

THE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' COUNCIL OF THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO

# Membership Review

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The Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance

**Ad Hoc Committee on Provincial Representation**

**4/7/2010**

# Membership Review

The Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance

Ad Hoc Committee on Provincial Representation

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## Introduction and Executive Summary

The Ad Hoc Committee on Provincial Representation (AHCPR) has been created to conduct an organizational review of the University Students' Council's (USC) existing membership within the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance (OUSA). The review is being conducted in accordance with USC By-Law #3, which stipulates that a review of existing memberships to external organizations must be conducted every two academic years.<sup>1</sup> The AHCPR will examine the existing status of the USC within OUSA as it relates to the effective representation of Western's undergraduate student body.

In compiling this report, *The 2010 USC Membership Review: Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance*, the AHCPR aims to evaluate, assess and frame OUSA initiatives, priorities and achievements as each relates to the effective representation of the USC and Western undergraduate students. Principles and concerns espoused by the AHCPR in this review reflect OUSA's demonstrated organizational administration. The AHCPR intends to explore whether the USC ought to renew and maintain its membership within OUSA based on the organization's ability to offer the USC and Western undergraduate students effective and inclusive avenues for provincial representation.

The AHCPR, through extensive research, consultation and public forum, has concluded that OUSA demonstrates continuing and consistent effective representation for the USC and Western undergraduate students. This is evidenced by OUSA's increasingly significant presence in government consultations, demonstrated interests in member-institution priorities, professionally structured organization and continued success in achieving post-secondary policy and programming goals.

*At this time, in the opinion of the AHCPR, it is recommended that the USC renew and maintain existing membership terms within OUSA.*

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<sup>1</sup>By-Law #3 of the University Students' Council of the University of Western Ontario, art. 2, sec. 02.

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### The Ad Hoc Committee on Provincial Representation (AHCPR)

The AHCPR, chaired by the Provincial Affairs Commissioner (Vince Mazza) and Vice-President University Affairs Elect (Meaghan Coker), is composed of the members of the University Students' Council External Affairs Committee (EAC) and student representatives from the Western undergraduate community at large. The following students and representatives participated in the external representative review process:

**AHCPR Co-Chairs:**

- Meaghan Coker: Review Author, USC Vice-President University Affairs Elect.
- Vince Mazza: Author, AHCPR Co-Chair, Provincial Affairs Commissioner.

**AHCPR Members:**

- Tamer Abdallah: EAC representative.
- Andrew Beach: USC Internal Affairs Coordinator.
- Lidya Beyene: Student-at-large.
- Christina Marko-Mammoletti: EAC representative.
- Chris Masciotra: Student-at-large.
- Patrick Duncan: EAC representative.
- Ashley Rowe: USC External Affairs Coordinator.
- Emily Rowe: USC President.
- Andrew Rowland: EAC representative.
- Alex Santos: Student-at-large.
- Matt Shumka: EAC representative.
- Brandon Sousa: USC Municipal Affairs Commissioner.
- Mike Tithecott: EAC representative; USC President Elect.

**Contributors:**

- Dan Moulton: USC Vice-President University Affairs, OUSA President.

*Acknowledgements for the creation of this report are kindly extended to the members of the AHCPR and contributors to the membership review process.*

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### Organizational Review

In 1992 an informal alliance of five university institutions seceded from the Canadian Federation of Students, the largest external student representative body in Ontario and Canada, and allied to form OUSA.<sup>2</sup> The newly formed but loosely organized OUSA vied for effective and educated lobbying of the provincial government. In 1994 OUSA fully incorporated, legitimizing its efforts as a permanent and institutionally-endorsed organization. Since its creation OUSA has expanded to represent over 140,000 undergraduate students from seven member-institutions across Ontario. The current members of OUSA are: University Students' Council (The University of Western Ontario); McMaster Students Union (McMaster University); Federation of Students at the University of Waterloo (The University of Waterloo); Wilfred Laurier University Students' Union (Wilfred Laurier University); Alma Mater Society (Queen's University); (University of Windsor Students' Alliance (The University of Windsor), and; Brock University Students' Union (Brock University).<sup>3</sup>

### Vision, Mission and Organizational Goals

As per OUSA By-Law 1:2.01 the organization's existing vision reads as stated: "OUSA strives to improve the accessibility, affordability, accountability and quality of undergraduate education in Ontario."<sup>4</sup> The mission and objectives of OUSA -stated in OUSA By-Law 1:2.02- include (a)conducting research and identifying issues related to affordability, accessibility,

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<sup>2</sup> Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance, *Organizational History*, n.d., <http://www.ousa.ca/about/organizational-history/> (accessed 30 March 2010).

<sup>3</sup> Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance, *Members and Partners*, n.d., <http://www.ousa.ca/about/members-and-partners/> (accessed 30 March 2010).

<sup>4</sup> Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance By-Law 1, art. 2, sec. 01.

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accountability and quality in Ontario undergraduate education, (b) developing credible and constructive policy to address these challenges, (c) lobbying government for undergraduate educational policy objectives, (d) communicating research and policy to government, stakeholders and Ontarians, and (e) building partnerships in the post-secondary education sector.<sup>5</sup> The AHCPR believes that the organizational goals of OUSA have and continue to maintain consistency with the organization's vision and mission. In order to successfully represent member-institutions and ensure fair and effective student advocacy OUSA has expressed the following priorities as organizational goals<sup>6</sup>:

- *Provide a common voice on educational issues for students;*
- *Strive to unite Ontario's full- and part-time undergraduate students to lobby for better financial aid, fair tuition fees, greater university accountability and more government funding for universities;*
- *Work to ensure that Ontario students receive affordable and high-quality post-secondary education;*
- *Provide research and ideas to governments and the public on how to improve the accessibility, affordability, accountability and quality of post-secondary education in Ontario;*
- *Present credible and constructive policies, so that students' issues are taken seriously by politicians and the public at large, and;*
- *Maintain a decentralized structure, so that policy is set by the annually elected student leaders from our member campuses.*

## Organizational Structure and Executive Composition

OUSA is comprised of two decision-making bodies: the Steering Committee, a Board of Directors comprised of representatives from each member-institutions, and the General Assembly, comprised of member-institution student delegations.

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<sup>5</sup> OUSA By-Law 1, art. 2, sec. 02.

<sup>6</sup> OUSA, *Organizational History*.

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Steering Committee (SC): the SC comprises the organization's executive Board of Directors. The SC is composed of one representative from each member-institution, generally a Vice-President University Affairs or institutional equivalency. Additionally, the SC includes three Executive Officers: The President, Vice-President Finance and Vice-President Administration. Directors are endowed with SC voting rights and are responsible for the supervision of OUSA affairs, priority planning and administrative and financial management. The SC acts at the discretion of the General Assembly, the organization's highest decision-making body.<sup>7</sup>

General Assembly (GA): the organization's highest decision-making body, the OUSA GA, is comprised of student delegates elected or appointed by their respective member-institutions. The GA is responsible for representing member-institution students' interests in guiding and establishing the policy directives of the SC. Member institutions are appropriated one GA delegate for each three-thousand full-time students which the institution represents.<sup>8</sup> Comprising the largest delegation in the GA, presently the USC is allotted ten seats.

Financial Management: organizational financial administration is primarily managed and supervised by the OUSA Vice-President Finance. In the absence of the President, the Treasurer assumes all Presidential duties. Primarily, however, the treasurer is responsible for managing all organizational financial affairs, including acting as an OUSA signatory, preparing financial

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<sup>7</sup> OUSA By Law 1, art. 5, sec. 01.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., art. 6, sec. 03.

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reviews and statements, approving expenditures and reporting budget programming to the SC and GA.<sup>9</sup>

Administrative Management: the OUSA Vice-President Administration, elected internally among members of the SC, ensures and enforces organizational compliance with By-Laws and Operating Policies. Moreover, he/she maintains SC minutes, manages the delegation of administrative tasks and responsibilities to OUSA personnel.<sup>10</sup>

### Staffed Members

The 2009-2010 OUSA *Home Staff* is comprised of three staff members, hired in accordance with OUSA employment operating policies: the Executive Director, the Director of Research and Policy Analysis and the Director of Communications and Public Relations.

Executive Director: responsible for managing the routine operations of the OUSA office and Steering Committee coordination; discretionarily hire and supervise personnel; review and administer OUSA financing and accounting records; attend Steering Committee and Assembly meetings, and; maintain official organizational documents, namely minutes and publications.<sup>11</sup>

The Executive Director has the authority to discretionarily hire two organizational officers to fulfill administrative duties; traditionally, the two roles have been reserved for the Director of Research and Policy Analysis and the Director of Communications.

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<sup>9</sup> OUSA By 1, art. 10, sec. 02.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., art. 10, sec. 07.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., art. 11, sec. 01.

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### Membership and Fees

OUSA membership fees are collected from member-institutions on a per student basis. OUSA currently collects \$2.18 per full-time student from each member-institution. OUSA will collect \$2.68 per full time student from each member-institution next year, a fee increase that has been approved by both the OUSA GA and the USC. The AHCPR believes that the membership fees OUSA applies are fair and cost-friendly; the USC receives exceptional representative services in return for these relatively nominal fees.

### Membership Qualifications

Member autonomy is a continued and respected principle maintained by OUSA and espoused in By-Law 1:4.11. Member institutions are granted full authority concerning all matters of membership; institutions may choose to remain or secede from OUSA at any time. Within OUSA there exist two orders of membership: associate and full. Associate members are those that formally and independently vote to join OUSA; full members are those that formally and independently vote to join OUSA, pay OUSA membership fees and enter a contractual and renewable membership agreement with OUSA.<sup>12</sup> The USC is currently a full member of the association.

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<sup>12</sup> OUSA By-Law 1, art. 4, sec. 01-05.

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### Representation Alternatives

The Canadian Federation of Students-Ontario (CFS-O) is the province's only other representative student alliance and currently represents over 300,000 undergraduate students from 30 Ontario institutions; the CFS-O is a branch of the Canadian Federation of Students (CFS), a federal student alliance representing undergraduate students from over 80 institutions across Canada.<sup>13</sup> Although the CFS-O has demonstrated a continued commitment to student advocacy, the organization explores varying research and lobbying priorities not intrinsically or specifically relevant to educational programming. Contrarily, OUSA has and continues to specialize in student-oriented educational advocacy and lobbying priorities, an approach the AHCPR deems more appropriate and beneficial to the Western undergraduate community.

### Lobbying Results and Recent Achievements

OUSA has and continues to lead student-oriented lobbying efforts and advocacy campaigns. In October 2009 OUSA hosted its annual lobby conference, a series of lobby meetings between member institutions delegates and government officials, representatives and bureaucrats. Numerous OUSA recommendations have been enacted by the Ontario provincial government, notably the implementation of student loan increases and affordable, student-friendly repayment assistance programming. The OUSA *Food for Thought* advocacy campaign, aimed towards increasing awareness concerning nominal OSAP funding, attracted significant media attention and public awareness. OUSA has steered the Ontario government towards increased

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<sup>13</sup> The Canadian Federation of Students, *Overview of the Federation*, n.d., <http://www.cfsontario.ca/english/about.php> (accessed 10 March 2010).

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infrastructure investments, educational policy reform and student friendly financing, namely the introduction of grants, support services and improved loan repayment assistance programming.<sup>14</sup> The *OUSA Blue Chair Campaign* was arguably the most relevant campaign sponsored by the USC this year; the campaign is aimed towards raising awareness concerning barriers to educational access. The AH CPR believes that the organization's demonstrated success and long-standing history of accomplishment qualifies OUSA as an effective student interest group to which the USC should remain a member.

## Principles, Concerns and Recommendations

### PRINCIPLES

*Principle One:* the USC should be a member of a representative organization that offers effective advocacy and lobbying initiatives concerning policy, programming and services in Ontario's post-secondary education system.

*Principle Two:* the USC should remain a member of an accountable and professional organization; the organizational structure of OUSA is professionally managed and financed.

*Principle Three:* the USC should be a member of an institutionally impartial organization with fair and decentralized voting procedures; OUSA is characterized by a fair and autonomously respectful voting structure.

*Principle Four:* the USC should be a member of an organization that offers optimal and professional representative services for a fair membership fee and membership qualification structure.

*Principle Five:* the USC should be a member of an organization that employs effective and appropriate staffing and human resourcing in order to achieve organizational objectives.

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<sup>14</sup> The Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance, *Advocacy: Successes*, n.d., <http://www.ousa.ca/advocasy/successes/> (accessed 10 March 2010).

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*Principle Six:* the USC should be a member of an organization that offers relevant, professionally researched and specialized post-secondary lobbying and advocacy.

*Principle Seven:* the USC should be a member of an organization that has and continues to achieve organizational goals and successes that benefit Western undergraduate students.

### CONCERNS

*Concern One:* OUSA's visibility and engagement with Western's students-at-large is restricted by the organization's continued commitment to member autonomy, among other factors.

*Concern Two:* the division between OUSA and other external representative student groups, namely the Canadian Federation of Students Ontario, may fissure post-secondary lobbying and advocacy efforts across the province.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

*Recommendation One:* OUSA, in collaboration with the USC, continue to increase awareness and visibility of the organization, its purpose and goals to UWO undergraduate students.

*Recommendation Two:* that OUSA and the CFS-O explore collaboration on post-secondary specific lobbying and advocacy efforts in order to present a united frontier in student representation.

*Recommendation Three:* that OUSA encourage continued inclusiveness and engagement by creating greater avenues for involvement of students-at-large.

*Recommendation Four:* that OUSA enhance its continued excellence in public relations by further developing the organization's communication portfolio.