



TEAM TOBI

MID YEAR PLATFORM REVIEW

2017/2018

2017/2018 USC Executives



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Dear Students,

My name is Tobi Solebo and I am your University Students' Council President. It has been a busy few months since Landon and I were elected, and I can assure you we are working harder than ever on behalf of students. We feel it is important to update you on our progress of platform goals from one year ago, as well as share some exciting items to come. While our work has been challenging at times, we have accomplished many things that have contributed to the USC's standing mission to enhance the student experience for all undergraduates. As always, if you have any questions or feedback, we invite you to reach out to us at anytime.

Tobi Solebo, USC President 2017/2018



Student Engagement

USC Accessibility

We have been working hard to ensure that students feel connected to the USC, see us as an organization that acts in their best interest, and knows we are here to listen when they have concerns. That's why we instituted Community Open Office Hours where the executive is available in the UCC atrium from 11:30am-12:30pm every Wednesday to hear your issues.



Increased Funding and Support of USC Street Team

We have rebranded and increased funding to the new USC Hype Team to create true ambassadors around campus for all things USC. While they focus on promoting events, the team also works to inform students about the many services and programs the USC offers.



Inter-Faculty Round Tables

We have hosted Faculty Roundtables for Fac-Council executives to get an understanding of their needs on campus, and how we can better support them. Through conversation and collaboration we can help bring their voice to administration to ensure each student on campus is being served in the best way possible.



First Year Town Halls

Reaching out to first year students is important to ensure they are engaged with campus issues and have a venue to voice their concerns. We are currently working to implement first year town halls so we can gather input from the newest members of the Western community and study ways to better engage first-years with the USC and our wide range of programs and services. These opportunities will also allow us to reevaluate our services based on their feedback, ensuring that we are properly supporting the first year community.



Post-USC Meeting Coverage

We know students want to be engaged and made aware of issues that pertain to them, but sometimes don't have the time to attend every relevant meeting or watch full live streams of council. That's why we have increased USC-coverage of regular council meetings through graphic updates and summaries that quickly recap meetings for both students and on-campus media. We will continue to increase this coverage in months to come.





Student Life

More Microwaves on Campus

Thanks to the hard work of last year's USC executive, there are now more microwaves on campus for all students to enjoy.



Expand Clubs Week

Last year the reduction of clubs week saw a decline in club registration numbers and challenges for USC clubs to maintain their official status with the USC. This year, we brought back a full five-day clubs week for each club so that each group had a chance to market their club to our campus community and each student had a chance to find the club just right for them.



Spoke and Wave Mobile Ordering

You asked, we answered. We proudly launched USCEats last semester to provide students with a quick and easy way to get great-tasting, affordable food at the Spoke or Wave without the lines!



Wave Breakfast Buffet

Last year we identified untapped opportunities at the Spoke and Wave. This led us to create The Stack, a Thursday morning breakfast buffet at the Wave that provides students with an affordable option to eat breakfast on campus and get a great start to their day.

Greater Emphasis on Kosher and Halal Food

The USC knows that students on campus have a variety of dietary needs and want to provide options for everyone at the Spoke and the Wave. This year we have introduced halal options to the Wave menu, and we are continuing to look into kosher options to bring to campus.

Alternative Night Time O-Week Planning

During Orientation Week 2017, we supported the decision to re-allocate funding to Starlight Stage to ensure that our O Week programming was diverse, and catered to the varied interests of all our students.

Off-Campus Housing Fair

The USC hosted an off-campus housing fair in the UCC atrium for two days so that students could talk to services on campus that informed students about tenants rights, and reviewed leases to make it easier for students to navigate the tricky waters of off-campus housing.

Airport Shuttles to Pearson Airport and London Airport During Finals

Last year we committed to doing a better job in supporting our international and out-of-province students. To this end we have met our promise of introducing USC-subsidized airport shuttles to Pearson and London airports during the exam periods.



Towel Service at Western Student Rec Center

The executive are currently in conversation with Student Recreation Services to investigate options to reduce or eliminate the fee for towel service at the recreation centre to increase accessibility and encourage physical activity for our students on campus.



LGBTQ and Trans* Flag on Western Campus

The LGBTQ flag flew on Concrete Beach during pride month in June, serving as recognition and celebration of our LGBTQ community at Western. We also flew the Trans* Flag during the Trans* day of Remembrance to show support for our Trans* students.



Music Faculty Showcases

Our aim is to get more non-music students involved in the hard work of the music faculty. We have been providing this support by promoting concerts and performances by Western students. We have also been featuring student bands at USC events, events around campus and trying to create exposure. In collaboration with the Faculty of Music Student's Council we also released a social media campaign called "Campus Sessions" highlighting individual musical talent on campus, and we are looking forward to finding new talent to continue this campaign.



Increase Promotion of the Mustang Express

Last year, we recognized that the Mustang Express is an underutilized service provided by the USC. We are currently working with the Hype Team to promote the free shuttle service to students. Riders can expect to see Hype Team members on the bus in the coming months to help ease communication about routes, schedules, and how students can get the most out of this free service to get a safe ride home at night.



Advocate to Western Housing for greater support to Residence Advisors

Residence Staff provide great support to our first year community, but we need to be sure they are being supported too. The USC is currently advocating for more resources to be provided to these campus leaders to be sure they have access to any health, wellness, or academic resources they may need.





Community Outlook

Council on Campus

The USC hosted Pints & Politics in November which saw a great turnout from Western students and was a unique opportunity for our community to engage in political discussion with Mayor Matt Brown, multiple Councillors, and City of London staffers. We also held a Pints & Student Politics event in second semester with our USC candidates for President and Vice-President to engage students in the USC elections.



Increase Pedestrian Safety Efforts

The USC continues to recognize pedestrian safety as a key issue for students on- and off-campus, and has identified the issue as a priority for advocacy efforts. We are working with the University and the City to address specific needs on campus and are lobbying for improved lighting and blue light poles on campus. Further, we are pushing for pedestrian safety to be an element in all campus traffic and transportation decisions moving forward, especially through the Campus Master Plan and Western's Open Space and Landscape Plan.



Extend Bus Passes Into September

The USC recognizes that the current LTC service is a key issue for students, especially those who rely on public transportation to commute to and from school or jobs. We know that many students want their bus passes to apply year-round to have the same access to transit whenever they are in London. We are currently in talks with the LTC on a number of student concerns and will continue to ensure students are at the forefront of these conversations.



Advocate for the Bus Rapid Transit System (BRT)

The USC has been advocating for the implementation of rapid transit in London for many years and has been a strong lobbying voice at every level of government. This year we have continued to be vocal supports of bus rapid transit in London and helped to secure up to \$170M in provincial funding to move the project forward. Students were clear that they want and need a better transit system and we are constantly working to fight for it.



Increasing Civic Engagement

Students make up a significant portion of the London community, so the USC is working to increase the engagement of students with communities beyond Western's campus. Pints & Politics and Local Advocacy Week gave students the opportunity to directly interact with local government officials and leaders to discuss relevant topics. We are also working to connect students to the London community by listing local opportunities on campus and partnering with Innovation Works downtown.

Increase Community Partnership Efforts

Community partnerships allow the USC to offer a greater variety of services to students and we are always working to strengthen these relationships. This year we have partnered with the CMHA to provide more mental health support, including the implementation of crisis counselling on campus. We have also created an off campus, collaborative space for clubs through our partnership with Innovation Works in downtown London.



External Advocacy for Affordability and Possibility

We know that textbooks and other educational resources can be a great expense for students. This year the USC has been working with OUSA Lobbycon to ensure our government officials know that affordability is a big issue for students, particularly through the Textbook Broke campaign. We passed an interim paper at the OUSA general assembly on the topic of open educational resources, and we will continue to push policy towards greater affordability for students.





Mental Health and Wellness

Soph Support

Through the USC's stake in the Orientation Community of Practices, we are continuing to find ways to provide resources and support to Sophs in their volunteer roles for their mental health and overall well-being not just during Orientation Week, but throughout the year.



Consolidation of Mental Health Resources, promoting the “Triage”

We have continued to work with the Wellness Education Center to ensure students use it as first line of defense when looking for mental health resources on campus. We made sure the WEC was prominently displayed in the bus pass insert, and directed students to them as needed. The WEC can help to point students to the proper resources for any wellness concern they may have.



Develop De-stressor Programs Year Around

The USC Health promotions coordinators have run successful de-stressor programs for the busy times like midterms to ensure that students had support during stressful times. As well, we have been creating collaborative relationships around campus to ensure the wellness needs of students are being met.



Explore Partnerships with Community Mental Health Groups

The mental health of students on campus is always a priority for the USC and this year we looked to partner with community mental health groups to provide support on campus. We worked with the CMHA to provide crisis counselling to students during peak times at the end of the semester and during final exams, and we participated in Bell Let's Talk Day to highlight the conversation around mental health that should be happening year round. We are continuing to work towards a collaboration with FEMAP to create a suite of options for students in the London community.





Student Academics

Fall Reading Week

After lots of hard work with multiple partners including Senate, Faculties, Student Councils, and the Affiliates, we are proud to have seen Western's first Fall Reading Week come to fruition this year and give students more time to study for midterms and take time to focus on their mental health.



Advocate for a More Efficient Academic Accommodations Process

The current academic accommodations process can be long and difficult, so we are advocating to make medial or academic accommodations easier for students. We have spoke with administration about the issue, but we need to continue to have the student voice at the forefront of these conversations. We are also hoping to look provincially for recommendations to create universal accommodation to reform the process province wide.



Advocating for Greater Leniency for the 3 in 23 Hours Rule

The current 3 exams in 23 hours rule has conditions for eligibility that not all students meet, causing some to have very condensed finals schedules. We are continuing to advocate for changes to this rule that will provide greater leniency when students request academic accommodation of this sort. The rule will be going under review by a senate committee at the end of this academic year for potential modification.

Earlier Exam Timetables

Thanks to the advocacy of the USC executive team, the final exam schedule is now released only 5 weeks into the semester, much earlier than in previous years. This gives students the opportunity to better prepare for their finals and more easily make arrangements to travel home for winter and summer breaks.



Advocate for Updates to Online Applications Used for Instruction

Throughout the year we have looked for ways to ensure students have access to online educational tools to help them through their university careers. Most notably we have been advocating heavily for Open Education Resources to ensure that students are able to get up-to-date textbooks for an affordable cost.



Advocating for the Addition of a Course Outline Database

The USC successfully advocated for the creation of a database containing all past course syllabi to allow students to better explore course options and have the resources to create their class schedule. Previously, students had to navigate separate department and faculty websites on which not all course outlines would be available to students not enrolled in the course. Now the database is running online through student center, with all course outlines conveniently located in one place.

Increase Student Study Space

Students are always looking for space to study on campus, especially during finals. The USC successfully implemented a secret study space campaign on social media to help students explore new places on campus to get their studying done. We are continuing to find new ways to create space for students on campus due to the high volume demand for space in the library.



Personal Interest Credit (Pass or Fail Credit)

Personal interest credits allow students to take courses that may not be in their area of study without the risk of dropping their cumulative average by grading them on a pass/fail basis. This year, the USC has partnered with the Student Senators to bring this to the Associate Deans, who are currently reviewing implementation strategies should it be approved by Senate.



Advocate for Increased Work Integrated Learning Opportunities

Work integrated learning provides Western students with the opportunity to gain experience in their field of study and knowledge from outside the classroom. The USC helped institute an experiential learning task force to advocate for more of these opportunities, and they will report to the Vice-Provost Academic at the end of the year on the direction for experiential learning at the university.

