

# ITSAC ANNUAL REPORT

2019-20

Academic  
Year

**McMaster University**

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



Photo 1: Members of the 2019-20 IT Student Advisory Committee:

From the top left: Jeremy Sewnauth, Jet'aime Fray-Samuel, Stephanie Koehl, Ryan Payne, Vraj Shah, Ashley Reddy, Maxwell Lightstone, Karol Serkis, Thomas Hankins, Areeb Khawaja;

From the bottom left: Nick Riddick, Aqeel Anas, Christa Morrison, Lauren Breen, Emma Yim, Marzena Kielar

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## Introduction

The Information Technology Student Advisory Committee (ITSAC) provides a forum for undergraduate, 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) by providing the opportunity for student input into the McMaster IT Strategy and matters relevant to IT Governance committees. To accomplish this, ITSAC will:

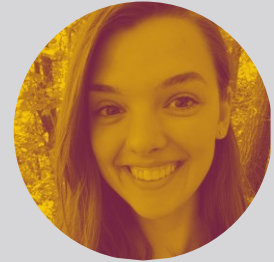
- create a platform for students to advise on their technology needs, priorities, and concerns
- establish a channel for communication between students, IT service providers, and IT Governance committees
- build relationships across student organizations and IT units and departments on campus
- provide 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
- empower ITSAC 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 reconvened in September 2019 and met six times over the Fall 2019 and Winter 2020 terms. The ITSAC 2019-2020 session intended to continue building awareness of existing IT services, programs and projects, and seek input on broader student communication.

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

### Student Feedback



Stephanie:

"The board is a really fantastic opportunity to build a relationship between students and IT Governance...It was a really awesome experience to be able to advocate for the needs of the students and be able to see that feedback being implemented."

[Stephanie's Full Feedback available on Flipgrid](#)

## Membership

The ITSAC represents a wide range of McMaster undergraduate and graduate students. 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.

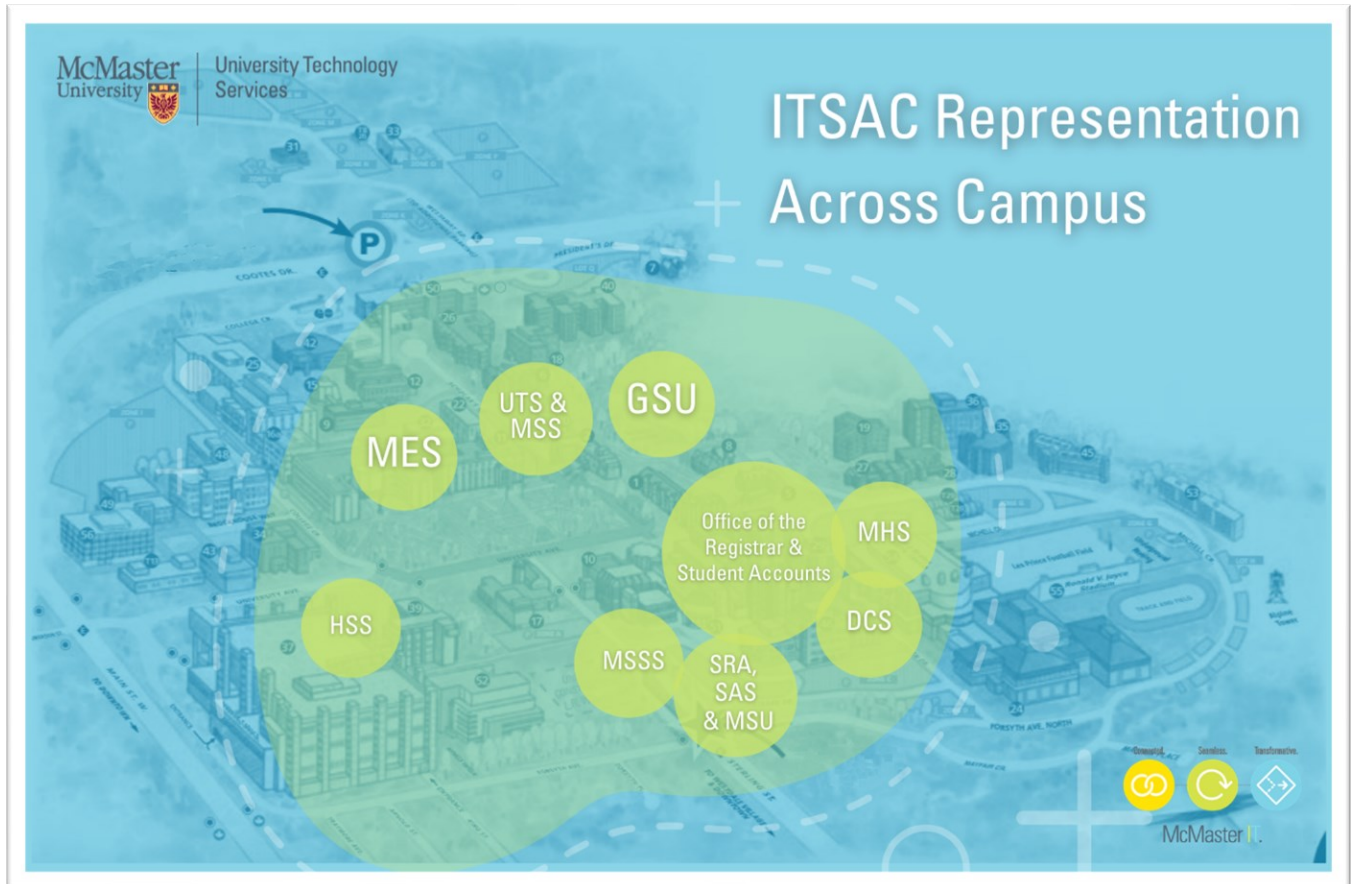


Figure 1 - interconnected network of diverse student groups, and departments that service students

## 2019-20 ITSAC MEMBERS

**Aqeel Anas**  
Registrar's Office

**Haider Khan**  
First Year Council (FYC)

**Christa Morrison (Co-Chair)**  
MacPherson Institute

**Lauren Breen**  
Social Sciences Society

**Thomas Hankins**  
McMaster Student Union (MSU)

Student Representative Assembly (SRA)  
(Term 2)

**No representation**  
Humanities Society

**Nick Riddick**

**Karol Serkis**  
Graduate Student Member at Large

**Emma Yim**  
Student Accessibility Services (SAS)

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

**Ryan Payne (Term 1)**  
**Stephon Ryan (Term 2)**  
University Technology Services (UTS)  
Help Desk

**Youssef Mikhail**  
Engineering Society

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

**Ninglu Weng**  
Health Sciences Society

**Aras Siddiqui**  
Library Information Technology

**No representation**  
Commerce Society

**Ashley Reddy (Term 1)**  
Student Representative Assembly (SRA)

**No representation**  
Student Success Centre

**Jeremy Sewnauth**  
Society of Off Campus Students

**Vraj Shah**  
Science Society

**Stephanie Koehl**  
Undergraduate Student Member at Large

**Maxwell Lightstone**  
Graduate Student Association (GSA)

**Jet'aime Fray-Samuel (Term 1)**  
Student Accounts and Cashiers



## Strategic Objectives

ITSAC plays a critical role in providing input into McMaster IT Strategic Planning. More specifically, ITSAC supports 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 the Senior Manager, Strategic Implementations, Manager Communications & Culture, and the Communications & Marketing Strategist, Registrar's Office. Their attendance ensures we 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 asked for input on key IT strategic initiatives such as the rollout of Microsoft Office 365, the Campus Wireless Upgrade, and Cyber Security. Raising awareness and discussing these initiatives help inform future IT strategic direction, implementation strategies, and communication planning.

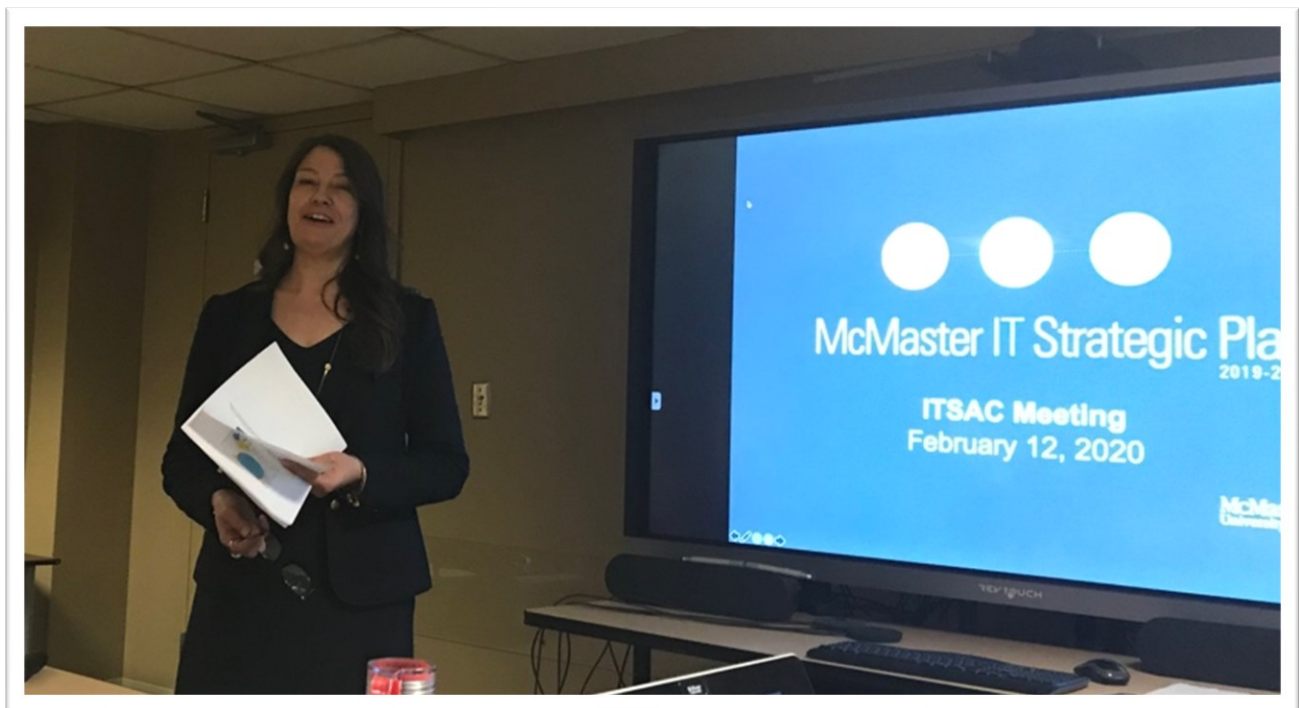


Figure 2 - Gayleen Gray, Chief Technology Officer and Assistant Vice President, talking about the McMaster IT Strategic Plan

## ITSAC Members' Objectives

At the first ITSAC meeting, in September 2019, members were asked to submit their objectives for the committee using Microsoft Teams. The word graphic represents overall themes that were identified. The larger the word, the more often the word was found in the submissions from the members.

These goals align with the members' responsibilities as outlined in the [ITSAC Terms of Reference](#).

### ADVOCATE

Many goals were motivated by members' desire to advocate, educate, and inform fellow students on "IT services they weren't aware of" or Other motivations were centred around how to better use already-known services, such as Mosaic, or "how to make technology accessible."

### REPRESENT

Members wanted their voices heard, particularly on "the specific technological **concerns** of students." Other members were student leaders and seeking ways to represent the student body and their interests.

### LEARN

ITSAC members expressed their goal to learn about "different technologies and services available on campus, "IT Governance," and broader "student concerns regarding IT."

### IMPROVE

Some members expressed a general desire to improve IT services, such as Wi-Fi and accessibility, other had more specific recommendations, such as streamlining software experiences for front-end users, simplifying IT tools so students are not overwhelmed, and increased collaboration between departments servicing IT.



Figure 3 - Word Graphic

# ITSAC 2019-20

## @ a Glance

### STUDENT REPRESENTATION:

- 82% (18 of 22) positions filled
- 16 student groups and services represented

### ATTENDANCE:

- Average Fall term attendance was 75%
- Winter term was 59%

### USEFUL LINKS:

- [Agendas and Notes](#)
- [ITSAC webpage](#)

## Topics Discussed

The ITSAC met six times over the course of Fall 2019 and Winter 2020. A list of topics chosen for discussion is based on IT strategic initiatives, programs, and services being undertaken during the academic year.

### IT Strategy

- McMaster IT Strategic Plan
- Course Planning Portal
- McMaster Wireless
- Cybersecurity
- Microsoft Office 365
- Digital Accessibility
- McMaster IT Governance
- Learning Management System Review

### IT Programs and Services

- Lyons New Media Centre
- Echo 360
- MacPherson supported educational tech
- LinkedIn Learning
- Library Website – User Experience
- New Exam Scheduling Software
- OSCARPlus Upgrade
- Student Choice Initiative
- PebblePad & PressBooks
- MacVideo



## Topics Discussed and Student Feedback

The ITSAC Chairs identified new and existing student IT services and programs. Guest speakers discussed new IT programs, projects and services to solicit student feedback on changes to existing and proposed services. In addition, ITSAC members were invited to raise topics of interest and concern.

Guest speakers championed each topic using different engagement activities. This was a suggestion from the 2018-19 ITSAC members. These took a form of gamification (e.g. Bingo, Jeopardy, Escape Room) with intent to provide opportunities for collaboration, discussion, and engagement during the meetings.

The following suggestions were identified for further analysis:

- Create an online technology support community for students like the existing McMaster Reddit or similar
- Create a public facing central Wiki for technology support that students will populate and use
- Use of collaborative and communication platforms
- Importance of enhanced WiFi
- Create a chatbot to guide users according to questions or keywords to online technology support
- Create a dashboard/portal (with filtering tool) of all student IT Services Available to Students
- Provide a DNS list of McMaster websites
- Importance of AODA compliance

## Wi-Fi AT McMASTER AND CYBERSECURITY

### *Discussed at the October 2019 meeting*

The information on [McMaster Campus-Wide WiFi Enhancement](#) and Cybersecurity were shared through an engaging interactive Jeopardy Game and Q&A session presented in the format of an Escape Room. The Cybersecurity group was divided into two teams. One team worked on cybersecurity clues and the other team had the opportunity to ask more questions about WiFi. It was a great opportunity for ITSAC members to understand wireless at McMaster and expand on cybersecurity awareness.

Students have had many questions about campus wireless, access beyond campus buildings, and status of project completion. These discussions and considerations factored into the development of the [Wireless at McMaster website](#). Here students can get answers to questions about all things wireless, along with FAQs, step-by-step guides, and support.

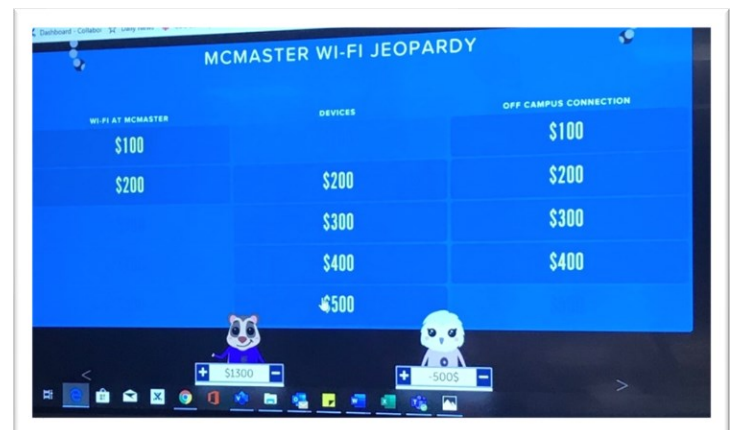


Figure 4 - interactive Jeopardy Game

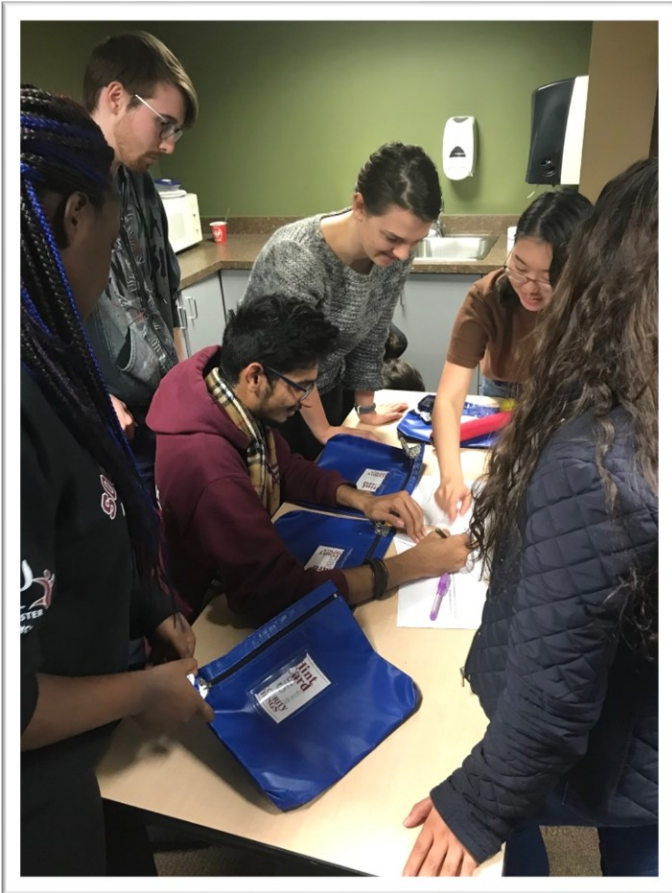


Figure 7 - Teams working together

Similarly, ITSAC input also helped guide how McMaster IT communicates and provides information on cybersecurity to students. Feedback from both teams was that the Escape Room was challenging, well organized, and fun. It was a great way to learn about cybersecurity (e.g. things to look for in a phishing email). Using this feedback from ITSAC, the Escape Room activity was delivered across the student population as part of UTS' 2019 National Cyber Security Awareness Month campaign. Other post-secondary institutions have requested and leveraged this approach for their future cyber security engagement and knowledge-building events.



Figure 6 - Team working on cybersecurity clues



Figure 5 - Asking questions about WiFi

## LINKEDIN LEARNING AND LYONS NEW MEDIA CENTRE

### *Discussed at the November 2019 meeting*

During this session, the value that students can get from using LinkedIn were highlighted and a Bingo game helped reinforce the information. The following themes were identified:

- Business, technology and creative skills are the LinkedIn Learning topics of interest. The tool has over 15,000 courses.
- Entering in skills can customize your dashboard / landing page for LinkedIn Learning.
- Sharing your information with LinkedIn when you link your profile.
- Bookmarking videos and executing items in sequence to achieve certificate of completion can be shared via network if connected to your profile.
- Filtering results in terms of content, type of course, and level (beginner, intermediate, advanced).
- Learning paths give you a list of courses to take to become a master. Typically, they have 8-9 courses. You would master, learn, and practice a skill set with a learning path.

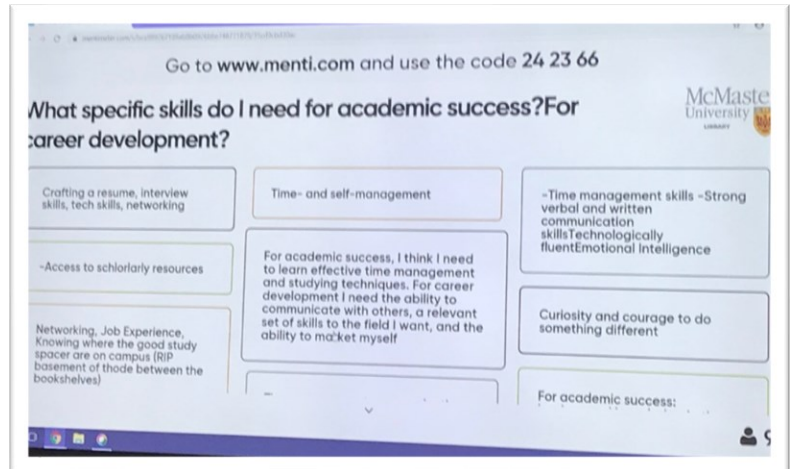


Figure 8 - Skills for success

Members identified the following skills for academic success and for career development:

- Crafting a resume, interview skills, tech skills, networking, job experience
- Time-management and self-management skills
- Verbal and written skills
- Access to scholarly resources
- Curiosity and courage to do something different
- Finding study spaces on campus



Figure 9 - ITSAC discussion



The committee visited the Lyons New Media Centre on the 4<sup>th</sup> floor of Mills Library to get a sense of the services available to them. Elaine Westenhoefer, Digital Media Specialist, gave a tour of the studio and answered questions before taking photos of students in front of the green screen. What followed was a tutorial of how to use photoshop to drop in a background on a green screen image. This provided the students with hands-on experience using some of the IT services that are available.

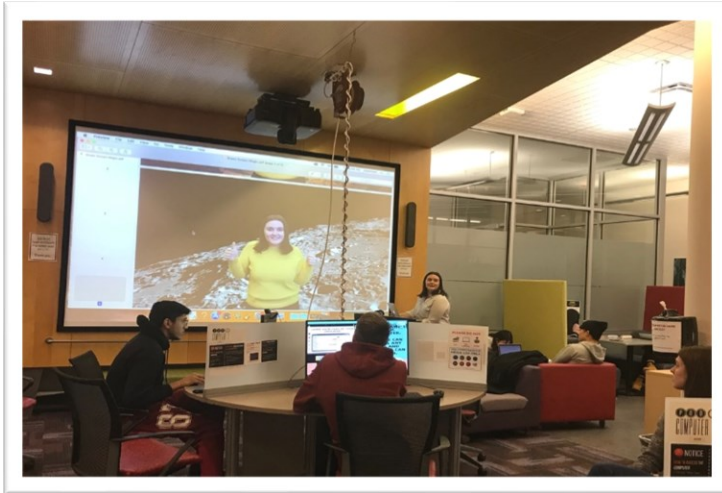


Figure 10 - Learning about editing using green screen

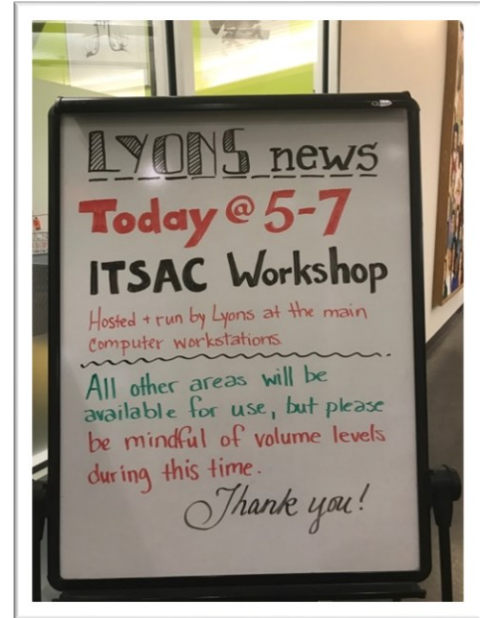


Figure 13 - Lyons' News



Figure 11 - fun with the green screen

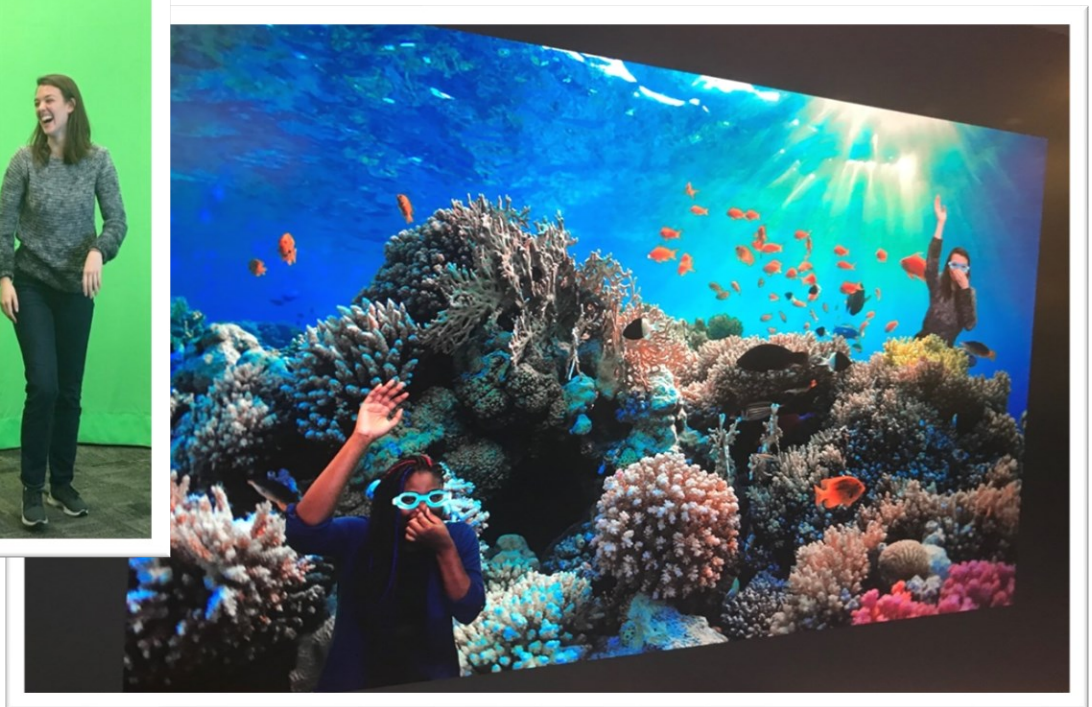


Figure 12 – Dropping in a background

## ECHO360 & COURSE OUTLINE PLANNING PORTAL

### *Discussed at the January 2020 meeting*

Currently, there are 34 classrooms set up with Echo360 and 75 courses are being recorded with over 2000 captures scheduled (multiple sections). New rooms are now being equipped with Echo360. The following features were discussed:

- Note taking
- Bookmarks
- Asking question
- Confusion Flag
- Transcript & searching by keyword
- Study Guide
- Discussion Feed
- PowerPoints can be downloaded, but video cannot
- Mobile app
- Live streaming and uploaded presentation

The Echo 360 MSU Adhoc Committee is a new committee that intends to build a strategy to reach out to as many students and instructors to promote and develop a summarized document outlining Echo360 benefits. The following themes were identified:

- Reach out to stakeholders
- Undergraduate affairs
- Associate deans
- Teaching staff – then will shift communication to students
- Opportunity to bridge the community
- Students and instructors
- Document will be distributed later this term

Echo360 supports a diverse population and universal design for inclusive learning. Getting to class, paying attention in class, and learning in class may be a barrier, an area Echo360 can help.

**Course Outline Planning Portal:** The purpose of the project is to implement a [Course Outline Planning Portal](#) that will guide instructors through comprehensive course planning process. The following were discussed:

- How to connect with students?
- What do you want?
- Other modalities and ways of interacting with course outline
- Link course outlines to the Mosaic shopping cart by making it more seamless
- What information is salient?
- What falls under experiential learning? This is a way of identifying classes that include assignment outside of the classroom.
- How are you using course outlines? By 4th year students can find outlines. The course outlines can be used to pick classes by understanding the workload

Few members expressed interest in participating in this project.



## AVENUE TO LEARN, WEBEX, MACVIDEO, PEBBLEPAD & PRESSBOOKS

*Discussed at the January 2020 meeting*

The following was shared with the committee:

- LMS Review – survey 866 students responded, and a continuous improvement survey will be done each Spring
- WebEx – web conferencing solution, online teaching (live streaming) and collaborative communication app (WebEx Teams)
- MacVideo – (McMaster's private "YouTube" platform - heavy use for online courses using video, opportunity to create video and add in-video quizzes
- PebblePad – learning portfolio to share beyond McMaster, additional training for instructors planned.
- PressBooks – open education, opportunity for students to create open resources in collaboration with instructors.

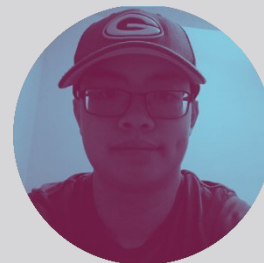
## McMASTER IT STRATEGIC PLAN

*Discussed at the February 2020 meeting*

Developing platforms for students to advise on their technology needs, priorities, and concerns is key to the success of the [McMaster IT Strategic Plan](#). ITSAC is one such platform. The following IT initiatives, and themes were discussed:

- Replacement of the identity management system - next phase will be to provide enhancements; presence on the [cto.mcmaster.ca](http://cto.mcmaster.ca) with [status on the initiatives](#)
- Digital Spaces across campus
- Active classrooms
- Internet of Things, 5G, improve automation, data flow
- [Cisco smart building occupancy](#) is available in few buildings on campus
- Microsoft Office 365
- CRM system for recruitment and student success
- Mobile app strategy
- McMasterVR: Nuclear Reactor app available in Apple Store and Google Play; Explore McMaster's nuclear reactor without leaving home; looking for ideas for different apps (e.g. green space on campus)
- One card system
- [Course planning portal](#) - for course outlines
- Smart campus initiatives - trying to provide tech that can support activity and gather data which can inform decisions
- expansion of the DeGroote School of Business building
- New grad admissions system

### Student Feedback



Matt:

"Each and every session you learn something new...It would be a good opportunity for you to learn about the inner workings would function within the IT department."

[Matt's Full Feedback available on Flipgrid](#)

Students asked about the implementation of the One card system and how or if there would be integration with the Presto card, a bus pass that all undergraduates are already eligible to receive. Other institutions, such as Waterloo University have already implemented this system. Other considerations were what measures ITSAC members could do to help. Involvement in IT Governance Committees, project steering committees, provide feedback on projects presented at ITSAC were all identified as means of involvement and prompting among the greater student body.

## MICROSOFT OFFICE 365

### *Discussed at the February 2020 meeting*

The following feedback and suggestions were brought forward by the committee to continue promoting Microsoft Office 365 to McMaster students:

- First Year projects - incorporate in the classroom, collaborate with classmates; engage 1st year instructors
- International Students: translator app
- Accessibility offices
- Dept IT communication to the 1st year students
- Keep alumni in the loop via Yammer
- Class Announcements
- Avenue/Mosaic links
- TA office hours via Teams, troubleshoot errors, answer common questions on the Teams channel
- OneNote: Immersive reader
- Use SharePoint as a landing page for Microsoft Office 365 information
- Record teams' videos and transcriptions
- Engage instructors; part of course work, especially for 1st year group work to ensure integration
  - Student orientation sessions
  - Do not use email for communication → communicate via IT dept. staff; have IT staff talk to 1st students

### Resources shared:

- [McMaster Office 365 Hub](#)
- [Office Quick Starts](#)
- [Microsoft Translate](#)
- [Presenter Coach](#)
- [Word References/Citing](#)
- [Read Aloud](#)



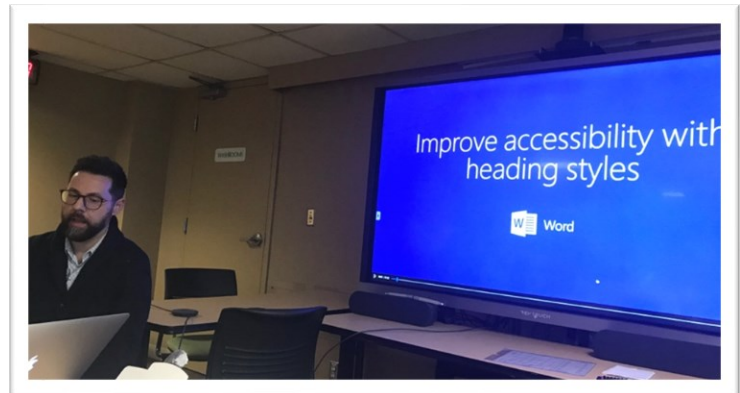
Figure 14 - ITSAC members working together

## ACCESSIBLE DIGITAL MEDIA DESIGN

*Discussed at the March 2020 meeting*

The information on [accessible digital media design](#) was presented and the following were discussed:

- Heading and document structure
- Video captions, McMaster Accessibility Captioning Resources
- Bullets and Numbered Lists
- Colour and contrast
- Digital barriers to access are created every day
- Hyperlinks
- AODA requirements and good skills to have for job searching
- Image Alt-text
- Actively seeking out more knowledge/training
- How to remove external barriers



*Figure 15 - Accessible Digital Media Design presentation*



*Figure 16 - Accessible Digital Media Design presentation*



## LIBRARY WEBSITE USER EXPERIENCE

*Discussed at the March 2020 meeting*

Information shared:

**ITSAC Library website user experience presentation**

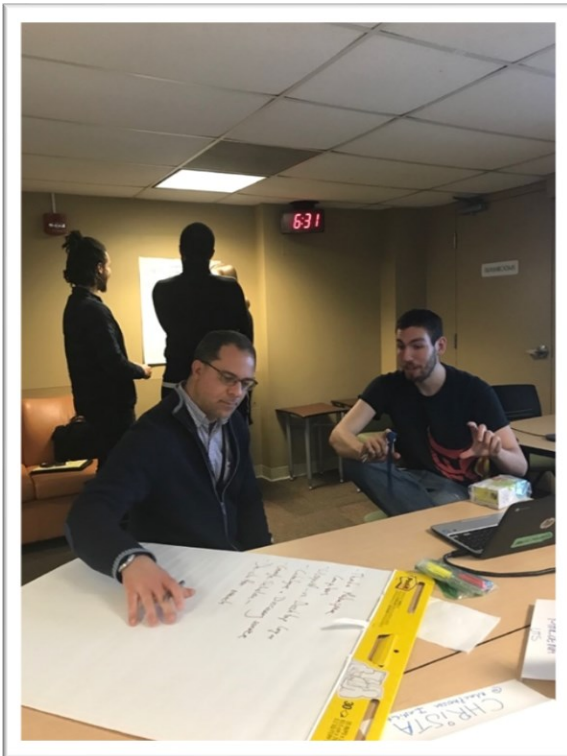


Figure 17 - Asking questions

### Mills Memorial Library

- Great location, easy to find, and convenient.
- Looking for better ways to find items more quickly online; sophisticated search parameters
- Google Scholar is popular
- Papers are outdated, suggestion is to move online
- Library gets full, looking for available seats
- Recommendation is to look at technology solutions and trends; track available seats by floor; crowd-source feedback

#### Questions asked of students:

- How might the Library improve your experience?
- Your expectations and experiences vs Library reality?
- How might the Library close that gap?
- Where to make immediate fixes?
- Where to implement longer-term solutions?
- Where to develop experiential innovation?

Responses were captured in small group discussions and the following student feedback was captured for:

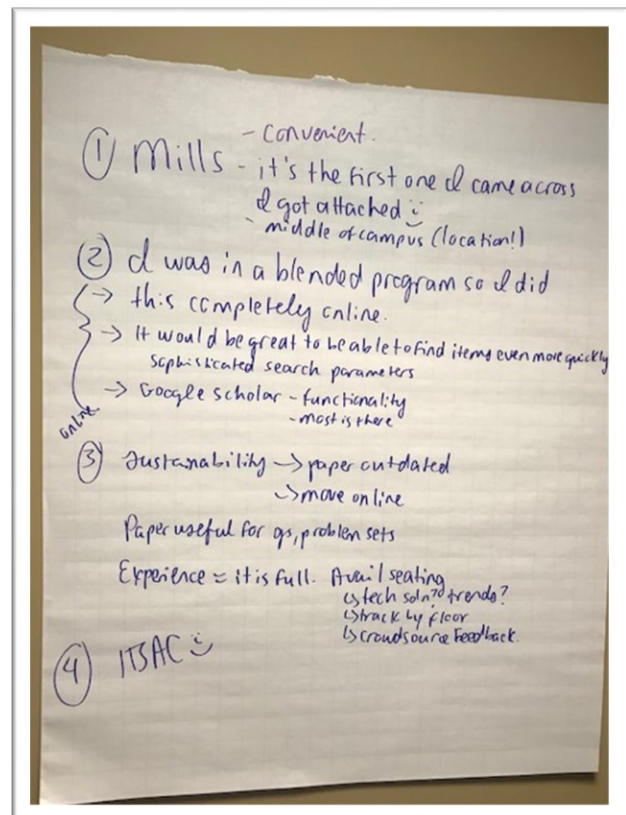


Figure 18 - Information gathering

## H. G. Thode Library and Innis Library

- Thode is great for engineering students, close to classes; good space set-up
- Innis is used by commerce students, close to classes
- Science and Social Science resources are good but not enough business resources: e.g. marketing and finance
- Study rooms are sometimes used by individuals
- Booking rooms is tedious
- By comparison Mills has lots more books
- Students like the library's recommended books
- Not enough chargers at every desk

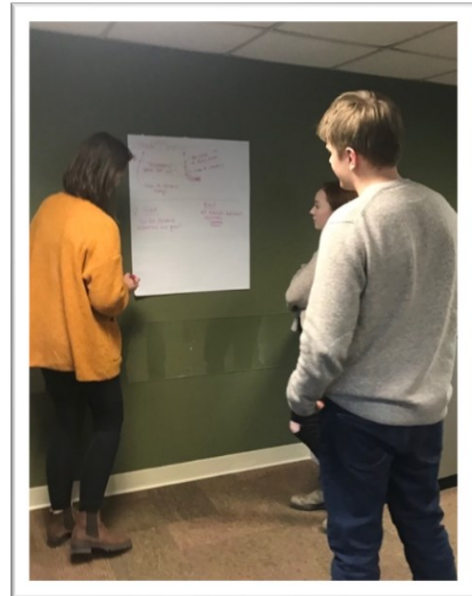


Figure 19 - Library information gathering

## Health Sciences Library

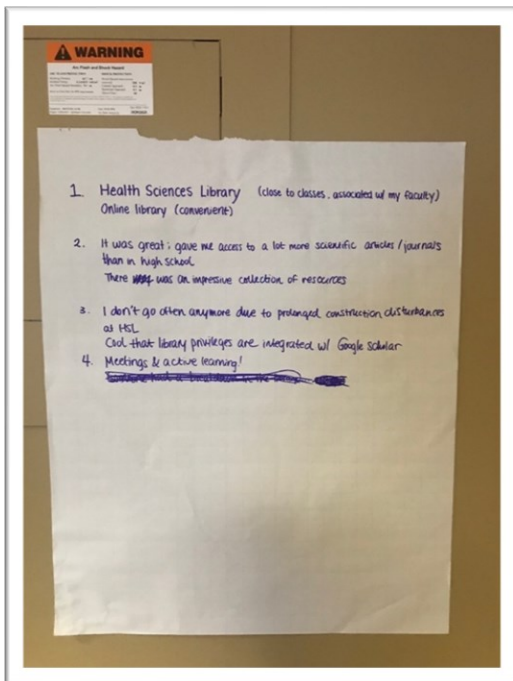


Figure 20- notes about Health Sciences Library

- Close to classes for FHS students
- Convenient online library
- Impressive collection of resources
- Library privileges integrated with Google Scholar
- Looking for opportunities to host meetings and active learning



## Main Takeaways

- Students are looking for a common platform for all the IT Services available to them. Need to have the ability to either search or filter based on interest.
- An online technology support community for students would help with common student questions. In addition, a public facing central wiki for technology support that students would populate and use.
- Students would welcome a chatbot to guide users according to questions or keywords to online technology support.
- Students are looking for opportunities to learn more about technology tools available to them. For example, workshops at the Lyons New Media Centre, LinkedIn Learning, Microsoft Office 365.
- An Escape Room type of activity is a fantastic opportunity for students to learn about Cybersecurity. Similar ideas should be explored for other technology topics to engage with students.
- To continue to promote Microsoft Office 365, start with first year students and course instructors to incorporate available tools into classroom, collaboration amongst the classmates; offer TA hours via Teams; host student orientation sessions. IT staff are encouraged to promote these tools to students.
- Students are interested in accessible digital media design and would welcome more sessions/workshops in the future to create more awareness on this topic.

### Student Feedback



Vinay:

"I felt that the people we were giving ideas to were receptive to our feedback."

[Vinay's Full Feedback available on Flipgrid](#)

## 2019-20 ITSAC Retrospective

- Incorporated the [feedback from the first year of ITSAC](#) to provide more meaningful engagement opportunities during the meetings. For example, introduced activities like Escape Room for Cyber Security Awareness and other games (Jeopardy and Bingo) to provide opportunities for students to ask questions and learn about IT Services and current IT projects. Received very positive feedback from student representatives.
- Introduced Microsoft Teams as an alternative for members to join the meetings online and provide feedback. This option proved to be a convenient way for students to join remotely into the meeting.
- Attendance at meetings was good and consistent over the academic session.
- Providing a food option at the meeting is a great incentive for the students' attendance. Other, perhaps digital incentives will need to be considered for the 2020-21 online attendance.
- Guests to the ITSAC were well prepared with activities that made the meetings more interesting and engaging.
- Membership from few student groups was challenging but overall students were well represented.
- Participation on the ITSAC provides students with better understanding of IT Strategic initiatives and governance process, offers inclusion on an IT project to represent students and offer feedback on existing services. This statement is perhaps best supported by a recent [McMaster Women in Tech series changemaker for June 2020](#) and ITSAC member for the past two academic years, Stephanie Koehl:



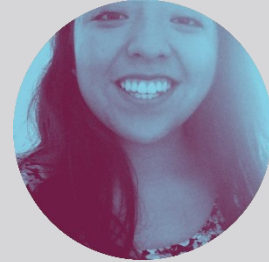
Figure 21- Quote from ITSAC member for the past two academic years, Stephanie Koehl

## How can we improve?

The ITSAC chairs are interested in continually improving the committee. Members of the McMaster community are encouraged to provide suggestions on how to make ITSAC better. If you are an IT Service provider on campus and looking for student feedback, engage with ITSAC.

Contact Christa Morrison, ITSAC Chair 2019-20 at [itsac@mcmaster.ca](mailto:itsac@mcmaster.ca).

### Student Feedback



Selene:

“This creates a lot more opportunities for students to speak out and give them perspective on issues that are affecting them in their everyday experiences.”

[Selene's Full  
Feedback available on  
Flipgrid](#)