



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 8th, 2014

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FALL READING WEEK NOW A REALITY FOR MOUNT ALLISON STUDENTS

SACKVILLE, NB — On December 2nd, 2014, the Mount Allison Students' Union (MASU) successfully lobbied Mount Allison University Senate on adopting a fall reading week for the 2015-2016 academic year. The motion to accept the calendar of events including a fall reading week was made by MASU Social Science Senator, Steven Black and seconded by MASU Arts Senator, Piper Riley Thompson.

The MASU is proud to celebrate the addition of a fall reading week to the university calendar of events as an advocacy win for our members.

"I think the ways in which a fall reading week will benefit our members speak for themselves, and I was very excited that we were able to make it happen in a way that resulted in no significant reduction of teaching days," says MASU Vice-President, Academic Affairs, Kyle Nimmrichter.

This was a member-initiated project first presented to Faculty Council by MASU member, Stephanie Davis in February 2013. "An ad hoc committee was struck [to explore the feasibility of a fall reading week] following my initial report and I have contributed to its development as a student representative on the committee ever since," says Davis. "Special thanks to the Mount Allison Students' Union for their unwavering support and advocacy."

Vice-President, Academic Affairs 2013-2014, Ryan Harley first passed the MASU Policy on Fall Reading Week (Policy 2013-10) through the Students' Administrative Council in October 2013. In the 2013 MASU spring elections, many student senator candidates were elected with a mandate from students to advocate for a fall reading week.

The Ad Hoc Committee on Fall Study Break, which included students, faculty, and administrators, was first hesitant to recommend this addition to the calendar of events. In their May 2013 report to Faculty Council, the report stated, "the ad hoc committee is not prepared to recommend that additional break days be introduced at this time, given that it would unfairly affect a significant proportion of classes, tutorials, and labs that occur once per week." The report also noted, "the data available to the ad hoc committee was limited (and very likely incomplete)."

MASU Arts Senator, Piper Riley Thompson joined the ad hoc committee in September 2014. "The question that always hung over the room was: if other well-respected schools can make a fall reading week work, why can't we?" says Riley Thompson. "My contribution to the committee's work involved squashing stereotypes about students' social behaviours during scheduled breaks in the semester, and positively presenting the ways in which a fall reading week would benefit the entire Mount Allison community."

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During the November 2014 meeting of Faculty Council, the ad hoc committee had reconsidered the issue again and brought forward a solution that would allow for a fall reading week with little loss to the number of teaching days in each semester. Faculty Council, a governing body that advises University Senate, voted against the recommendation of the ad hoc committee—advising University Senate to do the same.

MASU Social Science Senator, Steven Black says, “After Faculty Council voted, the MASU Senate Caucus [comprised of the MASU President; MASU Vice-President, Academic Affairs; and the six MASU Senators] decided we were going to meet with every member of University Senate individually.” Black adds, “By having over forty meetings in under thirty-six hours, we were able to show senators that a fall reading week is something that matters to our members.”

“Being able to say that we had passed a policy on fall reading week through the Students’ Administrative Council is what I believe convinced University Senate,” says MASU President, Heather Webster. “The university community respects our policy process, because it means we speak on behalf of all students.”

“This advocacy win demonstrates another benefit of a students’ union: even though its people change annually, its work still continues and gets results,” adds Webster.

The Mount Allison Students’ Union represents all full- and part-time undergraduate and graduate students at Mount Allison University in Sackville, New Brunswick.