

NOVEMBER 2024 EXECUTIVE REPORTS

PRESIDENT, RAI ALI

GENERAL UPDATES

- **OUSA Student Advocacy Conference**

This month, seventeen student leaders from the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance (OUSA) attended the Student Advocacy Conference at Queen's Park. We met with Members of Provincial Parliament (MPPs) and their staff to discuss pressing student concerns. Representing 160,000 students from nine universities across Ontario, our representatives advocated for priorities such as investing in post-secondary education, addressing housing and food insecurity, and responding to hate-motivated attacks.

I personally met with seven MPPs, as well as the Minister of Colleges and Universities, Nolan Quinn, to champion student voices. These meetings were productive and underscored the importance of continued dialogue between students and policymakers.

- **Custom Apparel Print Shop**

We are making significant progress on the establishment of our custom apparel print shop:

- The printer has arrived, and we have scheduled staff training for December 3rd.
- Noel from Value-Rite Business Products Inc. will conduct the training session.
- During this time, we will discuss the timeline for the launch and address all other logistical considerations.

We are excited about the potential this initiative has to enhance student engagement and provide valuable services to our community.

- **Town Hall Success**

I'm pleased to report that our Town Hall events on November 14 were a tremendous success. Students actively participated both in-person and virtually, posing insightful questions on topics like external advocacy and partnerships, university affairs and student representation, and student services and initiatives. The executive team addressed their concerns thoroughly, fostering a constructive dialogue that highlighted the importance of student representation and empowerment. This positive engagement reinforces the value of reinstating the Town Hall and sets a strong foundation for future student governance initiatives.

- **Food Bank Initiative**

In response to growing concerns about food insecurity among our students, I am exploring opportunities to establish a food bank on campus:

- I plan to initiate discussions with the Tim Hortons located on the first floor of SHA to see if they would be willing to collaborate with OTSU through their Smile Cookie initiative. This program donates the full \$1 from each cookie sold to support local charities like hospitals, food banks, and children's programs. Our goal is to direct these proceeds to fund an on-campus food bank.
- Following this, I intend to launch a survey to gauge student interest and gather input on the initiative.
- Alternatively, we are considering partnering with a local food bank to have food delivered to OTSU for distribution to students in need.

Before moving forward, I will meet with OTSU staff to discuss the feasibility and logistics of implementing a food bank on campus.

VP STUDENT LIFE, AREEJ FATIMA

GENERAL UPDATES.

- **Remembrance Day Ceremony**
I attended the Remembrance Day ceremony hosted by the Durham College Student Association (DCSA) on behalf of OTSU. It was an honor to represent OTSU and deliver the closing remarks at such a meaningful event. Our presence demonstrated solidarity and collaboration with our counterparts at Durham College..
- **TownHalls**
I attended both the town halls at downtown and north campus, to address student concerns. A significant portion of the discussion centered around the new leveling system, which has sparked considerable online conversation. While the turnout was much lower than the online engagement suggested, I was glad to see students who genuinely had questions and concerns take the time to attend. These town halls provided an opportunity to clarify misconceptions, answer questions directly, and ensure that students felt heard and supported.
- **Mental Health Awareness**
With exam season approaching, mental health services are more critical than ever. I have been working with Brad to create awareness about the mental health services offered by OTSU. We want to develop initiatives that better educate students about these essential services because our current programs are underutilized.
- **Addressing Financial Concerns for Sub-Societies**
I met with BITSoc executives regarding their concerns about the reduction in funding for sub-societies. They expressed that these funding cuts have placed a financial strain on their operations. While I understand the financial strain this might have placed on their operations, my role is to balance these concerns with the needs of the entire student population. I am committed to working with the Clubs & Societies Committee (CSC) to explore fair and sustainable solutions that support the success of sub-societies while maintaining financial equity across all groups. Ensuring the long-term viability of our funding model for everyone remains a top priority.

COMMITTEE UPDATES

- **Clubs and Societies Committee**
I will be convening the Clubs & Societies Committee soon to discuss important policy updates and address ongoing concerns, including those related to funding and the new leveling system. This meeting will provide an opportunity to gather feedback from committee members and ensure our policies are equitable, transparent, and aligned with the needs of the broader student body. I look forward to a productive discussion that will help shape our approach moving forward.

VP STUDENT AFFAIRS, ZAINAB HUSSAIN

GENERAL UPDATES

- **Annual General Meeting**

In late October, the executives, including myself, attended the Annual General Meeting.

- **Durham Region Transportation Advocacy**

This month, Kamika, the DRT engagement representative, visited. Students had the opportunity to speak with her and express their concerns directly.

- **Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance (OUSA)**

The Ontario Undergraduate Student Survey (OUSS) was released, marking the first time that Ontario Tech students will participate in this comprehensive survey.

This month, we released an Instagram video for OUSS, during which we also highlighted OUSA's advocacy achievements. The video aimed to raise awareness about OUSA's work for the students and encouraged students to complete the survey.

Additionally, I also wrote a blog post highlighting what happens at the OUSA general assembly and the plenary. The blog post further promoted awareness of OUSA's work and informed students about the OUSS, encouraging them to participate.

I also participated in the Student Advocacy Conference (SAC) and its associated training. This event provided Steering committee members and delegates from all OUSA-affiliated universities the opportunity to meet with various Members of Provincial Parliament (MPPs) to lobby for recommendations based on OUSA's priorities. This year's advocacy priorities and corresponding policy recommendations include: housing, food insecurity, investing in post-secondary education, and response to hate-motivated attacks.

Job posting for the spring co-author also went up.

- **Town Hall**

I also attended the town hall for both the downtown and north campus, where students had the opportunity to communicate with the executives in person and raise concerns. Additionally, I contributed to the blog post by sharing my perspective on the town hall.

We also conducted a meeting with Mary and Jaquelin to discuss the cancellation of the Palestinian Youth Association.

COMMITTEE UPDATES

- **Student Advisory Committee:** The job posting for the Student Advisory Committee - Student At-Large position has been published; however, there has been insufficient engagement with the post.
- **Student Advisory Committee:** Unfortunately, I was unable to attend the Student Advisory Committee meeting this month due to a scheduling conflict with one of my meetings with the MPP.
- **Student Success Committee:** However, I did attend the Student Success Committee meeting, during which members discussed the outcomes of orientation. Additionally, we explored ways to better support students in challenging courses and streamline available resources. The beta version of the Student Success website was shared, and we also discussed the next steps for the committee.

VP DOWNTOWN, MATIFADZA (MATI) CHIDIVI

GENERAL UPDATES

- **Understanding Student Engagement at the Downtown Campus**

I continued to collect information this month and have now started to create a comprehensive report on how to engage downtown students and some strategies to be deployed. I plan on pushing these strategies within OTSU and at the university. My projected outcome would be having different communication and engagement plans for both campuses

- **Student engagement and feedback**

During our Annual General Meeting and the town hall that followed, we had a high engagement rate from students who wanted to understand how the OTSU works and what mechanisms exist for them to provide feedback and suggestions. This is an organizational issue that needs a more comprehensive conversation. As the VP of Downtown, I am looking for ways to keep students more informed of the initiatives I will be working on starting from the winter semester. I am looking to employ strategies that allow for student feedback and engagement while working on projects and not retroactively. Acknowledging that the Downtown Campus Advisory Committee does serve that role in a more formal capacity. I am looking at ore relaxed and irregular communication from students who may not be on the committee.

- **Town and Gown**

I meet with Jen Plishewsky, the TeachingCity Project Coordinator for the City of Oshawa. I had conversations about creating a town and gown, alternatives to that, and other ways to engage students in Oshawa and represent student perspectives. I had a few major takeaways from this meeting.

The city and student unions. The city may be resistant to including student unions in city committees because each executive team comes with its own perspectives and mandate, which has led to breakdowns in previous partnerships and projects. Before a town and gown follow-through can happen, a long-term strategic plan needs to be in place for how the OTSU can commit to a community partnership that withstands turnover.

Alternatives to Town and Gown. The city has many initiatives they are willing to support and fund for students that not reaching students. Many of these initiatives would support high student engagement, particularly at the downtown campus, and work complementary with some of our initiatives. Higher levels of partnership need to be had with the city outside Town and Gown.

Intra-Union/Association Partnership. There are many ways to reach students at the downtown campus that would not require many resources that can be explored through working collaboratively, which have been out of our purview due to low community involvement.

- **Social Media**

Based on my social media engagement this semester between September and November, I will create a new social media strategy to grow downtown student engagement, including content that explores the city more and the downtown experiences.

COMMITTEE UPDATES