The newsletter for part-time students at McMaster University

NOVEMBER 2014

About MAPS

MAPS is here for you! Please take a moment to stop by the office and Lounge (MUSC 234) to meet our team, take advantage of our low cost printing (5c per copy) - black and white or colour, use the lounge computers, have a coffee or relax between classes.

The office and lounge are open from 9:30-7:30pm Mondays through Thursdays and 9:30 to 2:30pm on Fridays.

Need help? If we don’t have the answer—we will find it for you!

Tell us about you—tell us about you!

MAPS is all about YOU!

What would make your school experience better? We are here to represent you and make sure your needs are heard?

Have any tips or tricks you can share? Angie Chan won $100 for submitting an idea at our office—we draw one winner each month!

Any issues or topics you’d like us to look into? We are just completing a report on course accessibility for part-time students.

Tell us your story! What are you at McMaster? What do you do besides school? Email us at maps@mcmaster.ca and we may share your story in our next newsletter!

There are over 3,200 part-time students at McMaster from the Centre for Continuing Education, engineering, social sciences, humanities, health sciences, nursing and business. Working together, we can make a difference!

Important Dates

Nov 27 MAD Students Accessibility Forum. McMaster’s first annual accessibility forum will be from 6pm-8:30pm in MUSC 319 (CIBC Hall). The forum is a safe space for students to discuss issues around accessibility and potential solutions. For more info, please contact maccess.student.network@gmail.com

November 28 Last Day for Winter Term Bursary Applications. MAPS has contributed over $1,000,000 for bursaries for part-time students. Application forms are available at MUSC 234 or through Student Financial Aid & Scholarships.

December 4th MAPS Awards Dinner. The 29th Annual Awards dinner will be in MUSC 319 (CIBC Hall). This is our chance to honour our members for academic and extra-curricular achievement. Award winners MAPS members are welcome to join us for this celebration.

Tickets are $25 per person and available at MUSC 234. Please call or email for more information.

December 31st Mentorship Program. MAPS will officially launch our peer mentorship program in early 2015 and we are currently looking for volunteers to be mentors or mentees. This program is designed to provide peer support, encouragement and information to succeed at Mac. You’ll make new friends, have some fun and get/ give some helpful support. Email us for more info!

January 5-30th Health and Dental Opt-in. MAPS and the MSU have arranged for a second opt-in period for the Health and Dental Plan. For more information please click here or contact us.

Spring 2015 Board of Directors Elections. Each year, 4-5 seats on the Board come up for election. Watch for the email in the new year.

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Embracing your inner Panda Bear

Ever notice how a word or a phrase can separate you from others? Words tend to hold specific meanings for us — some of them positive and some of them negative. That’s not always a terrible thing — “good” is a word with very specific meaning that we all understand and react appropriately to. But some words — or labels — can make us uncomfortable. Part-time may be one of them.

I was reading a paper by Dawn Norris of the University of Maryland entitled “Walking Around Like A Panda Bear” which discusses the feelings of stigma among non-traditional aged students. What she found was that stigma is not always due to what a larger group thinks of a smaller one, but what the smaller one thinks of itself. One extreme of this is elitism. The other extreme is a self-imposed stigma. People who see themselves as different act as though they are different (and in Norris’ paper, feel like they are ‘panda bears’ wandering around the campus).

We all make assumptions about what part-time means. For some it means less than fully engaged (you’re only doing part of something, instead of all of it). Others interpret it as a lack of capacity (you can only manage to do part). Any google search or even a casual conversation will suggest that ‘part’ anything is less ideal than full. In a recent meeting with faculty academic advisors, we heard that many full-time students who are having difficulties with their studies feel that reducing their course load is a sign of defeat – they see it as an admission that they are not as good or as smart as others. Or perhaps worse, that their parents or friends will see them as less than who they are.

But that’s really just part (and in my opinion the wrong part) of the story.

The definition of “part” is a piece or segment of something such as an object, activity, or period of time, which combined with other pieces makes up the whole.

All school is part-time of your life – whether you’re taking 30 units or 3. Nobody goes to school 24/7/365.

The problem may be what we think the noun ‘part’ refers to. Whether you’re taking 30 units or 3, school is part of your life. The only difference between any of us is what percentage of our life involves school. I personally am taking part-time studies. I find the experience of learning new things exciting and intellectually stimulating. It makes me better at my job and shows me new perspectives on life.

McMaster is working to incorporate what they call “experiential learning” into the curriculum. In other words, Mac wants students to build real-world experience incorporated into the theoretical program of study. That sounds a lot like what part-time students are already doing.

In a way, we are all part-time students.

Education comes in many forms: school, work, relationships, learning about ourselves and others, and all the other experiences that makes life so interesting. They are all ‘parts’ of our life. In a way, we are all part-time students.

So whenever you think of yourself as ‘different’, take a moment to think if you’ve ‘put on the Panda Bear’ … it might just be that the only person singling you out … is you!

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McMaster University is looking for input on the following projects. If you have any thoughts, comments, or opinions, please send them to maps@mcmaster.ca and we will let the university know what you think.

**Student Mental Health (MH) Strategy** McMaster wants to make it easier for students to access mental health services and improve service coordination. Have you used MH services? Do you have any experiences you would like to share about accessing MH services at McMaster? Do you have any suggestions on how to improve these services?

**Gender-based violence and sexual assault strategy** Does gender-based violence or sexual assault exist at McMaster? Is this an important issue for part-time students? What can we do to address this and/or make sure it doesn’t become an issue at Mac?

**Accessing career and development services** Have you used the university’s student success centre? Currently, part-time undergraduates can only use the student success centre if they purchase a student services user card. CCE students are not able to use these services at this time. Is the ‘opt-in’ approach best for part-time students? Would it be better if everyone paid for the services out of their fees? Should CCE students have equal access to services? Have you used these services? If yes, what did you think? Could any improvements be made?

Look at who is on your team!

**TEAM MAPS**

Your Association has pulled together a fantastic team to help you navigate your success…And here they are:

- **Kyle Johansen (Executive Director).** Kyle has been with MAPS since summer 2013 and is responsible for office operations, advocacy, program development, liaison with the university and supports the Board of Directors.

- **Malanie Dani (Info Assistant).** Malanie joined MAPS in July 2014, and very quickly become the unofficial MAPS ‘office mom’. Malanie has her diploma in disability studies from Humber and is currently completing a combined Social Work/Sociology degree at Mac.

- **Chris Talbot (Info Assistant).** Chris joined the team in October 2014 and works with Malanie to make sure you get the info you need when you call, email or stop by. Chris is a part-time honours student in mechanical engineering.

**MAPS recently hired 3 part-time students as coordinators to help us help you.**

- **Div Jalan (Mentorship).** As mentorship coordinator, Div is matching up peers to provide support, encouragement and information to each other. Div just graduated with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Biochemistry and is currently a part-time student at McMaster.

- **Gifty Warval (Social Media).** Gifty is responsible for making sure that MAPS is communicating with you effectively through social media. Gifty will be building/expanding our social media presence on Facebook, twitter, and Linkedln over the coming months. Gifty is an honours B.Comm grad from Mac and is currently taking additional accounting course towards his CPA designation. Gifty also helps out as an Information Assistant.

- **Anne Van Dyk (Newsletter).** Anne is responsible for editing The Link. Working with you and our team, Anne provides timely and interesting stories about what’s happening at Mac of interest to you. Anne is a part-time student pursuing her BA in English.

- **Felice Gilpin (Bookkeeper).** Felice joined the MAPS staff in December 2013. She graduated from Mac with a certificate in advanced accounting and is continuing her business studies. She won the “Award of Academic Excellence” when she graduated at the top of her class.