

Jan 17th, 2024
2:36
C.B

Emilie Kalaydjian USC President Candidate Platform

1. Campus Culture and Student Life

1.1. Multicultural Week

1.1.1. Recognizing the growing diversity of students at Western, as seen in the Equity Census and the instrumental role cultural identities play in fostering a sense of belonging, as USC President I will introduce Multicultural Week to Western which will take place immediately after Orientation Week. Multicultural Week will feature culturally diverse live performances on Concrete Beach, a variety of food vendors with cuisines from around the world, and highlight Western's cultural clubs. An example of this at other universities is McMaster's Multicultural Showcase and York's World Music Festival. Multicultural Week will be an opportunity for cultural appreciation and a venue where international students can share their culture. Mustangs come from all places and I am proud to celebrate their diverse backgrounds.

1.2. Weekly Live Performances at the Spoke

1.2.1. Additionally, after seeing so many amazing student performers at Battle of the Bands, Western needs more consistent opportunities to showcase students and their talents. As President, I will bring bi-weekly live performances to the Spoke with opportunities for student musicians and bands to showcase their skills. Student musicians can submit audition tapes if they are interested and will then be selected to perform at the Spoke for the weekly live music night. This will provide music students and student musicians new opportunities to expand their performance resumes. More live performances at the Spoke will highlight students with a talent and passion for the arts while providing a nostalgic nod to Western's tradition of student performers.

1.3. Lacrosse Game

1.3.1. In partnership with varsity athletics and the Indigenous Student Centre, I would like to host a lacrosse game at Western, inviting Indigenous people in the community to participate in. The game should be conducted in September, to commemorate Truth and Reconciliation Day. Recognizing how this sport has strong Indigenous ties, this event will be an engaging way to showcase Indigenous talent and provide an opportunity for education for all Western students. Through working with the Indigenous Students Centre, the game can feature a halftime ceremony that centers on Indigenous art and culture, followed by inviting an Indigenous leader to speak to the audience about the local Indigenous community. To support Western's initiatives on decolonization, this event will be an opportunity

for multiple student groups to learn more about Indigenous people and the contributions they have made to communities across Canada.

1.4. USC Varsity Games

1.4.1. To support varsity athletes and their dedication to representing the university through sports, the USC will designate a home game during various teams' seasons to assist with programming initiatives and foster a stronger relationship with the athletics community. In collaboration with the Athletes Council (MASC), the USC and its members will be encouraged to engage with varsity teams, recognizing their hard work and bolstering overall student attendance at their home games.

1.5. Speed Dating with Winder

1.5.1. Save a horse! In collaboration with Winder (now College Mixer), Western's newest dating app, the USC will host speed dating nights at the Spoke. This will allow students to connect and build potentially, life-long relationships at everyone's favourite bagel-bar. All are welcome to attend, and with specific 2SLGBTQ+ nights, we hope that this can provide a fun and safe space for anyone to build connections right on campus.

1.6. Purple Fest

1.6.1. To continue the momentum of Purple Fest next year, I would like to host it during Frost Week. While maintaining focus on first-year students, fun events will be planned for all students throughout the week, including winter-themed events like Après Ski parties, off-campus transit to skate and, of course, the final concert. Moving Purple Fest to the first week of the second semester will allow for people to be more at ease with their academic schedule and participate in a larger variety of programming.

1.7. Outdoor Fitness

1.7.1. To help alleviate overcrowding at the Rec Centre, as the USC President, I will introduce outdoor fitness events on Health Sci fields. Taking advantage of the immense green and field space on campus, the USC will host drop-in, outdoor sporting events and fitness classes. With beginner-friendly activities like yoga, tai chi, spike ball, ladder-toss, and more, the USC will provide alternatives to staying active during periods of good weather in the summer, spring, and fall months. The addition of outdoor fitness events and classes will give students more options for working on their health and wellness.

1.8. Partnering with the Forest City Film Festival

1.8.1. The second floor of UCC contains the furnished and functional McKellar Theatre but most students have not had the opportunity to see a film on campus. As the USC President, I will partner with the Forest City Film

Festival (FCFF) to bring films back to the McKellar theater. The FCFF, much like the Toronto International Film Festival, showcases a diverse slate of quality cinema at a yearly festival. By partnering with the FCFF, the McKellar Theater can be used as a location for some of FCFF's festivities. Hosting some of their films on campus will make things accessible for students in the cinematic arts who want to participate while simultaneously serving as a form of entertainment for the general student body. My team and I have been in contact with the FCFF's founder and executive director, Dorothy Downs, regarding how we can bring films to Western's campus and we are both enthusiastic about a USC-FCFF partnership. The FCFF is interested in using the McKellar Theater to screen films on Western's campus prior to their yearly, 9-day festival which is held at locations downtown. This partnership will entertain Western students and build more connections between the USC and London arts community.

1.9. Convertible Dance Studios

1.9.1. To support the thriving community of dancers on campus, classrooms in the University Community Centre should be made into convertible dance rooms. We will install mirrors on the walls of select UCC classrooms which can be converted with sliding whiteboards that will cover them when the room is used for academic purposes. This will provide student groups with more recreational spaces without losing any instructional spaces. Adjustments such as using desks with wheels and stackable chairs will make for an easy conversion from classroom to dance studio. It's time for the USC to properly address the lack of spaces for dancers and other physically active clubs by creating high-quality, accessible spaces.

1.10. Soph Spaces on Campus during Oweek

1.10.1. During Orientation Week, Sophs devote significant portions of their time to welcoming new students and giving them a fun, memorable welcome. Sophs are on campus for hours each day, with little time to go home and rest. While sophs, particularly those in residence, currently have access to "Stuph" rooms, there remains no designated resting space for Sophs on campus where they spend most of their day. As the USC President, I will create temporary Soph spaces on campus during Oweek where Sophs can rest and relax. Unused classrooms will be turned into comfortable private areas where Sophs can take well-deserved breaks and recharge.

1.11. Increasing Study Spaces

1.11.1. Every student knows the feeling of not finding a spot to study and/or eat. As the USC President, I will add new study spaces around campus by placing desks and chairs in underutilized spaces, adding ledges and stools along viable empty walls, and replacing missing furniture to optimize existing spaces. The USC must increase study spaces in accordance with

Western's increasing student population, especially considering the recent integration with Brescia. We will aim to add at least 200 new seats by the end of my term.

1.12. Helping to Create a Science Specific Study Space

1.12.1. As the USC President, I will work to assist the Faculty of Science in its current goal to introduce a space specifically for science students, similar to the Social Science Reading Room. Assisting the Faculty of Science in this goal is in the USC's best interests considering the growth of Western's student population as this will free study spaces for other students on campus. As USC President, I pledge to advocate for the creation of this space and will facilitate its construction where help from the USC may be needed. The USC will involve the Science Students' Council and the general student body to ensure that the needs of all stakeholders are met.

1.13. Extending USC Communication Initiatives to Affiliates

1.13.1. Almost every main campus student agrees that the Social Science building is a campus eyesore, but what do King's and Huron students think? Affiliates have been underrepresented in discussions surrounding campus life and student services by the USC. Throughout my tenure as President, I will ensure that affiliate students are highlighted in USC communications through initiatives like including GooseTalks on the Huron and Kings campuses and spotlights on affiliate initiatives and student life.

1.14. Brescia Legacy Club

1.14.1. To help Brescia students maintain their community and connections, as USC President I will fast-track the creation and ratification of a Brescia Legacy Club. The culture that Brescia has fostered not only has deep sentimental importance but is also an intricate aspect of the support systems, orientation and friendships Brescia students have formed with each other. This club will host transitional mixers that will provide Brescia students with an opportunity to connect with professors and academic counselors. A Brescia legacy club will be a place where former Brescia students can maintain their unique identity and support each other through their transition onto Main Campus.

1.15. A Path Forward for Greek Life

1.15.1. Greek Life at Western has been unreasonably treated as a monolith by the USC. The structure, governance, and behaviors of individual sororities and fraternities vary and how the USC works with them should also vary. Unlike previous attempts to reestablish a relationship between the USC and all Greek Life organizations, I believe the USC should interact with them on a case-by-case basis. For organizations that are interested in reestablishing a formal relationship with the USC, we will work with them

on 1-on-1 to ensure that they are completing adequate and effective EDI (Equity, Diversity, and Inclusivity) and GBSV (Gender-Based and Sexual Violence) training. We can provide interested Greek Life organizations with a pathway back to a formal relationship with the USC while also ensuring that they remain responsible for keeping our campus safe and welcoming for all.

2. Professional Development

2.1. Professional Development Formal

2.1.1. In the classroom, students learn theoretical and technical skills in their respective fields, however, in an increasingly important “who you know” community, there is a gap that is not being filled at Western. I will implement a Professional Development Formal for students to meet professionals in a multitude of fields in a semi-casual setting where they can ask questions and make connections that will help them meet their goals. Additionally, this formal will include culturally diverse professionals who can provide insight into their unique careers in their respective fields. These professionals can be contacted through Western’s expansive Alumni Association. Ultimately, showcasing nontraditional career pathways is a key element for students to have access to when considering their future employment during their undergrad.

2.2. Financial Literacy Course

2.2.1. By submitting a proposal to the Senate Subcommittee on Undergraduate Academic courses and working with the department chair of DAN Management, a course on financial literacy should be developed that is accessible to all students. It should be noted that this resource will be exceptionally helpful for international students who have not been exposed to certain Canadian policies. The content should include instructions on how to file taxes, budgeting, fraud prevention, mortgages and the utilization of basic investment accounts. Following the format McGill has taken, offering a free online module, this proposal will work to provide more accessible information for students to utilize while they are at Western and after they graduate.

2.3. “How to Benefits” during Oweek

2.3.1. Students with Purple Care have access to a plethora of benefits but with no formal direction on how to use them. The USC needs to rectify this information gap for both first-year and upper-year students. By adding information about Purple Care during the Residence Rally—already a presentation-based event—we can increase first-year students’ awareness of Purple Care’s benefits. Regarding upper-year students, the Western Now

app will be modified to include streamlined information on how to access Purple Care benefits and information booths will be stationed in the UCC throughout the academic year.

2.4. Graduate School Application Workshops

2.4.1. In partnership with the Society of Graduate Students (SOGS), a bi-weekly, free workshop will be made available for third and fourth year students to provide them with insight and tips on their graduate school applications. Considering how members of SOGS have direct experience with the graduate school application processes, they will be a direct resource for undergraduate students to network with. Additionally, through the consistency of these workshops relationships and professional networks can be built between these senior undergraduate students who are experiencing the stressful experience that is graduate applications.

2.5. Post-Graduate Achievement Fund

2.5.1. To help Western students achieve their goals and promote professional development, the USC will offer scholarships that cover the cost of writing postgraduate certifications, applications, and entrance exams such as the MCAT, LSAT, NCLEX, etc. As USC President, I will create a need-based scholarship that will be awarded to students who are devoted to their academics and are community leaders, while recognizing financial need. To promote the professional development of Western students, the USC can support aspiring postgraduates by removing these financial barriers.

3. Safety and Wellness

3.1. Updating the USC Charter to Acknowledge Religious Discrimination

3.1.1. Recognizing incidents of faith-based, religious discrimination on Western's campus and the 2021 terror attack in London that targeted the Afzaal family because of their faith, it's important that the USC Charter includes protection against religious discrimination. Currently, the USC Charter—which acts as its guiding mission statement—does not include a statement on protecting students from religious discrimination. Working with students and religious groups both at Western and in London's community, I will amend the USC Charter to remedy this critical omission. By adding the goal of protecting students from religious discrimination to the USC Charter, this will keep the USC accountable to ensure that Western students can feel safe practicing their religion.

3.2. Updating Western's Discrimination and Harassment Online Reporting Tool to Include Incidents of Religious Discrimination to Include Faith-Based, Religious Discrimination

- 3.2.1. Western's Discrimination and Harassment Online Reporting Form currently does not differentiate between cases of racism/racial discrimination and faith-based, religious discrimination. There is no option to report religious discrimination. While many cases of religious discrimination can be considered racial discrimination, not all are. This provides a gap in Western's ability to account for and address specific incidents of religious discrimination. By decoupling racial discrimination and religious discrimination, this provides greater specificity that Western can use to better address these urgent student issues. This differentiation would improve student safety and provide greater accuracy to the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Office each time a student uses the online reporting form.
 - 3.3. Athlete Reporting Tool
 - 3.3.1. Athletes are a unique population at Western because they work very closely with staff such as coaches, physiotherapists and strength trainers. Due to the intimate settings under which athletes interact with Western staff, it's important to ensure that student athletes are being treated properly during these interactions. Safeguarding policies for athletes do exist, but streamlining and simplifying the procedures that exist within these policies will make them more accessible. The creation of an anonymous reporting tool that allows athletes to report concerns they have regarding their experiences whether it be maltreatment, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, or physical abuse would address the present gap. The current reporting method requires sending an email, which is a deterrent due to the lack of anonymity and leaves athletes without support because they do not feel comfortable sending an email to report. A streamlined, anonymous process specific to athletes ensures that these reports are addressed promptly and reduces bias in pursuing the next steps.
 - 3.4. Indigenous Relations Coordinator
 - 3.4.1. As USC President, I will create a new position of Indigenous Relations Coordinator under the University Affairs Portfolio. This permanent position will be incorporated to work as a liaison between the USC and both the Indigenous Student Centre and Indigenous Student Association. A permanent Indigenous Relations Coordinator will also serve as a resource that will connect university groups with local Indigenous organizations. The addition of an Indigenous Relations Coordinator will work towards the university's efforts on decolonization and provide meaningful representation for Indigenous students. By supporting Indigenous students and helping non-Indigenous students access

educational resources, this paid position meaningfully moves towards representation for Indigenous leadership at the USC.

3.5. Installing New Code Blue Emergency Phones on the Main Campus and Affiliates

3.5.1. Code Blue Emergency Phones, or Blue Phones, are highly visible resources designed to provide a quick and direct means of communication during emergencies. By expanding the installation of Blue Phones, we can enhance the safety and comfort of Western students by ensuring a prompt response to safety concerns. Blue Phones are especially important for protecting against gender-based and sexual violence as they add an extra layer of security for vulnerable students as they walk home at night. As President, I will work with Facilities Management, Western Special Constables, and the City of London to expand Code Blue Emergency Phones to key locations across the main campus, affiliates, and the pathways between them.

3.6. 2SLGBTQ+ Mentorship Program

3.6.1. Members of the 2SLGBTQ+ community are more likely to self-report feelings of isolation and mental health issues. Western is a large and diverse school, by creating a mentorship program led by PrideUSC, 2SLGBTQ+ students will be provided an additional resource to connect with members of their community. This can be accomplished by simply filling out a form that will allow PrideUSC to pair students with a mentor. This system of support will help integrate new students with Western's 2SLGBTQ+ community to fight feelings of isolation. This program can also connect students with local queer events, culture, and spaces.

3.7. Freddie PrEP

3.7.1. To increase awareness and access to PrEP, a vital medication in preventing the spread of HIV, the USC will partner with Go Freddie. By partnering with Freddie, an organization that prescribes and delivers PrEP prevention HIV medication, we can help Western students prevent the spread of HIV. Our team is currently in contact with Go Freddie, a non-profit healthcare provider devoted to barrier-free access to HIV prevention medication PrEP. By partnering with Go Freddie, we can bring important information to Western students through programming and increase the access students have to this life-saving medication.

3.8. Introduction to Anonymous Reporting for GBSV

3.8.1. During my time as President of One Love Western, I was able to establish a working relationship with REES, which is a simple, secure online platform for reporting sexual violence, tailored to the unique setting of post-secondary institutions. Western has mechanisms in place for reporting acts of GBSV, however, the anonymous functions of platforms like REES

provides a more survivor centric approach. Through the University Affairs portfolio I would like to create a plan that can introduce resources like this within the Western community.

3.9. EDI Review on Soph Hiring

3.9.1. For more equitable hiring practices for students looking to become sophs, there needs to be adequate consultations with the EDI office regarding questions asked in interviews. This will allow for orientation teams, particularly faculty sophs who do not have direct hiring support of organizations like Housing, to ensure that students being interviewed feel comfortable and are asked questions that gauge their understanding of inclusion before they begin to welcome new students on campus.

3.10. Movember

3.10.1. To support men's mental health, I will introduce a USC-led Movember initiative to destigmatize mental health. Movember is an annual global campaign where men grow mustaches during November to raise awareness for men's mental health. The USC will partner with athletes, sophs, faculty, clubs and more to demonstrate the diversity of men's mental health and break down the stigma that exists regarding seeking help. This past November, multiple soph teams completed their own Movember challenges. Through the Western Student Senators, I also had the opportunity to work with varsity athletes who shared their stories on how they have managed their mental well-being. These powerful initiatives should be recognized by the USC and adopted into a campus-wide campaign to destigmatize reaching out for mental health support.

4. Housing and Affordability

4.1. Rate My Landlord

4.1.1. Student renters deserve more information about who they are renting from before they sign on. By expanding the USC's Off-Campus Housing Services to include a system where students can share their experience with landlords and buildings, this information can then be shared with future prospective student renters. If you have a landlord who has treated you poorly or exceptionally, you will be able to submit information about your experience. Off-Campus Housing will then share your experience with other students who may be considering renting from that landlord.

4.2. Shuttle to Grocery Stores

4.2.1. The USC will start a weekly shuttle from Western to nearby grocery stores on days with student discounts (typically on Tuesdays). This shuttle will help busy students fit grocery shopping into their schedule, especially first-year students, residence Dons, and live-in REAs. This program will

also help students with accessibility needs who may find grocery shopping using public transportation difficult, particularly during harsh weather conditions. This initiative will provide direct and convenient transportation for students looking to save money and time.

4.3. Food Support Services for All Students, From All Students

4.3.1. Food Support Services (FSS) provides vital support for students who are struggling to make ends meet. FSS is paid for by the USC and undergraduate students but also sees significant use by graduate students whose student fees do not pay into the service. These students should not be denied service, but it is unfair for the burden of financing FSS to be placed entirely on undergraduate students. Graduate students and their student union, the Society of Graduate Students (SOGS), has its own program for dealing with food insecurity but this program has not been able to meet the needs of graduate students who have then turned to FSS for vital support. Under my leadership, the USC will work for a fair new deal that is equitable for undergraduate students who are shouldering the entire cost of FSS, which is also used by SOGS members. By working to merge SOGS' "Food Bank Program" with USC's Food Support Services, this will save money for both programs by eliminating the duplication of services and provide service to all Western students, funded by all Western students.

4.4. Rounding-Up For Free the Dot

4.4.1. USC's Free the Dot initiative provides essential assistance to students unable to meet their menstrual hygiene needs. I will introduce a Round Up initiative at USC businesses such as the Spoke, Wave, and Purple Store where customers can round up their purchase to the nearest dollar with all proceeds going towards supporting Free the Dot. This will help Free the Dot access the funds necessary to provide this vital service to students in need.

4.5. Rent Control Advocacy

4.5.1. Student renters in London face extreme and sudden increases in their rent. Students start renting their homes at one price and are subjected to massive rent increases which are disruptive to student finances and budgeting. This can cause students to stress as they look for cheaper living spaces while being a full-time student. As the USC President, I will use every opportunity available to lobby for the reinstatement of rent control for all properties and renters in Ontario. Currently, leases signed before November 15th, 2018 are covered by rent control, meaning that rent can only be increased once a year by 2.5% per month as decided by the provincial government; however, this doesn't accommodate for students

signing leases today. To help accomplish this, I will work with the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance to advocate for the reinstatement of rent control.

5. Academics

5.1. 48-Hour Grace Period

5.1.1. To further support our students' right to observe religious holidays, I will work with the Senate to introduce a 48-hour grace period for accommodations. For example, if a holiday in the academic calendar falls on November 20th and an exam is scheduled on the next day, November 21st, it prohibits students from properly observing their holiday as they will still spend that time studying. Through my current membership in the Senate, I will connect with the university's Committee on Academic Policy to draft a proposal that can support both student and faculty interest regarding adapting this grace period.

5.2. Program Quality Audits

5.2.1. In light of recent tuition hikes for MOS and Computer Science programs, the USC needs to do more to ensure that the quality of students' education are matching such trends. This will be accomplished by introducing program quality audits by the USC every instance tuition is significantly increased for a program. While the USC does not have control over how Western sets the tuition of its programs, by introducing program quality audits following a spike in tuition, we can help ensure that in return, upgrades are made to their module. Program quality audits will be conducted in collaboration with the USC's Vice President of University Affairs with support from program Department Chairs. Ultimately, this will hold Western accountable for elevating the educational experience as tuition fees rise.

5.3. Compassionate Accommodations

5.3.1. Policy around uncounted compassionate accommodations, simply put, supports students when life happens. Whether you got in a car accident, have family matters to take care of, or are a working student, unforeseen events can prevent students from completing their academic responsibilities on time. As a senator, I currently sit on the Working Group for Academic Policy alongside associate deans, the registrar and the vice provost of Academics. In this group, we are currently in the process of writing a policy and consulting with stakeholders to replace the infamous SRA (self-reported absence). This working group is the route for academic policy to be passed to the senate and I would like to see improvements to the student experience happen quicker. To enhance the productivity of this

working group, I will invite undergraduate students to participate in these conversations and create public updates to the student body as to where the progress of this group stands. Opening feedback from multiple sources while mirroring the success of other university programs who have introduced policy on undocumented compassionate considerations are important next steps to finally complete this initiative. Students deserve compassionate accommodations and I will work to expedite this process and include more students in its creation.

5.4. Peer Support Drop ins for Students with Registered with Accessible Education

5.4.1. Following the University of Toronto's peer advisor drop in sessions through accessibility services, there should be designated times at Western where students have readily available access to a support team for inquiries on Accessible Education. Students with disabilities and neurodivergent students should be able to access streamlined assistance in regards to accommodations, individual education plans and general registration questions. To assist King's students pursuing careers in disability studies, creating supporting positions to run these drop in sessions will allow them to work closely with Accessible Education and the community. These drop ins should be available both on zoom and in person to support the unique needs of every student.

5.5. Final Grade Deadlines

5.5.1. Throughout my terms as a senator, one consistent complaint I have heard from students is that there have been instances where their final grades are submitted to the Student Centre late into January or the summer. When students have modules where they must maintain a required average or are required to overload courses, academic counseling cannot grant permission until their final grades have been published. This delay is usually a result of make-up exams, however, for the student who completed everything on time, this can be very problematic. While the ombudsperson's office is a good place for students to connect with and receive resources, I believe that this issue needs to be corrected through policy. I will advocate for a policy that requires professors to provide final grades before the add/drop date so that students are not prohibited from taking the courses they need.

6. Sustainability

6.1. Creating a Plan for Converting to Electric Vehicles

6.1.1. The Government of Canada has mandated that all new personal vehicles sold in 2035 must be electric. Because the sale of gasoline and diesel-powered vehicles will be phased out in Canada over the next

decade, both Western and USC need to create a plan for how they are going to decarbonize their vehicles. Western and USC need to create roadmaps for how they are planning on accommodating this change in Federal policy and prepare campus facilities for the gradual transition to electric vehicles. I will lead the USC to create a joint step-by-step, comprehensive outline with Western including action items such as the installation of electric chargers and our plans for our current fleets of fossil fuel vehicles.

6.2. Providing more USRIs in Sustainability Efforts

6.2.1. Undergraduate Summer Research Internships, or USRIs, provide students with opportunities to conduct research with Western faculty members. Considering the recent implementation of Western's strategic plan which aims to uphold greater sustainability practices, I will advocate for Western to offer more USRIs that explore sustainability. By working with the Research Office and individual departments, we can create student opportunities for various academic disciplines that will further Western's sustainability goals and our understanding of the climate crisis.

6.3. Creating a Plan for Green Bins on Campus

6.3.1. Starting in 2024, the City of London has introduced "green bins" used to collect compostable waste. Per the city's direction, USC and Western need to implement green bins across campus to reduce the environmental impact of food waste. I will lead the implementation of green bins across USC facilities and advocate for Western to create a comprehensive and accelerated plan for introducing green bins on campus. To further support this initiative, the USC will work with Housing to teach first-year students how to utilize green bins.