## YEAR PLAN

### *Academic Advocacy Coordinator*

### *Jennifer Kim*

### McMaster Science Society

### 2019-2020

(submitted *June 15, 2019*)

2019-2020 Year Plan

Hello, McMaster Science!

 My name is Jennifer Kim, and I am this year’s Academic Advocacy Coordinator for the McMaster Science Society! I am incredibly honoured and humbled to be a part of this amazing team of hardworking individuals.

Last year, through the efforts of Chen Chen (Academic Advocacy Coordinator) and Jhanahan Sriranjan (VP Academic), the role of the Academic Advocacy Coordinator was introduced to the MSS. During the role’s first year, a large survey was released in the fall to gauge the student perspective on a multitude of academic issues, including (but not limited to) academic policies, course evaluations, and podcasting courses. The data from that survey was compiled, analyzed, and brought to the attention of SRA Science, the Associate Dean of Science, and the Dean of Science with the intention of improving the academic climate within the Faculty of Science. In addition to the survey, Chen helped organize several academic events hosted (at least in part) by the MSS, such as *Academic Roundtable*, *How to Study Science with Dr. Joe Kim*, and *Sciclopedia Livestream*. Many of the projects from last year are ongoing, but the progress made by the last Academic Advocacy Coordinator sets a strong foundation to build upon and opens up the opportunity for McMaster Science to enact change.

This year, one of the major goals I have is to set the infrastructure required to establish a division of academic advocacy within the Faculty of Science. Via strengthened relationships between the MSS, SRA Science, the Office of the Dean of Science, and all associated program societies, I believe we can form a solid medium in which the student perspective on academia may be credibly acknowledged and valued. I intend to work with program societies in beginning to establish this research-based division of academic advocacy and building the division into a fully functional, systematic approach to improving academia in McMaster Science over the next few years. In the long term, I hope to see advocacy blossom into a more progressive and productive initiative.

Additionally, I hope to release two large-scale surveys focusing on the student and staff knowledge/perspective of two specific academic issues. These surveys will be conducted in partnership with the science faculty program societies in an effort to maximize the survey’s exposure to all science students and to obtain a diverse pool of survey participants. Data from these surveys will be analyzed and presented to several organizations (including SRA Science, the Office of the Dean of Science, etc.) in order to generate a proposal and step-by-step plan to improve/solve those academic issues.

Academic advocacy is invaluable to students wishing to improve their academic careers. I want every student to feel as though their voice is being heard and change is being made to reflect the progression of academia.

I am looking forward to a productive year with all of you!

Jennifer Kim
Academic Advocacy Coordinator
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**OBJECTIVES:**

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| **Division of Academic Advocacy** |
| **Description/Current State** | Currently, there is a lack of opportunity for science students to communicate their opinions on academics beyond course evaluations and the McMaster Science Course Evaluation Form (MSCAF). Unfortunately, course evaluations can sometimes be used inappropriately (eg. exaggerations, emotional bias, etc.) and the MSCAF is not widely known (as evident by the numerous courses in the resource lacking student input). The underuse of this resource may stem from the inaccessibility of academic policies and initiatives formed by the MSS and other McMaster organizations.* Methods of collecting student perspectives on course content and teaching methods have not been used effectively
* There is no commonly known means for science students to effectively communicate their perspectives on academic issues aside from course content and teaching methods
* It is difficult for students to become aware of academic policies and initiatives
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| **Goal** | The goal is to provide students with a more effective and meaningful way of communicating their academic desires to the faculty. With the establishment of a division of academic advocacy within the Faculty of Science, science students may be offered several effective opportunities to contribute to the improvement of many different aspects of academia.* Increase transparency between the MSS/MSU/SRA Science and the student body, in that the student population can easily see what actions and academic initiatives are running at the time
* Work with the VP Academics and Presidents of science program societies to better promote academic climate surveys and identify program-specific concerns
* Hold events such as Academic Roundtable for a direct avenue of communicating questions/concerns amongst students and faculty
* Meet frequently with program societies, SRA Science, the Dean of Science, and the Associate Dean of Science to report the findings of the surveys and inquire about the next steps for improving identified issues
	+ The busy schedules of these organizations and individuals will be accommodated for by scheduling meetings well ahead of time and providing meeting agendas at least 48 hours prior to the meeting to ensure effective and efficient communication
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| **Barriers to Success** | Barrier #1: Creating unbiased and inclusive surveys that attract all or most science students will be difficult due to the sheer size and diversity of the faculty.* The MSS fortunately has a strong Communications portfolio that can assist in formulating promotion plans to maximize exposure of the surveys to the student body
* Our surveys have not received a substantial number of participants in the past
* This presents itself as an opportunity to place a larger priority on the marketing and promotion aspects of the surveys than was placed in the previous year

Barrier #2: Frequently communicating with multiple individuals and organizations may be challenging in that scheduling conflicts and redundancies may arise.* In the past, the MSS has formed and maintained positive relations with many external organizations that are to be involved with this objective
* This is an opportunity to strengthen these relationships by demonstrating organization, time management, and punctuality
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| **How?** | Barrier #1:* Contact the MSU Communications department for assistance in removing bias and exclusivity in each survey prior to their release
* Plan to have incentives (such as Formaldehyde tickets) for completing each survey in order to appear appealing to many student demographic groups
* Use several different methods of promotion (eg. social media posts, in-class talks, posters, promotion via program societies, faculty-wide emails, etc.) and develop a promotion plan with the MSS Communications portfolio
* By following these steps, we hope to achieve a 35% increase in participation from last year’s survey
* This will allow the division of academic advocacy to pertain to as many science students as possible

Barrier #2:* Use a Google Drive folder for all advocacy-related documents, shared with all associated individuals and organizations (program societies, SRA Science, Office of the Dean of Science, etc.)
* Release availability polls several weeks prior to meeting dates, and establish a meeting time at least 2 weeks in advance to avoid conflicts and allow program societies to find substitutions for members who are unable to attend
* Release a tentative meeting agenda to all involved parties one week prior to the meeting, allowing all parties to review and add requests for 5 days
* Indicate to attendees which documents must be read 48 hours prior to the meeting to ensure fluidity and efficiency of meetings
* Send confirmation and reminder emails to attendees to ensure consistent punctuality and professional behaviours at meetings
	+ Provide light refreshments to encourage attendance
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| **Long Term Implications** | The implications of creating a division of academic advocacy will allow the MSS to expand its reach to science students. Having a flow of information traveling through a series of organizations working toward the common purpose of improving academics within the Faculty of Science will prove to be highly valuable and effective in the near future.* Science students will be more able to communicate their opinions on academics to the relevant people, efficiently
* Academic issues will be more readily identified and improved
* Data and reports from all previous surveys will be saved for future reference and longitudinal data collection
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| **Partners** | Chen Chen - MSS VP Academic (vpacademic@mcmastersciencesociety.com)Chris Simon - MSS President (president@mcmastersciencesociety.com)SRA Science (srasci@msu.mcmaster.ca)Dean of Science - Dr. Maureen McDonald (deansci@mcmaster.ca)Associate Dean of Science - Dr. Michael Farquharson (adeansci@mcmaster.ca)Science Program Societies |

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| **Collecting Data from Science Students and Staff** |
| **Description/Current State** | As previously mentioned, there is a lack of opportunity for students to express their academic concerns in a meaningful way. Many of these academic concerns may be mirrored by the thoughts of faculty, and as such, collecting the science staff perspective on these issues may increase the urgency to implement improvements. Additionally, if the staff perspective on certain academic issues differ from that of the student body, these discrepancies should be made apparent, such that both demographics have a clear understanding of why attempts to enact change have not yet been initiated and what is difficult about solving/improving that particular academic issue.* In the past, neither demographic group has had an adequate means of communicating their academic concerns to each other
* The current lack of transparency between these demographic groups is a major barrier to the improvement of the academic climate
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| **Goal** | The goal is to provide the student body and Faculty of Science staff with the opportunity to comment on specific academic issues within the faculty, with regard to how the issues are perceived and if they believe the issue is pertinent enough to necessitate change, and what changes to enact. I hope to do this by creating surveys for both demographic groups. The perspectives of both populations will be compiled and analyzed in the same end-of-term reports to be presented to SRA Science and the Office of the Dean of Science.* Luckily, the MSS Communications portfolio has extensive experience with promoting events and surveys to science students
* One notable challenge to this goal pertains to the promotion of the survey to faculty staff, which the MSS has not explicitly attempted previously (to my knowledge)
	+ This may be overcome using a separate incentive for the faculty staff survey and distributing the survey using department head, AP&PC, and Faculty of Science professor emailing lists
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| **Barriers to Success** | Barrier #1: Distributing the survey to faculty staff may be difficult, considering the MSS currently does not often reach out to staff.* Engagement and participation of faculty may also be considered a barrier to success, given the lack of a strong relationship between staff and the MSS
* This may be an opportunity to foster a stronger faculty-MSS relationship to set the foundation for future collaborations

Barrier #2: Staff may not be cognisant of or empathic toward some academic issues that students are facing. As such, this may skew the survey results and/or make the data less credible.* It may be difficult for staff to recognize problems for students within academia
* Staff may not be willing to advocate for change to academics if they are not directly impacted
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| **How?** | Barrier #1:* Obtain/Generate a faculty staff emailing list from the Office of the Associate Dean of Science and obtain permission to contact staff
* Use incentives that are more appropriate for the faculty staff demographic, in an attempt to make participating in the survey seem more appealing (such as raffle baskets)

Barrier #2:* Include questions in the surveys to gauge how informed of the academic issues the participants feel they are
* Include questions in the surveys to gauge how strongly the participants feel about their opinions and whether or not they believe the academic issue is pertinent enough to necessitate change
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| **Long Term Implications** | In the long term, this objective will allow the MSS to form a stronger bond with both the student body and the Faculty of Science staff. Collecting the student and staff perspectives on academic issues and compiling the data in a report will facilitate necessary transparency between the two demographic groups, allowing for both groups to be more informed. Hopefully, this objective will spark more interest and passion from both sides for academic advocacy. |
| **Partners** | Chen Chen - MSS VP Academic (vpacademic@mcmastersciencesociety.com)Chris Simon - MSS President (president@mcmastersciencesociety.com)Sam Marchetti - MSS VP Communications (vpcommunications@mcmastersciencesociety.com) Dean of Science - Dr. Maureen McDonald (deansci@mcmaster.ca)Associate Dean of Science - Dr. Michael Farquharson (adeansci@mcmaster.ca)Michael Wooder - MSU Communications and Marketing Director (comms@msu.mcmaster.ca)  |

**EVENTS & PROJECTS**

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| **How to Study Science with Dr. Rosa da Silva** |
| **DATE** | Early October |
| **PURPOSE** | Many students are often concerned with effectively studying and improving their studying methods. As a guest speaker, we will host Dr. Rosa da Silva, who will speak to her own personal experiences during his undergraduate academic career and how to maximize studying. There will also be a panel of science alumni and/or upper year students, from a joint partnership with *Symbiosis*, an event run annually by the MSS, to answer any questions and provide their insight. A form will be released prior to the event (and will be kept open during the event) for students to anonymously submit questions for the guest speakers. Students may come in person for the event, or watch the livestream on Facebook. |
| **PROCEDURE** | * EOHSS booking for a large BSB classroom
* Contact Dr. Joe Kim and alumni/upper years to invite them to speak at event during August
* Fill out promotional form for graphics once the speakers are confirmed
* Release anonymous form 1-2 weeks before the event for question submission
* Promote the event on social media, during iLove Science day, MSS general assembly meetings, and during in-class talks
* Promote event to VP Academics of program societies and MSS Year Representatives during first (video call) meetings in August
* Collaborate with all of the MSS Academic portfolio for promotion and transference of knowledge to tutors and mentors
* Purchase thank-you gifts and cards for speakers
* Order refreshments for event
 |
| **DIFFICULTIES** | Attendance and outreach |
| **PARTNERS** | * MSS executives
* Sciclones
* Alumni
* Dr. Rosa da Silva
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| **PROJECTED OUTREACH** | 100 in person + 50 during livestream + 350 post-livestream |
| **BUDGET** | $50 |

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| **Sciclopedia Livestream** |
| **DATE** | Early August |
| **PURPOSE** | To help transition incoming first years into the McMaster community, this summer livestream will connect students with upper years who can answer their questions pertaining to academics in MacSci. A form will be released prior to the event for students to anonymously submit questions and will remain open for the duration of the livestream.  |
| **PROCEDURE** | * Work with MSS Communications portfolio to set up the livestream
* Fill out promotional form for graphics
* Set up question submission form 1-2 weeks prior to the livestream
* Create themes to schedule livestream night with, based on last year’s stream and first year questions (eg. effective study methods, time management skills, what are labs/tutorials, course-specific questions, etc.)
* Organize group of MSS executives, program society executives, and Sciclones to answer questions during livestream
* Finalize list of questions
* Ensure social media director or VP Comm or President will be present to monitor livestream and MSS social media channels
* Test out technology before livestream
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| **DIFFICULTIES** | Outreach and technical problems (such as audio) |
| **PARTNERS** | * MSS executives
* Program society executives
* Sciclones
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| **PROJECTED OUTREACH** | 100 during livestream + 500 post-livestream |
| **BUDGET** | $0 |

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| **Academic Roundtable** |
| **DATE** | Early March |
| **PURPOSE** | Academic Roundtable will facilitate communication between faculty and students, especially after the publishing of (at least) the first term’s academic diagnostic report. Students and faculty can engage in more personal/engaging conversations with each other on academic themes and topics to help better the future of academics in science. |
| **PROCEDURE** | * E-mail ucevents@mcmaster.ca to book out the lower level of Faculty Club (provided three preferred dates and times)
* Fill out ucevents planning form
* Confirm the budget for the event
* Fill out promotional request form
* Create 3-5 themes based on our advocacy goals this year
* Set up livestream
* Release question form 1-2 weeks before event
* Set up a live-question program
* Contact professors and faculty members via e-mail/phone if necessary
* Contact MSS, SRA, and program society executives who can facilitate conversations at the table, provide them with necessary information
* Promote event on social media, MSS general meeting assemblies, and in-class talks
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| **DIFFICULTIES** | Attendance and outreach |
| **PARTNERS** | * Professors & Faculty Members
* MSS Executives
* Program society executives
* SRA Science
 |
| **PROJECTED OUTREACH** | 100 in person + 100 during livestream + 500 post-livestream |
| **BUDGET** | $1000 (unconfirmed) |

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| **Peer Review and Publishing Workshop** |
| **DATE** | Mid/late January |
| **PURPOSE** | This workshop will promote effective science communication, an area which many students feel are lacking until even the end of their undergraduate education. As a result, a workshop for all years will introduce students to real-life scientific writing, reviewing, editing, and publishing, which are all crucial to careers in science. An already established student-run peer-reviewed journal can help run the workshop for maximum applicability. |
| **PROCEDURE** | * EOHSS booking for large BSB classroom
* Confirm the budget for the event
* Fill out promotional request form for graphics
* Reach out to and meet with editors of *Sciential* journal in November
* Plan itinerary of event with iScientist editors
* Promote this event during General Assembly if possible and during VP Academic / Year Representative meetings
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| **DIFFICULTIES** | Attendance and outreach |
| **PARTNERS** | * Sciential editors (email: sciential@mcmaster.ca)?
* VP Academic Chen Chen (email vpacademic@mcmastersciencesociety.com)
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| **PROJECTED OUTREACH** | 100 students |
| **BUDGET** | $50 (unconfirmed) |

**GOALS TO STRIVE FOR**

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

1. Release level I gateway program survey, and compile the data and means of improvement in a report to be provided to the Office of the Dean of Science.
2. Communicate with VP Academics and Presidents of program societies, SRA Science, and MSS Year Representatives in regards to the fall term academic climate survey topic ideas and promotion.
3. Complete the first draft of the fall term academic climate survey.
4. Host the *Sciclopedia* livestream.
5. Begin planning for the *How to Study Science with Dr. Rosa da Silva* event.

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

1. Release the fall term academic climate survey, and compile the data and means of improvement in a report to be provided to the Office of the Dean of Science.
2. Communicate with VP Academics and Presidents of program societies, SRA Science, and MSS Year Representatives in regards to winter term academic climate survey topic ideas and promotion.
3. Hold the Course Evaluation and Course Wiki campaigns in collaboration with Macademics and the MSS Tutoring Coordinator.
4. Hold the *How to Study Science with Dr. Joe Kim* event.
5. Begin planning for the *Academic Roundtable* event.

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

1. Release the winter term academic climate survey, and compile the data and means of improvement in a report to be provided to the Office of the Dean of Science.
2. Hold the *Academic Roundtable* event.
3. Gather feedback from program societies, SRA Science, and the Office of the Dean of Science in regard to the past year’s communication and promotion efforts.
4. Host the *Peer Review and Publishing Workshop* event in collaboration with iScientist.
5. Transition in the next Academic Advocacy Coordinator.

**TIMELINE**

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| **Month** | **Objective/Project/Event/Goals** |
| June | * Complete rough copy of level I gateway program survey
* Plan for MSS website updates with webmaster to better display academic initiatives
* Begin planning for *Sciclopedia* livestream
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| July | * Complete first draft of fall term academic climate survey
 |
| August | * Host *Sciclopedia* livestream
* Reach out to Dr. Joe Kim for the *How to Study Science* event
* Release level I gateway program survey
* Program society VP Academics meeting
* Year Representatives meeting
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| September | * Release fall term academic climate survey in mid-September
* Complete data report by late September
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| October | * Hold *How to Study Science with Dr. Joe Kim* event
* Program society VP Academics meeting
* Year Representatives meeting
 |
| November | * Course evaluation and course wiki campaign
* Complete first draft of winter term academic climate survey
* Finish researching methods of improvement based on data collected from fall term academic climate survey
* Begin planning for *Peer Review and Publishing Workshop*
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| December | * Present proposal to SRA Science and Office of the Dean of Science
* Program society VP Academics meeting
* Year Representatives meeting
* Begin planning for *Academic Roundtable*
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| January | * Release winter term academic climate survey in mid-January
* Complete data report by late January
* Hold *Peer Review and Publishing Workshop*
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| February | * Program society VP Academics meeting
* Year Representatives meeting
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| March | * Finish researching methods of improvement based on data collected from winter term academic climate survey
* Present proposal to SRA Science and the Office of the Dean of Science
* Hold *Academic Roundtable* event
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| April | * Program society VP Academics meeting
* Year Representatives meeting
* Transition in the next Academic Advocacy Coordinator
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