

## The Graduate Students Association VP- External Annual Report for the academic Year 2021-2022

### Dear Graduate Students

It was a pleasure serving you as the GSA VP External over the 2021-2022 academic year. Please see below the initiatives and programs I have conducted throughout my term.

- 1- Attending **training sessions** by Sydney (former VP External) to help with the transition process and learn about the VP-External role.
- 2- Attending the GSA's weekly executive meetings, the monthly council meetings, and the board meetings.
- 3- Working with Sydney on **communication policy** for the GSA to enhance effective advertising. This has been approved in May council meeting.
- 4- Representing the GSA in **the SGS's International Graduate Student Advisory Group**.
- 5- Attending the **Grad Student Societies of Canada Meetings** in April & May.
- 6- Changing the **format and design of the GSA weekly newsletter**.
- 7- Designing **posters and graphics** for the newsletter and social media.
- 8- Approving events on the **student events portal** and emailing them to send advertisements, that adhere to the community policy, for events funded by the GSA to promote on social media and newsletter.
- 9- Sitting on the President's Awards for Community Engaged Research review committee and reviewing applications on behalf of GSA.
- 10- Searching for a new affordable alternative to Hootsuite for social media scheduling (**Buffer**), which has been approved in the May Finance Committee. Approving Buffer and subscribing.
- 11- Coordinating **GSA Introduction Series** for Executives, Staff & FRCs to include in the newsletter. Sign-up sheets have been created on Google Excel to book preferred day.
- 12- Creating **weekly emails on mailchimp** and creating **daily advertisements for social media** platforms (Facebook, Twitter and Instagram) that are scheduled through buffer.
- 13- Developing the **"Places to Fall in Love with" initiative** to foster community-building and improve students' engagement with the GSA.
- 14- Co-ordinating submissions and winners in the **"Places to Fall in Love with" contest** throughout the year to engage students and get them involved in the GSA. The initiative has achieved great success with, increasing the number of featured photos to 2 per week.
- 15- Creating a **new Instagram account** and starting to follow active McMaster account. Communications has started on the page, and it reached a good number of audiences with nice engagement.
- 16- Activating LinkedIn page and starting communication on it.
- 17- Creating Linktree of all GSA platforms to improve communication and increase accessibility and awareness of available programs and services at McMaster.
- 18- Downloading all **2020-2021 material and resources from Constant Contact** before the deactivation of the account. These materials are uploaded to the sea file.
- 19- Reading through the **results of the GSA annual survey** to find if there are any major issues that require immediate action. No major issues were located.

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- 20- Randomly selecting **the winners in the draw for the annual survey** and contacting them to get their McMaster email instead of the personal ones and asking if there are willing to get their names included in the newsletter.
- 21- Holding an **Emergency Student Issues Action Committee** meeting to discuss motion brought by a member.
- 22- **Recruiting new members** from different faculties to join **the Student Issues Action Committee**.
- 23- Changing the **name of the Events and Trips planning committee** to Social Events Committee.
- 24- Working on the following for the **International-Domestic Peer Support Program**:
  - a. Completing the matching process and emailing matched students all the instructions.
  - b. Preparing materials and resources for the orientation session
  - c. Hosting 2 orientation sessions to accommodate students living in different time zones. Both sessions were well attended with over 100 students and partners from different universities attended (e.g. uOttawa, Queen's, UofT).
  - d. Addressing the absentee participants (Addressing the issues related to absenteeism) and rematching those whose peers dropped out of the program.
  - e. Working on certificates and sending to all participants who completed the program
  - f. Holding end-of-program ceremony to introduce students to a wide array of cultures, while securing many prizes.
- 25- Working with Caroline & Spencer **on urgent statement policy** for the GSA to provide timely support and response to students and community in case of emergency social issues and attending Bylaws meeting to get this approved. This is to be approved in June council meeting.
- 26- Co-ordinating with Spencer to draft an Indigenous Statement Solidarity to stand in solidarity with Indigenous student and provide support after discovery of 215 children remains in BC. Bringing an **e-motion to endorse Indigenous Solidarity Statement**. The motion passed. Then, revising the Indigenous Solidarity Statement to reflect the recent incident of further discovery of children in Saskatchewan.
- 27- Producing and releasing an **interim statement for Indigenous Solidarity Statement and London Attack** to provide support until official statement are approved in council and released.
- 28- Co-ordinating with Spencer to draft a Statement on London Attack to stand in solidarity with Muslim community and provide support.
- 29- Holding June **Student Issues Action Committee** meeting to discuss a motion on London Attack brought. The motion passed and presented in the council meeting.
- 30- **Recruiting new members** from different faculties to join **the Social Events Committee**.
- 31- Discussing funding needs among students and suggesting **reallocation of GSA funds**. Providing help in **Spencer's grant funding survey** and promoting it among individual association and student bodies.

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- 32- In collaboration with the GSA Exec team, securing COVID Relief Fund to support final year students whose studies were impacted by the pandemic.
- 33- Representing social Science faculty and **negotiating with SGS and Social Science Dean** to provide more support to disadvantaged students, considering the research domain. Examples, include not limiting research grants to travelling as travel should be the parameter to students' research importance.
- 34- Supported various human right causes through the Student Issues Action Committee by holding monthly meetings, coordinating with members to provide their feedback on numerous social issues, developing surveys for voting, communicating results and promotion.
- 35- Co-ordinating with Caroline to include **GSA's logo on the International Cookbook**, and discussing some suggestions for including some resources for food stores and restaurants. The cookbook has been disturbed among students and advertised on GSA platforms as well as website.
- 36- Securing different **discounts from a wide array of ethnic grocery stores** and restaurants to support students from different cultural backgrounds and help them obtain the food they love at low prices.
- 37- Developing a new wellness-promoting program (ran from June to October 2021) in partnership with *Hamilton Victory Gardens* "**Gardening for Wellness Program**" to help students socialize while having opportunity to grab some fresh produce for free.
- 38- Partnered with CUPE 3906 for a long-term social initiative "**McMaster Fun & Comfy Zone**" to help students escape the university routine and have some fun by developing monthly themes that engage students throughout the year. Six monthly prizes were secured for winners every month and all necessary arrangements were made regularly for voting surveys, announcing/contacting winners and promotion.

Thank you so much and wish you a great new academic year!

Warm wishes,

Sarah Elshahat

GSA VP-External