From the Board of Directors to our Members
Monday, June 17, 2013

On February 5, 2013 at MAPS’ Annual General Meeting we were elected to the Board of Directors. Each member of the outgoing Board of Directors had resigned and we were seven individuals (previously eight, one resigned early on) who were unknown to each other and the workings of the MAPS organization. We got to work immediately, holding meetings almost weekly in the beginning as we prioritized the issues in play and learned about all of the relationships and commitments MAPS has with the McMaster community. We learned quickly that we had underestimated both the scope of the challenges we inherited and the workload ahead. We were, and remain, committed to act in the best interests of part-time students.

As you know, the reputation of MAPS has been questioned and scrutinized. Interest in the specifics of MAPS activities for the last few years has come from the McMaster campus, the Hamilton community, student organizations at other universities and even beyond. MAPS has been put under a microscope with good reason. As the new board, we would like to say that all of the problems have been resolved; however, we cannot.

In the last few days, MAPS has experienced two additional and significant issues. The first is a lawsuit by MAPS’ former executive director, which names MAPS, McMaster University and five previous members of the MAPS Board of Directors. MAPS’s insurance company has assigned legal matters to Stieber Berlach LLP and we have been advised not to comment further. The second issue is a direct strike at the sustainability of MAPS as an organization. On Thursday, June 6th the McMaster University Board of Governors voted to temporarily suspend collection of part-time student fees. This means that until the University’s senior administration decides otherwise, MAPS will no longer be receiving the $7 per unit fee previously collected by the University on our behalf from part-time students.

We are not ceasing operations. We have enough money in the bank and access to funds held in trust by the University to continue operating while governance and financial administration reforms are fully implemented.

In October of 2012, the University laid out a set of conditions in response to a review conducted in the summer of 2012. At the time of our election, we were not apprised of the details of the conditions. Over the course of the last 4 months we have collectively put in several hundred hours working toward a more positive future. We came into our roles eager to restore MAPS’ activities and reputation, but we found it took some time to learn the nuances of the challenges facing the organization. We inherited an organization with a rich history and much like any inheritance; this one came with a huge mess to clean up. We are fully engaged in addressing the requirements defined by the University in October 2012.
In communications with the Provost shortly after our election, we were applauded for our work and the relationship was congenial and positive. The tone of communications has changed in timbre in May and early June, culminating in the suspension of fees collection as the University felt that our progress was insufficient. The contention that we have not been diligently working is both dismissive and unwarranted. MAPS’ president met with the Provost on June 11 and the outcome of that conversation was a positive, forward-looking approach to rebuilding MAPS.

Like other part-time students, we have obligations to employers and families in addition to our studies and our volunteer role on the MAPS board of directors. We’ve been busy. We have been attending to bookkeeping, payroll and audit issues. We have represented MAPS in university committee meetings, sat on valedictorian selection committees and attended awards ceremonies. We have almost completed a full rewrite of our by-laws. We have met with representatives from the MSU and CCE. We have also had meetings with a variety of other McMaster departments ranging from Financial Aid to Human Resources. It is our intention to complete each of the tasks outlined in the October 2012 requirements and petition the administration to resume collection of the per unit fee on our behalf.

The MAPS office has remained open with the same knowledgeable staff at the helm to assist students and ensure that the board is fully aware of the many facets of MAPS operations. Kim and Sarah have been as important to us during this time of transition as they are to you, day in and day out. As an aside, you may want to thank them next time you visit the MAPS office.

It is at this time, it’s appropriate that we ask you: “What do you want from MAPS?” We regularly ask ourselves “Would students want this?” On the administrative side some decisions are easy to make. Do we continue to pay the bills and the staff? Yes. Should we liquidate our interest in the vehicle leased by the former board? Yes. When it comes to student life related issues however, we need your input. Part-time students have substantially different needs than full-time students. The future of what MAPS could do for students has yet to be envisioned. These are decisions that affect your life as a student at McMaster and we cannot answer for you.

Should we host special events – a welcome week BBQ or a monthly speaker series?

Should we re-establish a periodic newsletter for part-time students?

Do you have other ideas, big or small? We would like to hear them – write to the board at maps@mcmaster.ca.

As we complete the work required to close our two new major issues, we invite you to help us steer MAPS in the right direction. Engagement with MAPS’ membership matters at this time possibly more than ever before.

Best Regards,

Andrew Smith, President
Jeannie An, Vice-President
Emily Cerantola, Vice-President
Jacqueline Arlen, Treasurer
Alamin Berhanu
John Liauba
Michelle Macfarlane