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ADVOCACY REPORT

SUMMER 2022

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MOUNT ALLISON STUDENTS' UNION
62 York St., Sackville, New Brunswick

OPENING

The MASU is dedicated to creating a university experience without limitations for students. Advocacy efforts on all levels are central to the pursuit of this goal. Every year, the MASU pursues advocacy items on the University, provincial, municipal, and federal level. We are members of the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations (federal) and the New Brunswick Student Alliance (provincial), which enable us to coordinate with other student-led associations and unions to pursue joint goals.

Furthermore, our Union maintains items called 'Advocacy Policies' which articulate the MASU's stance on issues and matters that are relevant to students in recent times. Our active policies can be found on the MASU website under 'Transparency'. Students-at-large may also bring forward items to be put through as Advocacy Policies as described in Governing Procedure 1500.

Internal advocacy at the University level forms a large portion of the advocacy work undertaken by the MASU and Executive Board. The primary forums for such advocacy are the two highest governing bodies at the University: The Senate and the Board of Regents.

Senate

Students are represented on Mount Allison University's Senate by seven student senators, the MASU Vice-President Academic Affairs, and the MASU President. As the highest academic governing body, Senate determines Mount Allison University's academic policy, approves courses, establishes terms of admission, controls the requirements for degrees, and establishes academic regulations and procedures.

Board of Regents

Students are represented on Mount Allison University's Board of Regents by the MASU President and one student-at-large. The Board of Regents is the highest governing body of Mount Allison and is responsible for all fiduciary, financial, and legal governance of the University.

We hope that this document acts as a method of documenting and archiving advocacy efforts on all levels of the MASU. This document and its future iterations should be utilized by the Executive Board every year for reference to past actions taken, note successful asks and achievements, and provide guidance for every Executive team pursuing advocacy in the day-to-day functioning of the MASU.

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ITEM 1

TITLE: ADHD Assessment

CATEGORY: University

CONTEXT:

Access to psychoeducational and ADHD assessments is limited especially given Sackville's rural location. MtA students have expressed a need for more accessible ADHD testing and accommodations through the Meighen Centre.

RELEVANT PARTIES AND INFORMATION:

- Alivia Warr – MASU VP Student Life: Alivia initiated the implementation of this project as an initiative to improve the accessibility of assessment, as well as accessibility of accommodations on campus.
- Emily Escofferey – MASU Health Services Coordinator: Emily has been the point of contact on this project and has made meaningful connections with outside parties, the MtA Wellness Centre, and the Meighen Centre to further the scope of this project.
- Dr. David Wong – UPEI ADHD Clinician: Dr. Wong was contacted by our Health Services Coordinator (HSC) and has extended support, advice, and aid in our research and development of an ADHD Clinic inspired by the clinic at UPEI.
- Matt Maston – MtA Director of Accessibility and Student Wellness: Matt was contacted and has collaborated with the MASU in working through logistical and financial barriers to the implementation of this initiative.
- Cindy Crossman – Wellness Centre, Registered Nurse: Cindy was approached by the MASU and is in full support of undergoing training to perform ADHD assessments on campus at MtA.

OVERVIEW OF WORK DONE:

The HSC has been meeting with Dr. Wong to better understand the UPEI ADHD clinic and how the principles can be applied to MtA. Dr. Wong has graciously offered to train Cindy in delivering ADHD assessments which would present a huge benefit to students seeking assessments. We have secured the support of Cindy Crossman who is open to delivering this training, and Matt Maston who is willing to work with Dr. Wong and the MASU to connect the assessment results to accommodations through the Meighen Centre.

FUTURE ACTIONABLES:

Current actionable items include unraveling and uncovering potential policy barriers to the training offered by Dr. Wong, as interprovincial regulations may differ from PEI to NB. Further, we have come to understand that the UPEI clinic received significant financial support from the PEI government, and we have been operating under the assumption that we will not have such support. Thus, with the support of Matt Maston, we are exploring grant opportunities to fund the hiring of a part-time nurse to support the needs of the Wellness Centre when these assessments are being delivered.

CONCLUSION:

This project has developed much quicker than anticipated, but we certainly have a long way to go and many financial and policy barriers to work through. While swift implementation is a priority, we will not rush the process and risk poor execution.

ITEM 2

TITLE: Athletic Centre Renovations

CATEGORY: University

CONTEXT:

The MASU was informed in mid-August that the Athletic Center was experiencing significant delays in its renovation. The original timeline had the AC opening in early September, but the new timeline aims to have it open in early January. This delayed will at least affected Varsity Basketball and Badminton, club Ultimate Frisbee, intramural Basketball however, more groups, clubs and intramurals will be affected by this delay and have already.

RELEVANT PARTIES AND INFORMATION:

- Anne Comfort, MtA VP, International and Student Affairs
 - Contacted via phone, email and in-person meetings
 - Is responsible for Athletics at MtA including Varsity Sports and Intramural Sports
 - Note: Is not responsible for club sports, that is through the MASU
- Robert Inglis, MtA VP, Finance and Administration
 - Contacted via email, in-person meetings, and Board of Regents meetings
 - Is responsible for capital projects which includes this renovation

OVERVIEW OF WORK DONE:

In this initial instance of the delay, the MASU advocated to Anne Comfort to have alternate spaces booked and secured for “home” games, practices, and training; to have additional funding opened for teams so that they would not have to bear the burden of additional travel and renting new spaces; and encouraged the University to consult with not just Varsity teams but also Intramural and Club. Internally, the MASU made a call out to students on Varsity, Intramural and Club teams to ask how they were affected and what supports they need – limited responses were received.

On the Board of Regents end, Nate Lesser, MASU VP, Finance and Governance was briefed on the delay and advocated for the same accommodations above plus emphasised the need for delays like this to be delayed.

Due to this and other concerns, Varsity Athletes decided to form the Varsity Council to give them a central place to voice their concerns and to advocate

to the University and the MASU. The MASU supported this choice and since then they have registered as a MASU Club.

FUTURE ACTIONABLES:

At this moment, no further major advocacy is planned as the project should be completed soon. The concerns over this project are still being voiced to the University but the project is moving as fast it can.

CONCLUSION:

This issue has opened a gap in the MASU's advocacy. We often will focus our major consultation on the general student population and then target specific advocacy to equity-seeking and historically prejudiced groups. However, this issue made clear that there was a gap in our consultation and connection with athlete, particularly Varsity athletes. From hearing feedback, they don't feel that they are adequately supported, heard, or represented by the MASU. This can be evident in their decision to make the Varsity Council. It is a group that will be beneficial but would have it been made if the MASU was able to advocate and represent them adequately? A major issue to this can also be that athletics falls under the VP, Student Life's portfolio however, that job is already designed in a way that items get missed. This further supports the need for the MASU to reform internally in order to better support students and advocate for them.

ITEM 3

TITLE: Financial Aid

CATEGORY: University

CONTEXT:

MASU advocates for more financial aid for students every year, in the attempt to make education accessible to every student. Mount Allison's current entrance scholarship renewal criteria is demanding, and most students find it difficult to maintain a cumulative 3.7 GPA in 30/30 credits in the fall and winter term.

Mount Allison offers general bursaries to students who demonstrate financial need as well, although these are low in number and value both, usually topping at around \$1500 dollars per student. This does not reflect the needs of every student, where one student might be receiving more than enough and another is not receiving enough. This is especially true concerning international students that pay an increased tuition rate but are offered the same scholarships as local students.

RELEVANT PARTIES AND INFORMATION:

Suhjung Chun: Vice-President, Academic and University Affairs, MASU

Jeff Hennessy: Provost and Vice-President, Academic and Research

Astrid Kreuger: Social Science Senator (2021 SAC)

OVERVIEW OF WORK DONE:

Last year, the Social Science senator motioned to recommend that the University change its scholarship renewal criteria from a CGPA of 3.7 in 30 credits per term to a cumulative 3.7 GPA in 21/30 enrolled credits or to 24/30 credits. The motion also included a commitment of review of the scholarship renewal criteria and the student enrollment rates, academic success, and overall satisfaction on an annual basis. This motion has passed in the senate.

FUTURE ACTIONABLES:

The MASU will continue advocating for the recommendations passed by the senate, as well as any other relevant financial aid advocacies that will further help alleviate the financial struggles of students.

ITEM 4

TITLE: Jennings Advocacy

CATEGORY: University

CONTEXT:

Residence students expressed concerns about the labelling of culturally significant food, the lack of spice, and lack of clarity surrounding food accommodations.

RELEVANT PARTIES AND INFORMATION:

- Alivia Warr – MASU VP Student Life: Alivia initiated cross-cultural competency and Jennings advocacy in response to direct concerns surrounding Jennings.
- Donna Hurley – MtA Director of Administrative Services: Donna has met several times with Alivia, the MASU VP Student Life, and engaged in meaningful conversation surrounding student concerns at Jennings.
- Ellie Hummel – MtA Multi-faith Chaplain and Spiritual Care Coordinator: Ellie has met with both Donna and Alivia to discuss concerns of Jewish, Hindu, and Muslim students facing challenges in Jennings.

OVERVIEW OF WORK DONE:

Alivia and Donna have unpacked several student issues, including but not limited to: Lack of spice, lack of food accommodation for religious students, and lack of communication. As a result of those meetings, a spice rack was introduced into Jennings as an opportunity for students to take control of their dining experience and add what they need. Further, conversations with the dining staff has led to more diverse and flavorful dishes being served, specifically at the vegetarian station.

FUTURE ACTIONABLES:

Alivia, Donna, and Ellie, will be co-chairing a new Food Committee, in which a representative from each residence and several representatives from religious groups on campus will discuss areas of improvement for Jennings, and proactive solutions to improve the dining experience.

CONCLUSION:

The University has expressed sincere intent and desire to improve students' experience in Jennings, and the students involved with this committee will continue to push for this item.

ITEM 5

TITLE: Sackville Hospital

CATEGORY: Municipal

CONTEXT:

In October 2020, Horizon Health announced that the Sackville emergency department's operating hours would be cut indefinitely and closed on Saturdays owing to a staffing shortage. The emergency room will run from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., according to a Horizon Health Network release. Additionally, it will not open again until Sunday at 8 a.m. after closing at 4 p.m. on Friday. After two years, hospital inaccessibility is still a major problem for students and the local community who continue to voice their concern over the hospital emergency room's shortened hours.

RELEVANT PARTIES AND INFORMATION:

- Vice-President, External Affairs, MASU
- President & CEO, MASU
- Mount Allison University
- The Rural Health Action Group (RHAG)
- Community Task Force
- The Services Design Working Group

OVERVIEW OF WORK DONE:

Many positive developments have been made owing to the tremendous efforts of community and advocacy groups in Sackville:

The Brunswick wing of the Sackville Memorial Hospital (SMH) now has six registered nurses.

An increase in staffing has allowed an increase in capacity from 18 to 19 beds. A Nurse Educator has been hired to help with orienting and upgrading nurses and LPNs, providing more career options to nurses while helping meet needs at the hospital.

For Mount Allison Students' Union, we have:

Past VPEA, Hannah Ehler had multiple meetings with relevant officials, as well as sending letters to push for increased services.

The MASU has completed interviews with CHMA and other New Brunswick media regarding these issues, commenting on the plight of students and the detrimental effects of hospital closures on safety.

The MASU Executive met with MLA Megan Mitton to discuss various issues, including the Memorial Hospital.

The MASU also presented on issues of hospital inaccessibility to Sackville's Town Council, represented by the MASU VPEA and President.

FUTURE ACTIONABLES:

As of right now, we will seek to collaborate closely with the Sackville community groups, including the Rural Health Action Group (RHAG), Community Task Force, and Services Design Working Group, to better advocate for these problems.

CONCLUSION:

Sackville Hospital advocacy is a long-term advocacy goal, but the MASU will strive to work toward promoting the advocacy goal of hitting the essential 24-hour, seven-day-a-week emergency centre in our local community.

ITEM 6

TITLE: NB-EI Connect Discontinuation

CATEGORY: Provincial

CONTEXT: On June 23rd, 2022, the Government of New Brunswick announced that the New Brunswick-Employment Insurance Connect (NB-EI Connect) program would no longer be operational. This program offers Employment Insurance to students across the province as they pursue training (including postsecondary education). The elimination of this program affected almost 7000 people in New Brunswick, including students. The cutting of this program cost affected students between \$1000 and \$1600 each month in lost funding towards the rising costs of tuition, books, housing, food, and more.

RELEVANT PARTIES AND INFORMATION:

- NBSA Executive Director
 - Primary advocacy person with the government on behalf of the NBSA and its members.
- NBSA Board of Directors
 - Advised the Executive Director of the NBSA and finalized the asks and what advocacy would happen
- Minister of Postsecondary Education, Training and Labor
 - Met with twice
 - Contacted via email, in-person meetings, and through requests to meets.
 - Are the minister responsible for this decision so is the one we primarily advocated to
- Deputy Minister of Postsecondary Education, Training and Labor
 - Controls most regulatory aspects of this choice and would operationalize the decisions made by the minister

OVERVIEW OF WORK DONE:

A press release was sent to the MASU's media list as well as all students, sharing students' concerns. Student testimonials and feedback was collected through social media and an online form (Microsoft Forms) so we could have a better idea about what students were facing (in total we heard from over 30 students). I completed interviews with CHMA, CBC and other New Brunswick media. The NBSA evaluated a proposal and letter presented by the FEECUM (French Students) which included a protest by students, the NBSA decided

not to join this as we had different ideas on what our advocacy should look like – we did not see a protest in line with our advocacy philosophy. MASU President met with Minister Holder, the Minister of Post-Secondary Education, Training, and Labor to talk on general student issues, NB-EI Connect being one of the topics. The MASU President then had another meeting with the Minister, Deputy Minister, and one Director in PETL with the NBSA Board to present asks. The asks were:

- (1) Create a 1-year grace period for the program to allow students to have time to prepare
- (2) Creation of adequate needs-based grants for those affected
- (3) An official statement explaining the discontinuation to students because no adequate reason was given aside from “the program wasn’t used for its intentions”
- (4) Consultation on future decisions like this because no students were consulted

These asks were presented to the Minister, he said he would be considering them and respond later. The NBSA inquired about a response twice and received none.

The NBSA also had a chance for two meetings with Student Financial Aid (a government body) to talk about the regulatory issues facing student with financial aid. This included the eligibility criteria, especially relating to parents’ income being used in calculations of awarded loans and grants, and the communication of what is offered. This meeting sparked a marketing campaign targeted at students to help educate them on what services are currently offered and to clear up confusion on some misconceptions.

Finally, the NBSA received training from Student Financial Aid on how financial aid is administered in NB. This training helped to influence the advocacy of the NBSA.

FUTURE ACTIONABLES:

Now, the NBSA is still advocating for a replacement of the program (we are the only group in NB still doing this) or at least more supports for students. Student financial aid is always an issue for students, so much of our advocacy is around the affordability of PSE in general. During the NBSA’s advocacy week, two asks (yet to be finalized) will be regarding NB-EI Connect or student financial/affordability.

CONCLUSION:

This issue is still one of importance to the NBSA and the MASU, however, it has evolved into the issue of affordability of PSE to students. Advocacy work

still will be done in regard to NB-EI Connect but a large portion will be focused on general affordability and student financial aid.