



# TEAM SOPHIE YEAR-END REVIEW

UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' COUNCIL 2015/2016



**SOPHIE HELPARD**  
PRESIDENT

Not everyone gets to wake up and think about how they can make a difference in the lives of their peers, but for the past 10 months I've been able to do it every single day. Being USC President has taught me about who I am as a leader, about the importance of advocacy when you care about moving a cause forward, and so much more about the students that make up this campus. Thank you Western for letting me represent you, it has been an honour!



**ALEX BENAC**  
VICE-PRESIDENT INTERNAL

Serving this year has been an incredible learning opportunity and an unparalleled chance to work with and for my community. Western is an amazing place; our community is vibrant, engaged, and passionate. I want to leave you with these parting words: despite the obstacles we face, never lose faith in the capacity students have to change something for the better. Some people will tell you that it can't be done. They're trying to sell you on preventing change for the sake of tradition; don't buy. Keep up your spirit, and never give up the fight to make Western more fair, transparent, accessible, and equitable.



**LINDSEE PERKINS**  
VICE-PRESIDENT EXTERNAL

Thank you to all the students who praised, criticized, or questioned our work as an executive. It has been a privilege working with each of you to ensure your undergraduate experience is the best it can be. If there is one thing I can pass along, it's to never underestimate your experiences outside academics. All of you worked extremely hard to get into Western, and four years go by much faster than you think. There are so many opportunities the USC has to offer. This past year has changed my career path completely, and I would hate to see any of you miss an opportunity to find what you love.



**JONATHAN ENGLISH**  
SECRETARY-TREASURER

As a USC Executive, I have the opportunity of seeing the behind-the-scenes work of so many individuals and groups. Council leaders working on reform; student event-planners trying to be creative and collaborative; student organizers who sacrifice their own credit cards to trying to make something a success. My time interacting with students demonstrates that they all share one universal goal: to make things just a little more enjoyable, a little more accessible, and a little more fun. That's what the USC is all about, and I am thankful to have had the opportunity to help students pursue their goals.



**KEVIN HURREN**  
COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER

Of all my priorities coming into this role, one was paramount: retaining integrity. I wanted to work for an organization that remained honest, committed and diligent. I knew this would be a challenge, but fortunately I was gifted with fellow executives who shared these same hopes and together we were able to accomplish a great deal. To all future student council members, never be afraid to embrace change and drive progress because students will support you. I will support you.



**TARYN SCRIPNICK**  
VICE-PRESIDENT STUDENT EVENTS  
I can't believe it has been a whole year since I stood on the Orientation Week stage welcoming the first-year class. I was lucky enough to meet some of the most important people in my life through this experience. I learned about myself as a leader. I learned how to be a part of a team and how to help others. I learned how to make a difference in a student's life. I hope future generations will all be incredible at making a difference and I want to thank all of you for helping me make a difference.

# SUMMARY



**COMPLETE**



**ONGOING**



**INCOMPLETE**

- MOVING THE FALL READING BREAK TO THANKSGIVING
- BETTER LIBRARY HOURS DURING READING WEEK
- USE THE WAVE FOR STUDY SPACE DURING EXAMS
- RELEASE EXAM SCHEDULES EARLIER
- FOCUS ON EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING
- COMMENDING EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING
- COURSE SYLLABUS ENHANCEMENT
- ADVOCATE FOR UNDERGRAD STUDENTS TO BE ON TENURE BOARD
- IMPROVING FOOD OPTIONS
- REASSESS SPOKE SERVICE
- ENHANCED SAO
- FULL O-WEEK
- EXPANDED SPOKE PATIO THE FIRST WEEK BACK
- ASSESSING SEPTEMBER AND CLUBS WEEK
- BETTER DEAL ON PARKING
- MAKE THE MUSTANG EXPRESS WORK FOR STUDENTS
- KING'S/BRESCIA BUS SERVICE IMPROVEMENT
- END OF THE YEAR FOODFEST WITH LOCAL LONDON VENDORS
- AMEND THE 3 IN 23 EXAM POLICY
- EXAM ACCOMMODATION FOR MENTAL WELLNESS GROUNDS
- MENTAL HEALTH MAP ON OWL
- PRESIDENT'S COMMISSION ON MENTAL WELLNESS
- MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS TALKS
- THE PEER SUPPORT CENTRE RENEWAL
- FOCUS ON LONDON
- IMPROVED LTC
- RESTORATIVE JUSTICE TICKETING
- IMPROVING ADVISORY COMMITTEE OUTCOMES
- GROWING EARLY OUTREACH CONFERENCE
- CLUBS FORUM
- REINTRODUCE INVOLVEMENT COMPASS WITH CAMPUS PARTNERS
- INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS COLLECTIVE
- EXECUTIVE SCHEDULES
- COLLABORATIVE VISION STATEMENTS
- WEEKLY RESIDENCE VISITS
- ONLINE CONSTITUENT SURVEYS
- EXTERNAL PORTFOLIO COORDINATOR ENHANCEMENT

### **MOVING FALL READING BREAK TO THANKSGIVING**

With the university's academic calendar set almost a year in advance, the 2015 reading break could not be moved to the Thanksgiving long weekend. However, we've been working with the student senators to ensure this remains a priority and a topic at senate. Additionally, a survey to students identified moving the break to thanksgiving was a strong preference for students. We're confident that Western administration will review these results and take steps to move the break.

### **BETTER LIBRARY HOURS DURING READING WEEK**

By opening up other spaces on campus for studying – such as the USC conference rooms – this became less of a priority this year. Additionally, the libraries could not implement extended hours on the timeline we set for them.

### **USE THE WAVE FOR STUDY SPACE DURING EXAMS**

The Wave will have the following extended hours: Saturday, April 9, 16 and 23 will be open from 12 p.m. to 8 p.m. and Sunday, April 10, 17 and 24 will be open from 12 p.m. to 6 p.m. The Wave will also be offering a limited kitchen menu. Our hope is that students struggling to find study spaces on campus can use the Wave for just that reason!

### **RELEASE EXAM SCHEDULES EARLIER**

In second term, the final exam schedule was released significantly earlier. We believe this was due to the pressure the USC placed on the university's Office of the Registrar, who administer the exam scheduling system. Now that we know an earlier schedule is possible, our hope is that future USC executive continue to apply this pressure until early exam scheduling is the norm rather than the exception.

### **FOCUS ON EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING**

First, we've been modelling scholarships and bursaries geared towards experiential or work-integrated learning. Earlier this year we created the Experiential Learning Endowment, granting students resources to take advantage of experiential learning opportunities. On the Student Services Committee we were successful in getting Western to hire a global experiential learning coordinator to connect students with abroad programs. More locally, we were able to get work-integrated learning as one of the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance top three priorities to push for at Queen's Park. Finally, we've finished an advocacy paper on internships programs in non-STEM faculties and passed that policy within council.

## COMMENDING EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

In tandem with the above changes, we just launched the President's Medal of Innovation in Teaching to do our part to incentivize professors towards new teaching methods and are currently looking for nominations. Instructors will still require support from the university to provide such programs, so we'll continue to remind Western's administration how important an investment in that support is.

## COURSE SYLLABUS ENHANCEMENT

Though our initial goal was to include mental health information in each course syllabus, the university took a hard stance against this explaining that course syllabi should only contain standard academic information directly related to the curriculum. As an alternative, we were able to build and design a mental health tab on OWL. More information on this is in the "mental health map on OWL" description below.

## ADVOCATE FOR UNDERGRAD STUDENTS TO BE ON TENURE BOARD

Early on this was a point identified as likely not going to happen this year. However, it was still important for us to put it on the university's radar and, although they'd argue students aren't experienced enough to sit on these committees, this is something we'll continue to advocate for.

## IMPROVING FOOD OPTIONS

This year the Wave and Spoke have added more vegan, gluten free and vegetarian options to their menus. Additionally, culturally diverse special menus have been through rotation at the Wave, garnering positive feedback from students. Spoke coffee has been added to the Wave and, finally, we've been able to host food interaction events for students in the Wave kitchen to get a better idea of what students like and don't like.

## REASSESS SPOKE SERVICE

At the Spoke, we've reviewed the service and made changes to the point of sale system so students have to wait less to get the food in their hands - an efficiency change that has also allowed the Spoke to save money. The Spoke has also become fair trade, and we've been a part of the committee to make the entire campus fair trade this year.

## ENHANCED SAO

We reached out to staff in the Student Success Center early in the summer to improve the USC's engagement with Summer Academic Orientation. As such, we were able to review and update involvement info going out to students, as well as getting newly created USC videos to play for each incoming student as part of their orientation. Finally, members of the executive were scheduled to speak at the opening reception for family and friends of incoming students.

## FULL O-WEEK

Though it was too late to change the academic calendar this year to allow for a full orientation week, no scheduled classes during that time will be a major part of the orientation strategic plan – a project launched this year by the USC to think about the future of orientation. Even without a full week this year we added a Soph care station and more complimentary programming to all main-stage events.

## EXPANDED SPOKE PATIO THE FIRST WEEK BACK

Unfortunately, there is a clause in our liquor licence that requires a special application when serving alcohol outside of approved venues. The USC only has a certain number of these special applications a year and we wanted to save them so we could serve alcohol at events like concerts in the Mustang Lounge and on UC Hill for Homecoming.

## ASSESSING SEPTEMBER AND CLUBS WEEK

This year we re-launched the USC's involvement compass, with newly added groups and questions, to better help students navigate the many involvement opportunities. Further, we rearranged the set-up of clubs week so that rather than alphabetically, club booths were sorted by theme (charitable, political, etc.). Similarly, for Volunteer Week and Job Fair we differentiated internal/on-campus and external/off-campus involvements.

## BETTER DEAL ON PARKING

We've been working with the university's Sustainability Office as well as Western's Vice-President, Resources & Operations to put car share spaces on campus. These spots will open more spaces in other parking lots and, if students want to participate in a car share program, they don't have to pay for parking. Right now, five or six slots are allotted to be added and a contract will be signed next term.

### **MAKE THE MUSTANG EXPRESS WORK FOR STUDENTS**

A review of the shuttle service has just ended, and a subsequent report has been prepared to be published in early 2016. Exam shuttles are also on track and, to provide increased service, shuttles have been taking students home from major second-term events such as Charity Ball, January Soph Pub and Purple Frost.

### **KING'S/BRESCIA BUS SERVICE IMPROVEMENT**

To make information about these shuttles and schedules more accessible, we've been coordinating with the Western App moderators and the affiliate shuttle organizers to add all the times to the Western App's bus section. These changes are scheduled to take place early 2016.

### **END OF THE YEAR FOODFEST WITH LOCAL LONDON VENDORS**

Rather than wait the entire year to enjoy some tasty treats, we've made it a priority to integrate food as much as possible in planning major USC events. Notably, we've been able to offer complimentary and purchasable food at both Beerfest, Homecoming and Charity Ball.

### **AMEND THE 3 IN 23 EXAM POLICY**

We've had several meetings with Western's Vice Provost of Academic Programs about expanding this accommodation policy. It has been made a priority with the student senators as well, and although it makes it harder to schedule exams, we're committed to continue lobbying the university for this change.

### **EXAM ACCOMMODATION FOR MENTAL WELLNESS GROUNDS**

Western's associate deans have endorsed the USC's recommendations on mental wellness accommodations and next term these changes will come before the senate. With the support of the associate deans and our earlier advocacy efforts we're optimistic of senate's approval.

### **MENTAL HEALTH MAP ON OWL**

The USC came forward to administration asking for a comprehensive guide to mental health resources on campus and such a guide was published on OWL for all students. This guide details descriptions, hours of operations, contact information and - perhaps most uniquely - differentiation information helping students find the exact help they're looking for (i.e. the difference between a psychiatrist and a psychotherapist).

### **PRESIDENT'S COMMISSION ON MENTAL WELLNESS**

In addition to introducing the mental health map on OWL, as detailed above, USC President Sophie Helpard wanted to create a guiding document for future generations of the Executive - highlighting where campus mental health strengths and weaknesses are. This document can be reviewed on the USC website under the President's page. We hope to use this guide to continue finding holes in the system where students feel unsupported or where services are inaccessible.

### **MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS TALKS**

In addition to making progress for mental health education and resources on campus, we've been connecting with other student unions to continue this work. As part of the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance, we were able to get mental wellness as a secondary advocacy priority. We've also been communicating with non-OUSA schools to broaden this conversation. Members of the external portfolio have also put together a report detailing what peer universities are doing in the realm of mental health. To view this report, please email [external@westernusc.ca](mailto:external@westernusc.ca).

### **THE PEER SUPPORT CENTRE RENEWAL**

Earlier this year, we reopened the Peer Support Centre with both a new space and revitalized program. This includes improved recruitment and training of Peer Support volunteers, an expanded resource library (with updated records and in various languages), a full-time psychotherapist from Western's Student Development Centre and a new way to track student intake.

### **FOCUS ON LONDON**

In December, we signed a principles of collaboration and commitment document with leadership in the city, including the mayor, outlining expectations and relationships between the USC and the city. USC executives and representatives have attended more city council meetings this year and, as such, we've been able to create new relationships and develop growing ones.

### **IMPROVED LTC**

The London Transit Commission has been a great partner this year and we've been able to implement many of the service improvements brought forward earlier this year such as more buses on the road and different or new routes. However, to ensure LTC continues working for students we've garnered more student feedback through forums where students can give suggestions. Finally, the USC has also been a major voice in the discussion about bringing rapid transit and light-rail transit to London.

## RESTORATIVE JUSTICE TICKETING

A restorative justice ticketing working group has been in talks all year to introduce a program like this to London. We also hosted a restorative justice program director from another city to further participate in the planning process. The next step will be exploring how this program is paid for, but if the incoming executive marks this as a priority we're confident it can become a reality.

## IMPROVING ADVISORY COMMITTEE OUTCOMES

There are seats for post-secondary students on seven of the city's advisory committees. We want to use these seats as effectively as possible. This year, we've really engaged with the transit advisory committee and due to this, in part, the city council unanimously approved recommendations about rapid transit and light-rail transit. We've also prepared a guiding document of recommendations for next year's executive on how to best use these committees.

## GROWING EARLY OUTREACH CONFERENCE

The conference has become a major event in the community and continues to show elementary school students the promise of post-secondary education. This year, we've grown the conference to include more families from Middlesex County as well as London - going from 200 students last year to a goal of 300 students. Also, we've connected with other universities to propose they hold similar conferences in their respective cities.

## CLUBS FORUM

As part of a push towards increased student feedback, we hosted a Clubs Summit in mid-January where club executives came together to discuss ways the USC can better support clubs. A report summarizing the feedback received from this event was published on the USC's website.

## REINTRODUCE INVOLVEMENT COMPASS WITH CAMPUS PARTNERS

Early this year, we went through the Involvement Compass algorithm and reviewed the questions to make sure students were being connected with only the most relevant clubs and organizations. Additionally, more people have been added as administrators so that a new array of involvement opportunities are available to students.

## INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS COLLECTIVE

Rather than a collective, we created the caucus framework. Caucuses, which can act as an avenue for special-interest groups on campus to have their voice heard by the USC, will operate like a think-tank - meeting to discuss issues relating to them and recommending policy or action by the council. We quickly realized this structure can work for more than just international students, and as of now three have been created - the First Year Students' Caucus, the International Students' Caucus and the Mature and Transfer Students' Caucus.

## EXECUTIVE SCHEDULES

This year, the executive are doing everything they can to make information accessible and understandable to students at large. Our schedules are no exception. A feature has been added to the website for anyone to request the schedules of executive members, facilitated through the Communications Officer.

## COLLABORATIVE VISION STATEMENTS

These short documents outline the direction, goals and major priorities of each portfolio (internal, external, finance & governance, student events and communications) as agreed upon by the president and executive member. Both first and second-term collaborative vision statements have been completed and can be reviewed on the USC website under any of the executive's individual pages.

## WEEKLY RESIDENCE VISITS

Staying connected with the first-year student experience is sometimes a challenge for executive council members as they enter their fourth, fifth and sometimes sixth year at Western. To remain cognizant of first-year interests and experiences, different executive members have been having meals in residences each week.

## ONLINE CONSTITUENT SURVEYS

This platform point initially discussed surveys for specific constituencies, but we've since learned the USC lacks the ability to target certain faculty email lists. However, we remained committed to increasing the number of feedback initiatives and have been able to complete an unprecedented number of surveys, focus groups and feedback reports this year. Additionally, we've laid the groundwork for a student-wide survey to take place every year asking broad questions about the educational experience and quality of life for students with the goal of tracking trends and progress.

## EXTERNAL PORTFOLIO COORDINATOR ENHANCEMENT

Because much of the work in the external portfolio involved off campus work, in past years some student coordinators lacked clear direction in their roles. This year, we've developed such positions to include research projects where students could work on finding new ways to address issues or educate others on municipal, provincial and federal topics. An External Advocacy Taskforce was also created to mobilize this research and engage as many students as possible.

### **EXECUTIVE COMPOSITION CHANGES**

To remedy inconsistencies in the executive portfolio, the USC altered the executive member composition to create portfolios which better reflected the nature and quality of work happening within the organization. These changes will be implemented for the 2016 election cycle.

### **USC BY-LAW REFORMS**

All of the USC's By-Laws have been reviewed and changed by the 2015-2016 council. These By-Laws are the guiding documents of the organization, so it was important they become accessible and reflective of contemporary practices.

### **A BETTER BUDGET**

The USC's Budget is an important steering document, but it doesn't mean much if students can't understand it. As such, we worked this year to present a budget that not only made sense, but was able to easily identify the organization's priorities, spending and future planning.

### **A NEW WELLNESS CENTRE**

The USC has successfully partnered with the university to build a Wellness Center in the University Community Centre. The centre will be an educational space that seeks to centralize health services on campus so students can get to where they need to go quicker. This space will be built by the USC but staffed by the university, tentatively opening in February.

### **ADDRESSING SEXUAL VIOLENCE ON CAMPUS**

The USC successfully advocated for a sexual violence prevention and education coordinator position within the university, which Western is now in the process of hiring for. This position will be based in the new Wellness Centre. Additionally, the USC co-hosted Western's first sexual violence forum to explore new ways to address institutional responses to sexual violence.

### **IMPROVING THE ONTARIO UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT ALLIANCE DELEGATE POSITIONS**

This year, the USC opened OUSA delegate positions to all students to better engage students with our provincial advocacy efforts. These roles were also changed to solicit a greater amount of student feedback on policy decisions moving forward.

### **STUDENT SERVICES COMMITTEE PASSING FOUR NEW FEE ALLOCATIONS**

The USC led the student services committee to fund four new initiatives: increased support for the alternative spring break program, the addition of a single session psychologist to the Student Development Centre, a social worker for Student Health Services and an elders-in-residence program for Indigenous Services.