



Photo 1: Members of the 2018-19 IT Student Advisory Committee:  
From the top left: Eric Howarth, Matthew Tom, Stephanie Koehl, Selene Dominguez Florean, Lee Anne Bodo, Jaspreet Brar, Nour-Eddin Issa, Karl Knopf;  
From the bottom left: Marzena Kielar, Kenzie Shin, Natasha Varghese, Vinay Padalia, Shirwa Geele

# ITSAC ANNUAL REPORT

2018-19

McMaster University  
Information Technology Student Advisory  
[itsac@mcmaster.ca](mailto:itsac@mcmaster.ca)

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## To: Assistant Vice President & Chief Technology Officer

### STRATEGIC HIGHLIGHTS

Launching the IT Student Advisory Committee (ITSAC), in September 2018, was a monumental step forward for our IT campus community to engage and foster relationships with a diverse group of students on campus. The first year of ITSAC has proven to be a very successful start to building student engagement and developing a collaborative process for IT service providers to seek input from students on new initiatives, projects, and services.

### OPERATING HIGHLIGHTS

Overall, ITSAC members acknowledged that the committee was an effective collaborative platform for IT service providers and students to engage in a conversation on IT matters that impact students. [Feedback](#) on the format of the meetings, discussion topics, and student engagement, received through an interactive session towards the end of the academic year will be incorporated in the future planning of the committee, starting in September 2019.

ITSAC members expressed much appreciation for the efforts in organizing the committee and the genuine interest of IT service providers in wanting to improve the student experience on campus.

In an interview with Vinay Padalia, 4th Year Commerce, Student Accounts and Cashiers representative, on what he learned from being on the committee:



"I didn't realize how important all the work in the background was to the functioning of the university experience. For example, I didn't realize how complex and how much planning go into things like responsible cyber security and rolling out Microsoft Office 365.

Also, I've found everyone to be really nice! I think IT has a bad rep, but through this experience, I've realized IT people are nice, approachable, and really want to help!"

Figure 1 - Vinay Padalia quote

## RECOMMENDATIONS

A set of [recommendations](#) has been included in this report for consideration. Although all of the suggestions are considered to be equally important, it is recognized that not all might be achievable over the next academic year. One of the key recommendations is to make IT services, programs and projects more visible to students – we need to meet students where they are. To achieve this, IT Service providers have an opportunity to connect and interact in student-accessible spaces (e.g. set up booths at locations with high student traffic such as libraries, by Starbucks, MUSC, and student events like Welcome Week, May@Mac, Student Services Fair etc.).

## LOOKING AHEAD

Overall, the committee is off to a strong start. The committee chairs need to focus on:

- continuing to develop a platform for students to advise on their technology needs, priorities and concerns, and to inform the direction of the McMaster IT Strategic Plan
- building trust among students and IT service providers
- facilitating raising awareness of IT services, programs, and projects
- ensuring student perspectives are considered earlier in the process of project and service design

The above areas of focus will become foundational building blocks in our journey to improve student experience on our campus.

**Marzena Kielar & Christa Morrison**

**2018-19 ITSAC Chairs**

**May 2019**

## Introduction

**The Information Technology Student Advisory Committee (ITSAC) provides a forum for undergraduate and graduate students and IT service providers to discuss current campus technology priorities, services, and new IT initiatives.**

ITSAC is intended to inform and advise the Assistant Vice President and Chief Technology Officer (AVP and CTO) in order to provide regular student input into IT Strategy and matters relevant to IT Governance committees and will:

- create a platform for students to advise on their technology needs, priorities, and concerns
- establish a channel for communication between students, IT service providers, and IT Governance committees
- build relationships between the student organizations and IT units and departments on campus
- provide IT units with student feedback on IT services and support
- provide student perspectives on IT project initiatives
- assist with testing new products and/or review new services before they are announced to campus community
- charge committee members to share what they learn with their peer groups
- submit an annual report including the review and recommendations of ITSAC

ITSAC's mandate, objectives, and responsibilities are provided in the [Terms of Reference](#).

The committee launched September 2018 and met six times over the Fall 2018 and Winter 2019 terms. The intention for the first year of ITSAC was to bring awareness to the committee members on existing IT services, programs and projects, and seek input on broader student communication with respect to these topics.

**This report provides an overview of topics discussed, student feedback, and recommendations.**

## Strategic Objectives

The IT Student Advisory Committee (ITSAC) plays a critical role in providing input into McMaster IT Strategic Planning. More specifically, ITSAC falls under the Transformative Information Technologies and Services pillar within the IT Strategic Plan and provides means for engagement to transform the student experience on campus.

Regular guests to ITSAC include a Senior Manager, Strategic Implementations, Manager Communications & Culture, and Communications & Marketing Strategist, Registrar's Office. Their attendance ensures that we can gather student input into initiatives taking place on campus and provides an opportunity to update the committee members on matters that directly impact students.

Students were informed and asked for input with regards to key [IT strategic initiatives](#) such as the McMaster IT Strategic Plan, Mobile Applications, Microsoft O365, Identity Access Management, Wireless Upgrade, and Cyber Security. Raising awareness and engaging in a discussion with the committee members on these initiatives will help inform future IT strategic direction, implementation strategies, and communication planning.

Several of the topics discussed throughout the 2018-19 academic session were centered around the IT Strategic Plan, and IT Governance projects.

## Membership

ITSAC represents a wide range of undergraduate and graduate students and staff members across the McMaster community. The diversity of the members ensures that we have an inclusive student perspective on IT services, programs, and projects. The diagram below represents the committee as an interconnected network of diverse student groups, and departments that service students.

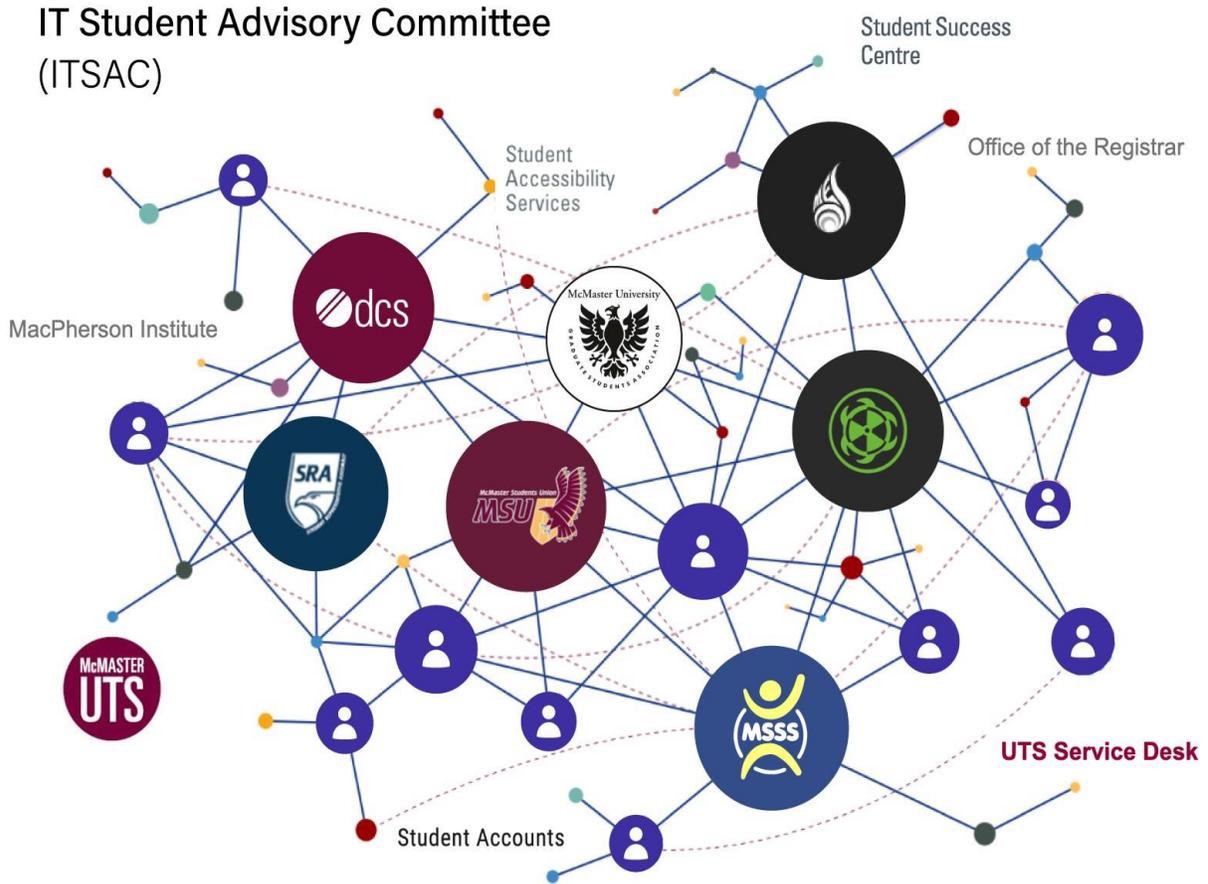


Figure 2- interconnected network of diverse student groups, and departments that service students

## ITSAC – 2018-19 MEMBERS

**Angela Shilmon**  
Registrar's Office

**Angelo Marmolejo**  
First Year Council (FYC)

**Christa Morrison (Co-Chair, Term 2)**  
MacPherson Institute

**Eric Howarth**  
Social Sciences Society

**Hyunji (Kenzie) Shin**  
McMaster Student Union (MSU)

**Jaspreet Kaur**  
Humanities Society

**Karl Knopf**  
Graduate Student Member at Large

**Lee Anne Bodo**  
Student Accessibility Services (SAS)

**Marzena Kielar (Chair)**  
University Technology Services (UTS)

**Matthew Tom (Term 1)**  
University Technology Services (UTS)  
Help Desk

**Michelle Zheng (Co-Chair, Term 1)**  
Registrar's Office

**Natasha Varghese**  
Engineering Society

**No representation**  
McMaster Association of Part Time  
Students (MAPS)

**No representation**  
Health Sciences Society

**Nour-Eddin Issa**  
Library Information Technology

**Selene Dominguez**  
Commerce Society  
Student Representative Assembly (SRA)

**Sherry Mousavi**  
Student Success Centre

**Shirwa Geele**  
Society of Off Campus Students

**Sinthu Senthilmohan**  
Science Society

**Stephanie Koehl**  
Undergraduate Student Member at Large

**Tim van Boxtel**  
Graduate Student Association (GSA)

**Vinay Padalia**  
Student Accounts and Cashiers

## ITSAC Members' Goals

### SUMMARY

Shortly after the launch of ITSAC, in September 2018, members were asked to write down their goals for the committee. Information below represents overall themes that were identified. These goals closely align with the members' responsibilities as outlined in the [ITSAC Terms of Reference](#).

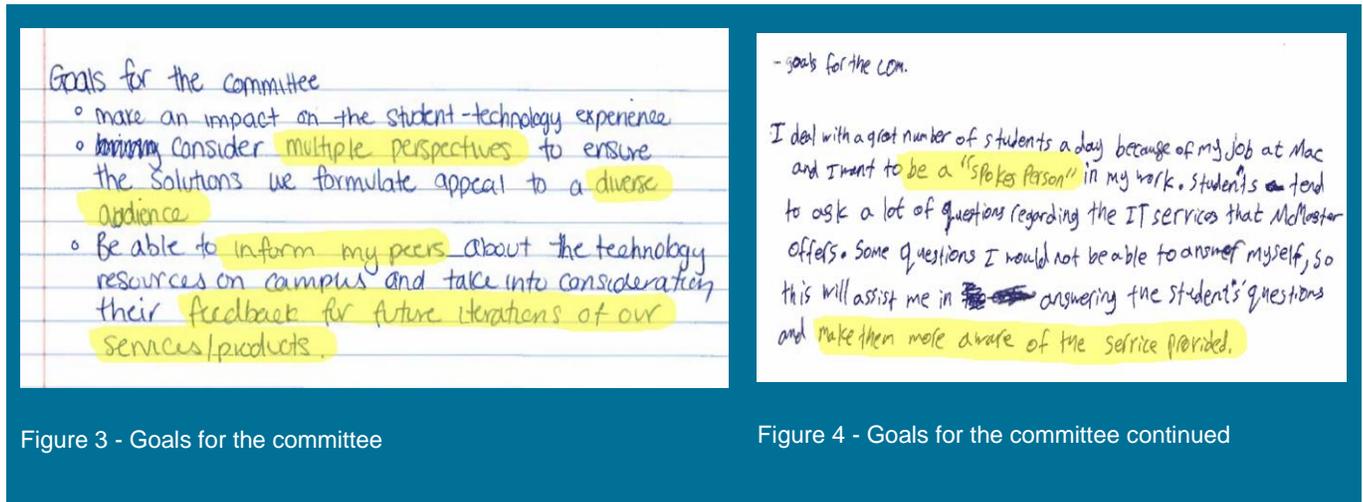


Figure 3 - Goals for the committee

Figure 4 - Goals for the committee continued

### COMMUNICATION

- Communicate what is discussed at meetings with students
- Create awareness of tech resources and services available to students (Thode Makerspace, 3D printers, Office 365)
- Facilitate communication about McMaster IT Strategic Planning with student organizations

### STUDENT REPRESENTATION

- Provide constructive feedback on IT services and identify IT needs on behalf of students
- Be a liaison between committee and student groups
- Provide direct feedback on changes made by IT service providers
- Bring forward technology concerns (e.g. accessibility challenges using Mosaic, A2L, and the McMaster website) and have input into future releases of A2L & Mosaic

# First Year of ITSAC

@ a  
Glance



## NOTEWORTHY

The IT Student Advisory Committee met six times over the course of Fall 2018 and Winter 2019.

### STUDENT REPRESENTATION :

- 91% (20 out of 22) positions were filled
- 16 student groups and services represented

### ATTENDANCE:

- Meeting attendance in the first term ranged from 73% to 83%
- The second term attendance was between 33% and 72%.

### ITSAC AGENDA AND NOTES:

All of the [2018-19 ITSAC agendas and notes](#) are captured on Confluence (wiki portal).

### WEBSITE:

[Information Technology Student Advisory](#)

### WHAT WE LEARNED:

The following represent the main takeaways for ITSAC chairs and IT service providers to incorporate into the future ITSAC meeting structure.

- Create meaningful ways to engage students in IT projects.
- Provide opportunities for student engagement during ITSAC meetings; e.g. brainstorming sessions and breakout groups for discussion
- Use Mentimeter or other online tools to gather student feedback

## TOPICS DISCUSSED

### IT Strategy

- McMaster IT Strategic Plan Preview
- Cyber Security
- Wireless Upgrade
- Office 365
- Mobile App
- Wi-Fi Improvement Suggestions
- Communication
- Identity Access Management Project

### IT Services/Programs & Projects

- Student Help Desk in Mills Library
- Lyons New Media Centre
- Thode Makerspace
- A2L App
- Lynda.com/LinkedIn Learning
- Student Ancillary Fees - Opt-out
- Registrar Office Website Project

## IN THE NEWS

### [Students and campus IT: creating a better experience through the McMaster IT Student Advisory Committee](#)

"Why is it important for students to input into the McMaster IT journey?"

Vinay: It's important for students to lend their voice and be heard. Being part of this committee has made me feel my opinion is valued. I feel that McMaster IT staff are actually listening and want to implement positive change for us.

Eric: It's really a two-way relationship. We're so dependent on technology now that we need the knowledge to truly invest in ourselves and our experience at McMaster. So it's important to be involved to make the most of our time here, and not take for granted all of the technology and opportunities available to us."

Vinay Padalia, 4th Year Commerce, Student Accounts and Cashiers representative

Eric Howarth, 3rd Year Public Law and Judicial Studies, Social Sciences Society representative

## ITSAC Members' Feedback

### COMMUNICATION

In the ITSAC meeting discussions in 2018-19, a common theme emerged on student communications. All the service providers that presented at ITSAC were seeking recommendations from students on how to create awareness amongst the students of the IT services and resources that are available and how to communicate with students on IT matters. Based on the feedback from committee members, it is evident that there is no one best way to communicate with students. Overall, it is quite evident that students are overwhelmed with the volume of emails they receive from various McMaster stakeholders. Our approach must be multi-channelled and diverse to reach a wide range of students with different communication styles and preferences.

**It is recommended that the list of suggestions below be reviewed by the project leads and IT service providers prior to presenting at ITSAC. Presenters requiring communications input and/or guidance should also come prepared with a proposed communication content (e.g. draft email copy; promotional materials) to be reviewed by the committee during the meeting.**

**Students suggested the following to IT service providers:**

#### Email Communication

In order to use email as a communication tool with students across campus, the following were recommended by ITSAC members:

- Use a catchy subject line, and ensure only critical emails are labelled as such
- Send emails from a well-known and recognizable source
- Keep the communication to just a few sentences
- Do not include images that need to be downloaded
- Use ITSAC meetings to review draft emails
- Send emails in the morning (10 am works best)

#### Promotion of IT Services

The following suggestions on the promotion of IT services were brought forward by the committee:

- Use existing platforms to promote IT services and resources, e.g. Library website, A2L, Mosaic tile & notifications. A2L, in particular, was most recommended to promote critical training like cyber security.
- Use language that resonates with students. For example, “Student Perks” – to identify student IT resources and services; “Stay Safe Online” – to create awareness on digital security; step-by-step guides.
- Start with highlighting a specific IT service, rather than list all services. For example, use locations with high student traffic at Starbucks, McMaster University Student Centre (MUSC), and libraries. Pick a theme for a month at a time to promote IT services.

- Develop promotional campaigns with graphics to better digest the information, and share them across all available social media platforms, making it easier for student leaders to share from official accounts to their constituents.
- Provide training on the basic use of software that students have access to. Offer more IT workshops that are linked to the campaigns. For example, digital tools workshops offered by Lyons New Media Centre on PhotoShop, Illustrator, etc. Also, leverage free learning resources like Lynda.com/LinkedIn Learning on topics of interest to students. This can also help when the university is deciding whether to continue providing these services to students.
- Offer open houses and booths at events.

### Partners to Help Promote IT Services

Partnering with our campus community groups to promote IT services was highly recommended by the ITSAC members. Specific groups that were identified included:

- Community advisors
- Residence life
- Libraries
- MSU, GSA, and Faculty Societies
- Campus Store
- Facebook groups (e.g. class of 2022, etc.) – group admins can pin posts to the top
- Welcome Week representatives
- Student Success Centre
- Academic Advisors

### Events Where IT Services Can be Promoted

The following events were recognized by the committee to promote IT services and to create awareness on IT matters among the prospective, first-year, upper-level, and graduate students.

- Welcome Week
- May@Mac
- Spooktacular/Student Services Fair
- Library Fair
- Student Tours
- Fall Preview
- Club Fest

### Resources & Incentives to Draw Students' Attention

ITSAC advocated that more resources and incentives need to be created to draw students' attention to IT campaigns and promotion on campus. The following represent common themes identified:

- Use lawn signs to communicate events and IT services offered
- Offer promotional materials:
  - Promotional pens
  - Blown up QR code at key locations
  - Flyers inside textbooks at Campus Store
  - Coffee sleeves with promotional content
- Provide infographics promoting the IT service for a period of time to catch students' attention. These can be shared by student groups on social media.
- Provide promotional posters to be placed in student residences, libraries, and MUSC.
- Contribute to MSU swag bag – during Welcome Week

- Provide information for *Surviving First Year* pamphlets that are given out to incoming first year students by faculties and MSU services during Welcome Week and first semester.
- Add information to Faculty Handouts
- Create and promote 30-second videos that can be shared on social media: e.g. Instagram, Reddit, and Facebook
- Offer *How-to* videos on the specific IT service, e.g. Office 365, which answer the question “Why should students use this service?”
- Offer contests, e.g. Instagram uploads

## STUDENT FEEDBACK ON THE MOBILE APPLICATION STRATEGY

The Mobile Applications Strategy and Implementation is one of the key initiatives identified under the Transformative Information Technologies and Services pillar within the McMaster IT Strategic Plan. ITSAC members were asked at March and April meetings to share their thoughts on the student mobile application features and student survey input.

The following functionality was identified:

- Notifications: emergency, snow days
- Top five features identified from a previous student survey for the launch
- Ability to customize or personalize
- Mobile friendly version of Mosaic
- Daily tips for stress management/mental health
- Money management: fees due, outstanding balance
- Study tips/tactics
- Find empty room to study/group work
- Go Bus schedule
- Find free food on campus, discounts
- Social media integration

### Feedback on the proposed mobile app survey

The following suggestions were identified by ITSAC members to be included in the mobile app survey:

- Use language that is less IT focused. For example: What would you like to see in the palm of your hand/on your phone?
- Set expectations at the beginning of the survey with how long this will take or provide progress bar
- Categorize content into groups and add branding:
  - Services
  - Schedules
  - Activities / Sports
  - Student Life
  - Academics
- Add notifications and due dates as an option
- Promote the survey more broadly. For example, offer the survey to May@Mac participants to gather feedback from prospective students; and include graduate students

## Member Reflections

### OVERVIEW

At the last ITSAC meeting in March 2019, members were asked to reflect on their first year on the committee. Specifically, the format of the meetings, discussion topics, and student engagement. We asked the students to indicate what we should START, STOP and CONTINUE going forward. The information presented below represents direct quotes from student members gathered through an interactive brainstorming session. Feedback from this session will be incorporated in the future ITSAC meetings, starting in September 2019.

### START

- Provide an online forum to further conversations beyond the meetings (quite a few presentations felt stopped short and once I had to step out of the meeting to catch the presenter for a few more minutes)
- At the beginning of each meeting, debrief the last meeting topic to see if more ideas have developed (very brief – q: do you have anything to add about the last meeting?) ~ 2min
- Include presenter key objective/outcome for meeting with us
- Infographics or email templates created based on resources & new info to distribute to students and staff
- A place for all resources shared previously
- Split into smaller groups more often (ex. Office 365)
  - Lets us get our ideas out
- Have more opportunities for immediate feedback on potential communications
- IT Student Advisory Committee Newsletter to be sent to committee members to share
- Allowing more discussion time / input from the members from the different societies and groups

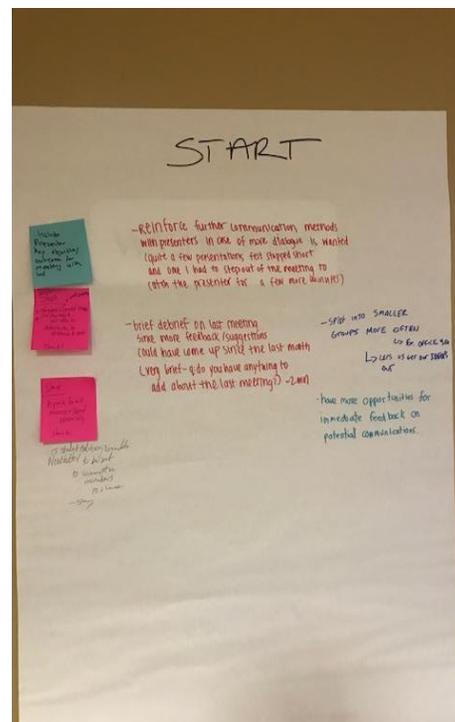


Figure 5 - brainstorming worksheet with START ideas

## STOP

- Limited time for large discussions
- Using old topics
- Sending too many emails

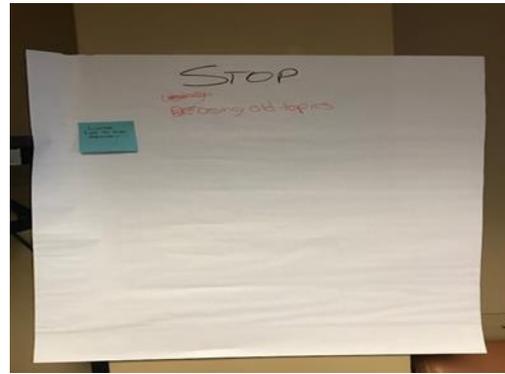


Figure 6 - brainstorming worksheet with STOP ideas

## CONTINUE

- Using Confluence (agenda, notes, updates, minutes) – *voted up by several members*
- Using multimedia to showcase agendas
- Involving a diverse group of student advocates
  - SAS and SCS were great
- Continue to invite members to at-large events
- 5 min introduction:
  - Sets an engaging atmosphere
  - Reinforces role (who I am representing)
- Distributing presentation materials from different presenters on Confluence – gave me time to preview and ask my constituents around for their thoughts
- 5 – 6:30 pm works magically, this room is accessible
- Updates on current IT projects
- Continued familiar faces (faculty members/staff, governance)
- Crisscrossing networks
- Email reminders of the meeting with the minutes of the last meeting & agenda of the next one linked – *voted up by another member*
- FOOD
- Presenters
- The respect between presenters, constituents (the members), staff – Thank you!
- Frequency of meetings is perfect; updates and agenda previews help with the organization; input from student members

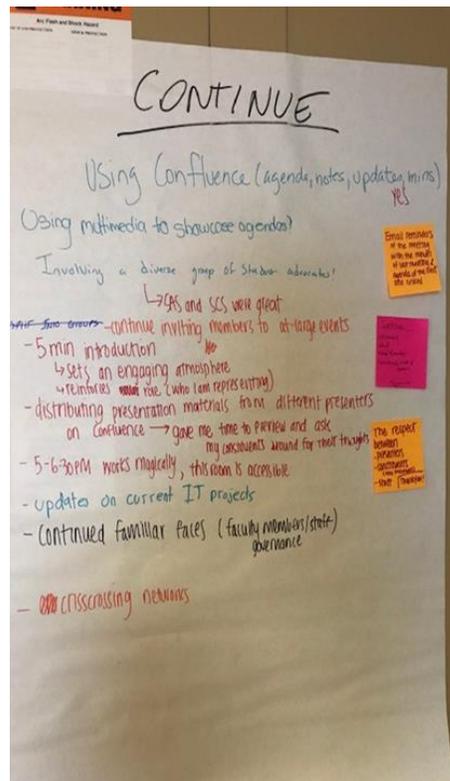


Figure 7 - brainstorming worksheet with CONTINUE ideas

## Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on the overall feedback from ITSAC members gathered through meeting discussions.

### CENTRAL PLATFORM

IT services and programs are difficult to locate for students as they are dispersed through various departments on campus. This represents a missed opportunity for students to utilize these offerings while at McMaster. ITSAC recommends that the IT services and programs offerings reside in a central location/platform that students are already using, e.g. library website.

### PROMOTION

ITSAC members also felt that the IT services and programs should be more widely promoted on campus, in locations with high student traffic and concentration. Highlighting one IT service or theme per month is recommended to create visibility of that service and not to overwhelm the students with too much information.

### TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT

IT support/training should be provided in an inclusive manner for students of all abilities. Partnership with campus groups that already support students to promote IT services and programs, and to create awareness on IT matters is another recommendation from the committee. A proposal for a Learning Hub should be considered to provide IT workshops on digital tools with links to free learning resources, e.g. Lynda.com/LinkedIn Learning. Also, there should be IT services presence at student events; and training and development for student staff that directly engage with students, e.g. community advisors, and student support staff.

### BUDGET

ITSAC recommends that there is an annual budget allocated to promotion of IT services on campus and to seek student input on IT matters. This budget should be used to create incentives for students to provide feedback, e.g. surveys, and to create promotional materials that can be distributed throughout campus community in physical spaces, and online.