



November 13, 2014

Dear Members of the McMaster Community,

Over the last few months the MSU and University leaderships have been reflecting on the role of the university with regard to local, national and global conflicts: the understanding that our scholars can promote, the many perspectives that their research can illuminate, the opportunities we have to share opinions and experiences within our community, and to educate ourselves, students, staff and faculty alike, about the issues facing our society and the world at large.

Although the relationship of the University to the outside world is a complex one, it is clear that our campus cannot be an island, existing separately and apart from global events. Such detachment would not only be unrealistic but would be in opposition to our responsibilities as scholars, learners, teachers and thinkers. Our campus, similarly, cannot be immune from the currents of global conflict. As a University, we must respond in the best way we know how: through scholarship. If we are to be of value to the society that we seek to serve, this has to be a place where even the most difficult and divisive issues can be discussed in a respectful, collegial and inclusive way, and without damage to the emotional, mental or physical well-being of members of our community. We should use the tools at our disposal--critical-thinking, reflection and inquiry--to promote understanding, mediate and moderate discussion, and strive for peace. If this endeavour doesn't live within the academy it is unlikely to thrive anywhere.

Some of the motions brought to the MSU's General Assembly last March, which focused on the relationship of the student body to the conflict in the Middle East, demonstrate the interest of members of our community in discussing the University's engagement with even the most challenging global issues. Our responsibility as an institution of higher learning is to provide an appropriate environment for these conversations--one that prizes thoughtful reflection and respectful discussion--and that defends above all else our commitment to a safe and inclusive community. To this end, for the 2014/15 academic year, we are initiating a campus-wide peace campaign, entitled *Perspectives on Peace*.

The intention is that *Perspectives on Peace* will foster creative dialogues around global issues with an emphasis on peace and conflict resolution. Within a framework of scholarly programming and interdisciplinary learning opportunities, members of the campus community will be encouraged to engage with one another to consider the root causes of conflicts and productive strategies towards their resolution, in a spirit of conciliation and inclusion. The details of the campaign, which is being coordinated jointly by the Office of Human Rights and Equity Services (HRES) and MSU Diversity Services, are available at <http://peace.mcmaster.ca/>. Further information will be added over the coming weeks. We welcome and encourage participation in *Perspectives on Peace* from any and all members of the McMaster community who are willing to engage constructively with the themes of the campaign. Our collective ability to understand and overcome conflict depends on our willingness to participate in the discussion. We sincerely hope that you will join us for these critical conversations.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Patrick Deane".

Patrick Deane  
President and Vice-Chancellor  
McMaster University

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Teddy Saull".

Teddy Saull  
President  
McMaster Students Union