-2024

### McMaster Dragon Boat Club

- Member

2020-2022

### McMaster Chinese Students Association

- VP External (2023-Present)
- Co-President (2022-2023)
- VP Finance (2021-2022)
- Junior Representative (2020-2021)

2020-2024

### McMaster Science Society

- Chief Returning Officer (2021-2022)
- First-Year Representative (2020-2021)

2020-2022

## EXTERNAL

### Pickering Dragon Boat Club

- Member

2022-2024

### Good Shepherd Venture Centre

- Food Bank Volunteer

2022-2024

## EDUCATION

Honours Biochemistry (B.H.Sc.)

2020-2024

# PLATFORM OVERVIEW

One of the overarching goals of my platform is to **foster greater connections within student leaders**. I believe that student leaders who feel that they are:

1. Supported and appreciated in the work they do
2. Part of a greater community

helps to create an environment where people are genuinely interested in being active leaders and making a difference. I've personally seen the effects that the attitudes of student leaders can make on students, which helps set a precedent for what student life should look like. I truly think that building these strong connections within student leaders from the start is essential for continuing the upward trends we've been seeing in student engagement.

Keeping this in mind, here are the main things/groups of people that I want to focus on in my platform:

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# PLATFORM OVERVIEW

## SRA Members

- Summer Social(s)
- Encourage Caucuses to Hold 1 Event/Term
- Provisions for Long Meetings
- Check-ins with Caucuses
- Revisit SRA from the Past

## PTMs

- Summer Social(s)
- Greater Summer Support/Interaction
- Better Highlight what Peer Support Services Offer
- PTM/Exec/Volunteer Appreciation
- Continuation of Cluster Meetings
- Continue Involvement with Service Activities
- Continue to Improve Training/Transition
- Centralized Resource Documents/Folders
- Review Hour Tracker System
- Encourage More Assistant Director Involvement

## AVPs

- Expand AVP Services Responsibilities
- Improve Working Relationship with the Speaker/AVPs
- Improve Service Reviews
- Improve AVP/Speaker training

## Community Engagement

- Welcome Week
- Greater Usage of MSU Spaces
- Attending Student Life Events
- Greater Partnership with MSU Clubs

# SRA MEMBERS

Overall, one thing I have noticed about SRA this year is that not everyone is necessarily engaged in their roles. As much as the role of VP Admin is very busy with other tasks that are under their purview, being an active member of SRA is also part of that job. As a member of the BoD, I would want to be more engaged with SRA through taking the initiative to better model how SRA members should be engaged in their own roles.

## **Summer Social(s)**

Team bonding has always been a really big priority of mine in any leadership position I've held. As part of my goal to build a community dynamic within SRA, I'd like to have an SRA-wide social after at least one of the two summer SRA meetings (if not both!). Students get busy during the school year and summer is the perfect time to have social events like these, especially early on in the year when everyone is still getting to know each other. Having an SRA social after a meeting can also incentivize members who live far from Hamilton to attend the meeting if there is a social aspect. There is a budget line for SRA summer meetings that could be used for this purpose. My goal with this is to allow SRA members to build closer relationships with each other as well as the BoD/speaker. This can also help SRA members feel more comfortable with speaking during meetings and voicing their opinions.

## **Encourage Caucuses to Hold 1 Event/Term**

One piece of feedback I heard a lot this year was that not many students are aware of the SRA. I think that there should be a greater responsibility placed on SRA members to promote their work throughout the year. I want to encourage SRA caucuses to hold at least one event per term, whether that be within their caucus or as a joint effort with other caucuses. There's an SRA special projects budget line that can be used towards this. I would also want to emphasize that SRA members can use a bit of creativity in planning these - partnerships with faculty societies is an example of a way they could get greater outreach during these events. These initiatives could be supported by the BoD members initially to get the ball rolling, but would eventually become fully caucus led.

# SRA MEMBERS

## Provisions for Long Meetings

SRA meetings happen on Sunday nights at 6pm, which can coincide with dinner hours for many people. I want to ensure that SRA members feel supported/appreciated for being active members of these long meetings by providing them with food if meetings exceed 2 hours. As the CRO of Elections this year, I've really seen the impact that supporting the Elections Committee members can make in their overall engagement. I think a similar dynamic could be developed with SRA, which starts with fostering an environment where SRA members want to be there.

## Check-ins with Caucuses

To improve support for caucuses, I would want to work together with the rest of the BoD to hold (at least) 2 short check-in meetings per year with each of the SRA caucuses. The first one would be either over the summer or at the start of the year and the second one would be at the start of winter term. I've realized that some SRA caucuses aren't really sure of what they should be doing throughout the year. As much as SRA members should be autonomous in their activities, giving them more guidance on what they can include on their year plans and how their ideas can be executed can help them build a baseline for how they actualize their ideas. If SRA members have a better idea of how to do things now, they can also better pass on their knowledge to future SRA members.

## Revisit SRA from the Past

Through speaking to individuals who have been working with the MSU since pre-pandemic times, there seem to have been aspects of SRA that have been lost in transitions. For example, SRA members used to have more vision for how they wanted to shape student government going into their roles. There also used to be more of a community dynamic (e.g., each caucus used to bring snacks to share at the meeting). I think reintroducing these little things (and creating traditions!) can make a difference in fostering a community environment within SRA. In turn, the more that SRA members feel connected to SRA as a whole, the more likely they'll be engaged to be more active members of SRA.



# PTMs

In terms of PTMs, a major goal of mine is to ensure PTMs and service execs/volunteers feel supported in what they do. The main ways I want to achieve this are by:

- Building stronger relationships with each PTM
- Get a better sense of what each service does/challenges they encounter so I can better help PTMs when problems do arise
- More explicit appreciation for the work that PTMs/execs/volunteers do

## Summer Social(s)

Similar to SRA, it would be a good opportunity for PTMs have a social in the summer. One instance of this could be implemented alongside PTM training, as all PTMs are expected to be present for it. Having a second small social in the summer can also build on the relationships formed between PTMs. Overall, this would allow PTMs to feel more comfortable with each other and more willing seek help from each others' services when needed. It also really sets the tone for what 'team culture' looks like.

## Greater Summer Support/Interaction

Everyone can agree that students are extremely busy when the fall term rolls around. Ensuring that PTMs are getting the support they need over the summer is essential for making sure they are equipped with the knowledge and resources they need to succeed when school begins. As well, I want to build relationships with each PTM during this period of time where most of them have more time to devote to doing this. Here is an overview of how I plan to do this:

1. Have an initial meeting with each PTM to get a sense of what their needs are in terms of support (e.g., Weekly check-in meetings? Bi-weekly?)
2. At least 1 more meeting with each PTM before school starts to ensure they are prepared to start their service
3. Check-in texts (casual, just to get to know each of them a bit better and continue to build a relationship with each of them)

Some services also have a lot of responsibilities over the summer (e.g., Maroons, EFRT), so I would also want to ensure that I'm providing these services with the adequate support that they need.

# PTMs

## **Better Highlight what Peer Support Services Offer**

From conversations with people who have been around since before the pandemic, it seems that peer support services used to be utilized more frequently as a drop-in service. Based on what I've heard from individuals currently involved with peer support services, the drop-in aspect doesn't get used very often by students which causes volunteers to feel disengaged from their roles as peer support volunteers. There has to be greater promotion of the specific peer-support aspect of these services by the MSU. This could be done by more 'professional' videos posted on the MSU McMaster social media handles or shorter promotional posts on their own pages. For example, peer support services could model after SWHAT, which posts a photo or video every night on their Instagram page to promote usage of their drop-in service.

## **PTM/Exec/ Volunteer Appreciation**

More should be done for volunteers and executives to recognize the work they put into their services. Having more socials across services (e.g., MSU Services pumpkin carving contest in 2022) and providing more recognition (e.g., small care packages that PTMs can distribute to their executives) can help not just PTMs, but also execs and volunteers feel more supported by the MSU. Although services are autonomous, having more top-down support is always appreciated and the volunteer recognition budget lines for services are not always sufficient.

## **Continuation of Cluster Meetings**

The work that has been done this year to bring back cluster meetings has been a great start for increasing collaboration between services. For next year, I would want to have the first cluster meeting earlier in the year as well as begin cluster meetings for student life services. Especially for services that are still figuring out what works for them, cluster meetings can be helpful for sharing knowledge between the services. As well, these meetings are another chance for PTMs to bond with each other.

# PTMs

## **Continue Involvement with Service Activities**

As services are a big part of the VP Admin's portfolio, it's crucial to know about what each service does. Again, although services are autonomous, having an idea of what each service is doing throughout year goes a long way. If not for the job, then because I'd personally want to know each service a little bit better. I'd want to take a more in-depth look at each services' year plans, as well as attend their events whenever possible throughout the year. I thought the 'Day in the Life' initiative, started by Adam (2023-2024 VP Admin), was a really great idea and is definitely something I would want to continue.

## **Continue to Improve Training/Transition**

As a PTM, having adequate training and transition into your role is incredibly important. It not only provides you with an overview of how to best do your job, but also the outgoing PTM acts as a sort of role model for how you should be approaching your job as a PTM. While PTMs from some services are trained really well, with adequate information passed down through either the transition reports or hands-on training, PTMs from other services could be trained better. Providing more support for PTMs who do not receive adequate training from their predecessors is essential for helping them feel prepared in their positions. This ties into a previous point I made about setting up meetings in the summer, where this is something I would discuss during those meetings.

## **Centralized Resource Documents/Folders**

More can always be done to make PTM's jobs easier so they can better focus on managing their service. Creating procedural documents with general resources on how to deal with specific/difficult situations could be helpful (e.g. what to do if a volunteer is acting inappropriately). As well, a centralized contact list with PTM and service exec contact information can be useful for planning cross-service events. PTMs are also always able to reach out if they need assistance but sometimes it can be easier to just refer to a document before doing so. As well, having a central folder with everything they need to do their jobs (e.g., all accounting documents, job descriptions, etc.) can make information easier to access.

# PTMs

## **Review Hour Tracker System**

Many PTMs aren't currently using hour trackers very much. The current system makes hours a bit tedious to track and there isn't much oversight on the tracking sheets themselves. For next year, I would want to put greater emphasis on using the hour trackers, especially during times where services may be busier. This could look like more reminders for the PTMs to fill them out and checking them more frequently.

## **Encourage More Assistant Director Involvement**

For services with an assistant director (AD), I would encourage directors to involve ADs more in big decisions that are made about the service. As well, I would encourage them to develop a good relationship with each other. While director and AD dynamic is dependent on the individuals working in the roles, strong communication between the roles can be really beneficial. This can also help ADs feel more involved in how the service is run.

# Speaker/AVPs

## **Expand AVP Services Responsibilities**

Overall, I feel that the AVP Services could be doing more to positively impact how services are operating as well as have a greater presence within the services. After consultation with current and previous students in the AVP services role, I would want to update the AVP Services job description to include more involvement with the Services (especially the ones that are being reviewed that year). This could look like more personal interactions with the services being reviewed (e.g., attending their events) or following up on service recommendations made in previous years. I would also want to encourage the AVP Services to be involved in cluster meetings. As the VP Admin role is relatively busy on its own, I would also want to explore delegating some service-related responsibilities to the AVP Services.

## **Improve Service Reviews**

As service reviews are a full-year project conducted by the AVP Services, I want to explore ways to better engage students in the review process and provide more in-depth service recommendations. One way I want to do this is have the AVP Services work more closely with each service that is being reviewed (as mentioned in my previous point). PTMs of services/volunteers may be more inclined to fill out the surveys if they've built a relationship with the person conducting them. As well, I would want to encourage the AVP Services analyze the survey data more in-depth to provide their recommendations. For example, for open-ended responses, a thematic analysis can be performed identify patterns in those responses.

## **Improve Working Relationship with the Speaker/AVPs**

While the Speaker and AVPs under the admin portfolio have pretty different responsibilities, they still work closely (but at the same time, independently) with the VP Admin. I would want to develop a better relationship with each of the individuals working in these positions. This can be done through regular check-in meetings (perhaps bi-weekly) with each AVP/the Speaker as well as spending time with these individuals outside of a work setting.

# Speaker/AVPs

## **Improve AVP/Speaker Training**

More can always be done to help the AVPs/Speaker feel more supported in their transition into their roles. A way I would help facilitate their transition into the role is by closing reading over their transition documents myself, ensuring I also have knowledge on the ins and outs of each AVP's responsibilities. As the VP Admin is the Deputy Speaker, it's also important to be familiar with their job. I would want to work especially closely with them during their transition process to ensure that I'm also familiar with how to chair SRA meetings.

# MCMMASTER COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Coming out of the pandemic, while it's clear that engagement in student life has made serious improvements over the last year, the MSU as a whole will still need to keep finding ways to better engage students in campus life. One group that I think is the best target for this is incoming first-year students, who are experiencing university for the first time and thus, are the most impressionable.

## **Welcome Week**

Although I have never attended Welcome Week (WW) by virtue of being part of the 'COVID year' and having not been a WW Rep, I think absolutely think it's the best way for first-year students to see what McMaster student life has to offer. While the BoD generally doesn't play a huge role in the execution of WW, the VP Admin sits on the WW Award Committees and attends WW. Throughout my platform, I've mentioned supporting student leaders a lot and there could definitely be more support for the reps during this time. As previously mentioned, Maroons takes on a lot during WW and as VP Admin, I would want to better support them through this process. Maroons did an 'amazing race' type of event with services for WW last year and I would want to work with the Maroons coordinator to further involve services during WW.

## **Greater Usage of MSU Spaces**

As someone who oversees PTMs, I would want to advocate for them to use MSU spaces more frequently during campaigns/internal events that they hold. The spaces I see best suited for this purpose include The Hub, TwelvEighty, and The Grind. As well, advertising these spaces as MSU owned, especially to students in first or second year, can help the MSU be better recognized by students.

# MCMMASTER COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

## **Attending Student Life Events**

A personal goal of mine is to attend more campus events, whether they be club- or service-run events. Putting your name out there and actually engaging with students can make a big difference in making students aware of the MSU as a whole. As well, other students who attend club/service events are ones that are already engaged in student life and would probably be more receptive of learning more about student life in the first place. Although the VP Admin portfolio is already quite hectic, student-led events are fun and it's always a good time to meet new people.

## **Greater Partnership with MSU Clubs**

There is a huge opportunity for services to partner with the hundreds of MSU clubs on campus. Many of these clubs have events with really great turnout that often rivals that of MSU services. However, many services have a larger budget than these clubs, creating an opportunity for partnership between clubs and services. Although some services have begun doing this already, it is worthwhile to further encourage this among PTMs and work with the Clubs Administrator to look for collaboration opportunities.



# THANK YOU...

To everybody who took the time to consult with me and share their MSU knowledge, your thoughts have been so invaluable! The following does not necessarily indicate an endorsement of my platform:

Adam El-Kadi, VP Administration Candidate, VP Administration (2023/2024)  
Mitchell German, Hub Coordinator (2023/2024), VP Administration (2022/2023)  
Veronica Larrazabal Zea, AVP Services (2023/2024)  
Piper Plavins, AVP Internal Governance (2023/2024), Speaker (2022/2023)  
Justin Phung, AVP Services (2022/2023)  
John McGowan, General Manager  
Michael Wooder, Marketing & Communications Director  
William Dang, Outgoing Communications Officer  
Victoria Scott, Administrative Services Coordinator  
Ayesha Zahid, DEN Director (2023/2024)  
Fezan Khokhar, EFRT Director (2023/2024)  
Samantha Cheng, FCC Director (2023/2024)  
Angela Bilic, Macademics Coordinator (2023/2024)  
Yaseen Khan, Incoming Maroons Coordinator, SRA Engineering (2023/2024)  
Allison Fang, PCC Assistant Director (2023/2024)  
Lena Wang, Incoming SHEC Director, SHEC Assistant Director (2023/2024)  
Serena Bansal, Spark Director (2023/2024)  
Jenny Zhao, SWHAT Coordinator (2023/2024)  
Jonathan Lai, Incoming SWHAT Coordinator  
Jazzlyn Abbott, SRA Science (2024/2024)  
Daniel Benaich, SRA Engineering (2024/2025)  
Liam Forbes, SRA Business (2023/2024)  
Sinead Gono, SRA Humanities (2023/2024)  
Kevin Hu, SRA Engineering (2023/2024)  
Larissa Long, SRA Health Science (2024/2025)  
Zachary McKay, SRA Engineering (2024/2025)  
Joseph Newman, SRA Science (2024/2025)  
Matthew Olejarz, SRA Health Science (2024/2025)  
Nelosha Suganthan, SRA Science (2023/2024)  
Vibooshitha Thusyanthan, SRA Science (2023/2024)  
Kerry Yang, SRA Health Science (2023/2024)

... And thank you to everyone else who supported me in developing my platform and through this time! I appreciate you all ❤️

Lastly, thank you to all the SRA members who took the time to read through my platform and ideas!