



University Students' Council

Western University, Room 340, UCC Building • London, Ontario N6A 3K7 • Tel: (519) 661-3574
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To Whom It May Concern:

As the University Students' Council Executive nears the end of our term, it is time to reflect back on a successful year in office and consider what to pass along to our successors. If a term was equivalent to a lifetime, this would be retirement – we still care very deeply about what we do, we want to help guide the people who will take over next, and we're also ready for a break! It is my hope that the USC can use this opportunity to examine what challenges lie ahead for the organization and how the Executives will face them.

One milestone to reflect back on in particular were the governance changes made to the USC that have better defined what we do for the Executive, the Council, and for students. The three core responsibilities of the organization are advocacy, student programming and services, and student development. Even though we have been advocating on behalf of student needs and providing programs on campus for over 50 years, I am very proud of how our priorities are now clearly aligned with our governance structure. First, the Executive introduced an Executive Composition change to dedicate one Executive solely to advocacy, and another one entirely to program and service delivery. Second, Council initiated a review of Standing Committees to actually reflect these changes in Council's governance structure. This re-alignment has not necessarily changed the work that we do, but has made the Executive and Council much more equipped to do it well.

Now that my Executive gets to transition a new and excited group of student leaders into a logical and productive structure, what advice do we leave them with? How do we ensure the strategy and visions of our team continue without infringing on their prerogatives? As the President of the USC it is my pleasure to facilitate the transition of the Executive and help guide Alex, Lindsee, Taryn, Jon and Kevin to focus in on what momentum is going to be important to carry forward into the 2016/2017 academic year.



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Below is a breakdown of what I believe to be the most important project for each of our portfolios to pass on, which hopefully aligns with the Collaborative Vision Statements we produced at the beginning of the semester.

The President: Without having written myself a vision statement in January, I strongly believe that a defining project of the USC next year will be producing the Strategic Plan. When looking back at some of the most impactful changes I made this year, few of them were driven by immediate results or recognition. I do not think the creation of the Strategic Plan next year will be the most glamorous or public facing project, but I do think that it will ultimately set the tone for another four years of an organization that refuses to stay static. I've learned that as the President, I was able to involve myself in the projects of my team when they were important but I would say that the Strategic Plan should be a file that is handed to Eddy for ideological and hands-on leadership.

The Vice-President Internal: Throughout the year, we as internal-facing advocates have started to understand the importance of academic affairs and have seen the impact that academic policy can have on student lives. Alex, two things you have done incredibly well this year have been formulating good Advocacy Papers for the USC Council to adopt as standing policy and understanding the intersections of a student's academics and their overall experience at Western. After seeing these take shape, I think the most important project to transition into your successor will be applying these methods and principles to academic-focused advocacy. An example would be the recent Senate debates regarding the issuing of grades prior to the deadline to withdraw from a course. Knowing how nimble your team has been developing policy, and how withdrawing from a course does not just impact academics but also a student's mental health, this would be the perfect example of an issue that the USC can have a louder voice on.

The Vice-President External: Another year of advocacy means another year of working with the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance. This year, it also meant building



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a federal student movement to pair well with the USC's advocacy efforts to the provincial government. Lindsee, you have shown your ability to be a leader amongst our peer institutions whether explicitly at Queen's Park or implicitly on Parliament Hill. The most important work that should be transferred to your successor is taking leadership on large externally facing campaigns and using it to solidify our seat at the table. It is no small task to expand representing 30,000 Western undergraduate students to students across the country. This year, however, we were able to work towards leadership in external advocacy efforts and fought on behalf of Canadian students on a national scale.

The Vice-President Student Events: The portfolio that never stops planning. Just when all of the events for the 2015/2016 calendar year could be crossed off of the list, the inevitable planning cycles of orientation and clubs seem to catch up. Taryn, despite the cyclical nature of planning in this portfolio I want to thank you for showing the USC how fulfilling programs on this campus can be facilitated. You were able to show the organization that this portfolio is responsible for building and maintaining real community for our students. I would assert that the most important project for you to transition to your successor will be continuing to build that community for the Clubs Program. Orientation, as a convenient example, already has a strong community associated with it. By consulting with Club Presidents and Executives, re-evaluating our policies and procedures for Clubs, and deciphering how liberal we should be with new Club applications, the USC should be able to begin the long process of building a new culture amongst a very student facing aspect of your portfolio.

The Secretary-Treasurer: This year, the USC gained the ability to ensure good financial and governance practices from one central Executive member. Jon – you were able to balance the needs of Council, the Board, the Executive and everyday duties to mentor other students in a field that is crucial yet sometimes overlooked in a student organization. Given this reality, the most important project to pass along to your successor will be continuing the momentum and ultimately setting a precedent for the Secretary-



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Treasurer to anchor all legislative groups in an ever-changing place. The USC as a whole can succeed when we are firing on all cylinders and guiding the Board and Council should be on the Secretary-Treasurer's mind every day.

The Communications Officer: An exciting opportunity for adapting this position was the possibility for the Communications Officer to facilitate more feedback from students on behalf of the USC Executive. Kevin, this year you did that. You also pushed the envelope by creating the USC Student Survey. While this year you administered and published the survey on a few broad topics, this project has the capacity to be the most important feedback mechanism in the entire organization. The USC Student Survey should be a notable project that you prioritize for your successor during transition. Because of your role incepting the idea and piloting it, you can have an influential role in guiding your successor to understand areas of potential growth for this mechanism, and ultimately use it in the immediate future for the Strategic Plan.

Despite the USC being intentionally strategic this year, forcing ourselves to think long-term, the greatest strength of the organization is the yearly transition of the entire Executive team. Alex, Lindsee, Taryn, Jon, Kevin – thank you for all of your service to students. Next year's Executive will have big shoes to fill but I hope highlighting important projects for continuation will help guide the long-term goals of the USC.

Thank you!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sophie Helpard".

Sophie Helpard
President 2015/2016
University Students' Council