

YEAR PLAN

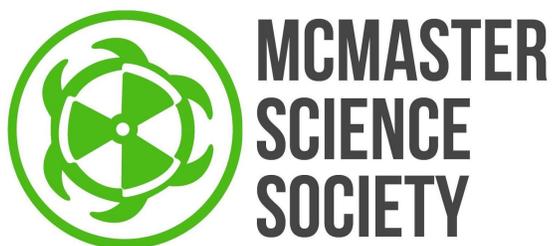
Academic Advocacy Coordinator

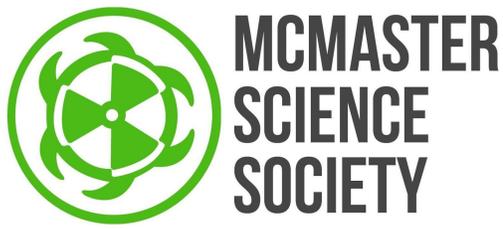
Cynthia Chung

McMaster Science Society

2020-2021

(submitted **June 12, 2020**)





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2020-2021 Year Plan

Letter from the Academic Advocacy Coordinator

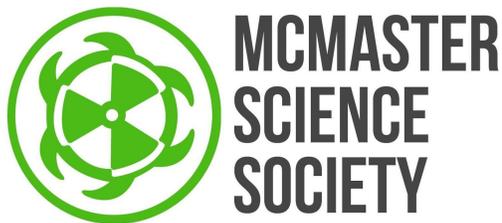
Hello MacSci!

My name is Cynthia Chung, and I am your incoming Academic Advocacy Coordinator! I am incredibly honoured to be in this role and to be surrounded by a team of inspiring individuals.

Last year, through the work of Jennifer Kim (Academic Advocacy Coordinator) and Chen Chen (VP Academic), the role of Academic Advocacy Coordinator was further developed. In partnership with Dr. Michael Farquharson, the Associate Dean of Science, a survey was released to assess the effectiveness of the Level I Science Gateway Program. Namely, its ability to funnel students to upper-year programs and specializations. The survey also explored the prospect of a General Level I Science Program. Upon analysis of the collected data, it was apparent that there was a general concern on the lack of information on second year specializations; this was brought to the attention of the Office of the Associate Dean. In January, a survey was released to evaluate the MSS Tutoring Service. This gave a key insight into the perception and efficacy of the service, revealing areas of improvement for upcoming years. In addition to surveys, a lot of work was done to establish the infrastructure for academic advocacy. This can be seen with the increased communication and strengthened relationships between the MSS and SRA Science, the Office of the Dean of Science, as well as associated program societies.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, McMaster has made the Fall 2020 academic term online. As a result, students may be learning in environments that are far from their ideal. Although academic-related stressors are ever present in the life of a student, they are often mitigated by campus resources and interpersonal support. In a remote environment, these factors are either non-existent or greatly diminished. As such, it is of the utmost importance that the concerns of students be heard and addressed.

My first goal of this year is to promote increased transparency between the academic needs of the student body and the Faculty of Science. This will be achieved through multiple large-scale surveys that will investigate the student perspective on specific academic issues. The collected data will be analyzed for trends in the response



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and presented to various academic organizations. The ultimate goal is to discover concerns within the student body and to devise solutions with other pertinent organizations.

In addition, another goal I have for this year is to increase the awareness of academic policies and initiatives within the Faculty of Science. More often than not, students are not aware of the academic resources available to them. Not only does this affect the effectiveness of these resources, it also limits the ability for self-advocacy within academia. Therefore, it is of the utmost importance to promote the location and significance of these academic resources.

Academic advocacy is the act of petitioning for and acting in the best interest of the students. As your Academic Advocacy Coordinator, I hope to fulfill that definition over the course of the upcoming year.

Looking forward to an exceptional year!

Cynthia Chung
Academic Advocacy Coordinator
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OBJECTIVES:

Increased Transparency on Academic Needs Within the Faculty of Science	
Description/ Current State	Currently, there are not many opportunities for students to communicate their concerns in a practical and meaningful manner. Although there are pre-existing measures to garner student opinions, they often receive less responses than expected. This is due to a multitude of reasons, including a lack of incentive and promotion. This much can be seen with course evaluations, in which students are unlikely to participate unless they have very strong opinions, thereby leading to emotional bias. In the case of the MSCAF, there is an overall lack of knowledge leading to general underuse. Furthermore, since it is based on voluntary student input, it also lacks a great amount of information. As a result, Daniel Aminaei, the fourth year representative, will initiate a revamp of the MSCAF. Over the upcoming year, he will be designing a new website and potentially adding new features; all of

	<p>which will hopefully either mitigate or resolve the aforementioned issues.</p> <p>Although these resources are nonetheless valuable, there is still a great need for more consistent and effective methods of addressing academic needs within the faculty of science. These methods must also be able to progress in a manner that allows them to address the current concerns of the student body.</p>
<p>Goal</p>	<p>The goal is to increase transparency on the academic needs of students within the faculty of science. This will be done by providing more consistent opportunities for science students to contribute their opinion.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop multiple large-scale surveys that aim to address current concerns of the student body - Collaborate with members of program-specific societies (i.e. VP Academic, President) to gain a better picture of the concerns of the student body - Create an open, anonymous avenue for students to voice their concerns so that they do not have to wait for the aforementioned surveys for their concerns to be heard - Continue to hold events like the Academic Roundtable to promote direct communication between student and faculty - Increased communication with pertinent academic organizations (i.e. SRA Science, Office of the Associate Dean, Program Societies, etc.) so that solutions to identified concerns can be devised and enacted
<p>Barriers to Success</p>	<p>Barrier #1: Ensuring that the surveys are inclusive and unbiased, have a large outreach, and will incentivize participation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It is important for surveys to reach a wide variety of students to ensure that responses are not biased and accurately reflect the overall student body - In the past, a prolonged and intensive promotions period for surveys has yielded a greater amount of responses - Furthermore, it has been demonstrated that the presence of incentives drastically increases participation



	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Engagement will be a particular challenge during the online semester, given that promotional material must be strictly online <p>Barrier #2: Developing solutions that address the concerns of students while remaining feasible for faculty</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- There may be a dissonance in what students and faculty believe are necessary in academia- As such, it may be difficult to find a middle ground between the wants of the students and what the faculty believes to be reasonable- It may be a challenge to get faculty onboard with certain academic advocacy initiatives due to a dissonance between student expectations and faculty values <p>Barrier #3: Mitigating the possible errors that will arise when communicating to multiple individuals and organizations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- It may be difficult to ensure that all involved parties are on the same page on the matters at hand- Moreover, in the case of meetings, there is the concern of not having adequate attendance from all parties. This may negatively impact the transmission of information and may affect the representation of opinions- That being said, MSS does have fairly strong relationships with external organizations involved in this project
How?	<p>Barrier #1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- The MSS has a strong Communications Portfolio which will be an important collaborator during the development of a promotion plan<ul style="list-style-type: none">- They will also be responsible for social media promotion on various platforms- Have incentives in place that will increase the appeal of the survey to a greater student demographic<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Incentives can include the traditional gift-card or exclusive access to experiences/activities planned by the MSS- To help with engagement, especially during the online semester when in-person promotions cannot take place, there will be a more intensive social media promotion campaign



	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- This may include increasing the number of posts about the survey and having a prolonged promotion period- Moreover, the aforementioned incentives may help to motivate individuals to participate- Finally, the topic of the Fall Survey will be chosen so that it addresses an issue students will resonate with<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Tentatively, it will be about the educational adjustments made for the Fall Term- This seems to be something that students will be interested in given their feedback on- Collaborating with other pertinent organizations (i.e. Program Societies, the Office of the Associate Dean) to ensure that the survey reaches a greater number of students- Ensuring that the surveys are as simple and effective as possible so that students do not have to spend extensive periods of time filling them out <p>Barrier #2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Include questions within the survey that gauge how important specific concerns are to students<ul style="list-style-type: none">- This will help to determine what is most important, and hopefully illustrate to faculty the significance of the concern- Having discussions with faculty to determine what academic issues are up for contention and the feasibility of change- If possible, find real-life examples of the proposed change, whether that be initiatives done by other universities or initiatives done at McMaster in the past <p>Barrier #3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Have a designated location for all relevant resources to ensure easy finding- Release availability polls a month prior to meeting dates so that a meeting time can be established at least two weeks in advance<ul style="list-style-type: none">- The goal is to maximize the attendance of the involved parties and to avoid scheduling conflicts- Strongly encourage representation of all parties by allowing for substitutions where appropriate
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Release an agenda a week prior to the set meeting date, allowing for suggestions from involved parties - Indicate any relevant resources that must be read prior to the meeting so to ensure efficiency - Send confirmation and reminder emails to attendees to ensure punctuality and attendance at meetings - Provide light refreshments to encourage attendance
Long Term Implications	Having an increased transparency on the issues faced by the student body will allow future academic endeavours to be more effective and progressive. Furthermore, it will allow for a more coherent effort towards the improvement of academia. Finally, having more consistent data will prove to be useful for future reference and for longitudinal assessments.
Partners	<p>Jake McNairn, MSS VP Academic (vpacademic@mcmastersciencesociety.com)</p> <p>Nicole Wong, MSS President (president@mcmastersciencesociety.com)</p> <p>Associate Dean - Dr. Michael Farquharson (adeansci@mcmaster.ca)</p> <p>Dean - Dr. Maureen MacDonald (deansci@mcmaster.ca)</p> <p>SRA Science (srasci@msu.mcmaster.ca)</p> <p>Program Societies</p>

Awareness of Available Academic Policies and Initiatives	
Description/ Current State	The MSS and other university organizations have formed many academic policies and initiatives. However, many are unknown to the student body. This can be attributed to a couple of reasons, including a lack of education. Incoming students are hardly educated on these resources, and there are few that naturally come up across the course of their university career. As such, these resources are not living up to their full potential. There is also the consequence of limited self-advocacy in an academic context.
Goal	The goal of this is to educate incoming and existing students on academic policies and initiatives. Not only will this allow for students to develop their capacity to self-advocate in academia, it will also aid in furthering the establishment of academic advocacy. Furthermore,

	<p>having a thorough knowledge of existing policies will allow students to guide the development of new policies.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop an educational series on the academic policies of the Faculty of Science (existence and significance) - Reach out to students about these academic resources via program societies, general assemblies, social media, year reps - Compile existing academic resources to make them more accessible to the student body - Create a “cheat-sheet” of sorts that contains all academic policies and the situations in which they are relevant
Barriers to Success	<p>Barrier #1: Maximizing awareness from students, emphasizing the importance of these resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There is a possibility that students are not interested in learning about these resources - This can be attributed to a lack of understanding on the significance of these resources, as well as how they affect the student body <p>Barrier #2: Ensuring campaigns reach a diverse variety of students</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It may be difficult to extend outside of the typical MSS audience, thereby limiting the extent of students who will learn about these resources
How?	<p>Barrier #1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide situational examples to demonstrate how these resources affect students on a daily basis. This will hopefully also illustrate the significance of the resource <p>Barrier #2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Work in conjunction with program societies and other pertinent organizations to ensure a wider audience - Use existing MSS channels (i.e. Sciclones, mentors, tutors, executives, etc.) to promote to the general student body
Long Term Implications	<p>Increasing the awareness of academic policies and initiatives will allow students to develop a greater ability to self-advocate in academic situations. Furthermore, it will lead to a firm establishment of academic advocacy within the Faculty of Science.</p>
Partners	<p>Jake McNairn, MSS VP Academic (vpacademic@mcmastersciencesociety.com)</p>

	<p>Nicole Wong, MSS President (president@mcmastersciencesociety.com) Nathale Abasto, MSS VP Communications vpcomms@mcmastersciencesociety.com Associate Dean - Dr. Michael Farquharson (adeansci@mcmaster.ca) Dean - Dr. Maureen MacDonald (deansci@mcmaster.ca) SRA Science (srasci@msu.mcmaster.ca) Program Societies</p>
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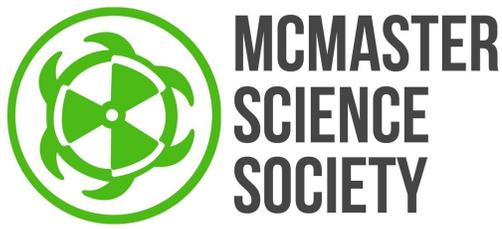
EVENTS & PROJECTS

Sciclopedia Live Stream	
DATE	July 19th, 2020
PURPOSE	The Sciclopedia Live Stream aims to address any questions incoming first-year students have about their upcoming university career. These questions will be answered by a panel of upper-year students, whose experience with academics, extracurriculars, etc. will hopefully allow students to have a better transition.
PROCEDURE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recruit panel of upper-year students from Sciclones, Program Society Executives, etc. - Set up Google Form for question submissions - Submit promotion request to Communications - Have designated themes during livestream, determined based on live streams from previous years as well as the submitted questions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Examples would include time management skills, course and/or program-specific questions, effective student methods, and many more - Create a structure/speaker list for livestream to prevent people from speaking over top one another. This is especially pertinent given that this will be done online - Finalize list of questions - Ensure an MSS executive will be present to monitor livestream as well as MSS social media channels - Create timestamps during livestream to allow viewers post-stream to have easy navigation
DIFFICULTIES	Outreach to students and the potential of technical difficulties (i.e. internet connection, audio, etc.)

PARTNERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - MSS Executives - Sciclones - Program Society Executives
PROJECTED OUTREACH	100 participants during live stream, 500+ views on recorded video afterwards
BUDGET	4 x \$25 prize draws to incentivize student participation

Academic Roundtable	
DATE	June 2021
PURPOSE	The Academic Roundtable aims to facilitate communication between students and faculty on academia-related topics. These conversations aim to discuss means to better the future of academics in science.
PROCEDURE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Establish event date, generally early to mid March - Decide on and confirm venue space - Create 3-5 themes based on advocacy goals for the year - Send invitations and create RSVP form for faculty members - Contact MSS and program society executives for volunteers to facilitate conversations at the table <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide them with necessary information - Submit promotions request to Communications - Create and release student RSVP forms - Promote event on social media, MSS general meeting assemblies, and in-class visits - Create and release feedback forms after event occurs
DIFFICULTIES	Attendance of both students and faculty members, general outreach and promotion of event
PARTNERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - MSS Executives - Faculty of Science (Members and Professors) - Program Society Executives
PROJECTED OUTREACH	100 students
BUDGET	\$2500 (if in person, unconfirmed)

GOALS TO STRIVE FOR



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5 things that you wish to have prepared for the beginning of September:

1. Hold Sciclopedia Live Stream event
2. Communicate with pertinent organizations (i.e. program societies, SRA science, etc.) to seek inputs for academic advocacy initiatives for the upcoming year
3. Complete the first draft of the Fall Survey
4. Have viable ideas for an open, anonymous avenue for students to voice their academic concerns
5. Create plan for an educational series on the academic policies of the Faculty of Science

5 things to be completed during the fall term (1st):

1. Release the Fall Survey, complete associated data report, and present findings
2. Hold meetings with VP Academics and Presidents of program societies and MSS Year Representatives in regards to academic concerns
3. Complete the first draft of the Winter Survey
4. Implement open, anonymous avenue for students to voice their academic concerns
5. Begin planning for Academic Roundtable

5 things to be completed during the winter term (2nd):

1. Hold Academic Roundtable event
2. Release Winter Survey, complete associated data report, and present findings
3. Hold meetings with VP Academics and Presidents of program societies and MSS Year Representatives in regards to academic concerns
4. Release educational series on the academic policies of the Faculty of Science
5. Transition the next Academic Advocacy Coordinator.

TIMELINE

Month	Objective/Project/Event/Goals
June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Complete Year Plan - Plan for Sciclopedia Live Stream
July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hold Sciclopedia Live Stream - Develop first draft of Fall Survey - Research and compile academic resources

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Brainstorm ideas for an open, anonymous avenue for students to voice their academic concerns
August	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discuss with Webmaster to create a designated page on the MSS website for academic resources - Send out availability poll for program society and year representative meetings in September - Create a plan for an educational series on academic resources
September	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Program Society VP Academics meeting - Year Representatives meeting - Start development of academic resource educational series
October	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Release Fall Survey early October - Complete data report late October - Implement open, anonymous academic concern avenue
November	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Present findings from Fall Survey early November
December	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop first draft of Winter Survey - Send out availability poll for program society and year representative meetings in January - Complete development of academic resource educational series
January	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Program Society VP Academics meeting - Year Representatives meeting - Start planning the Academic Roundtable event during mid-January - Release academic resource educational series
February	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Release Winter Survey early February - Complete data report late February
March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Present findings from Winter Survey early March - Hold Academic Roundtable
April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Transition in the next Academic Advocacy Coordinator