

April 2021

Laura Blanchette for News Editor 2021-2022!



A mock-up of me in a hectic newsroom keeping as cool as a cucumber. An asset to any news team.

Who is she?

I'm a second-year journalism and humanities student from Edmonton, Alberta. I was raised by an eco-conscious mother and a sci-fi-obsessed father who were unprepared for the year my sisters and I got hooked on politics and started dragging them into intense dinner table debates. It wasn't until late high school I started reading the University of Alberta's student newspaper, *the Gateway*, and I knew I wanted to pursue journalism.

I grew up spending all my time in the city. I attended every festival during the summer, was a critic on my school Cappies team, and sat on the City of Edmonton Youth Council. My high

school experience was chaotic, but I graduated with a full IB diploma (and with the title of Salutatorian, but no one knows what that is hehe) and took a year off before moving across the country to start at Carleton.

I love small politics--campus, municipal, community, all of it! Sign me up for all your town halls and general meetings! There is so much room for people to make a difference in their communities and I think it starts with reliable news that reflects their values.

After a year settling into a new city and another year trapped indoors, I am ready to immerse myself in the hectic world of editing, writing, pitching, and be an invaluable asset for *the Charlatan's* editorial team!



Me with a craft beer wearing a beanie from a local cafe to show I am classy and connected with the local Ottawa community. Photo taken by my roommate and good pal Sember Wood.

Why Laura?

I have two years of writing experience for *The Charlatan*. I started with the Arts section but was quickly drawn to the drama of student governance--woohoo! I have also written an op-ed in which I complain about Alberta's terrible politics, and I would so *love* to do more of that!

I wrote my first *Charlatan* article in October 2019 after responding to an email blast from KC Hoard (a fellow JHum student!). I picked up a story about a [live concert fundraiser for CKCU](#) during their annual funding drive. At the event, I interviewed the radio hosts and talked to them about the Student Choice Initiative (SCI). I was so excited I had the opportunity to talk about something that *really* mattered, and my work on this story grew into a feature about SCI that was later published in a print issue.

My best experiences working with *the Charlatan* have been when I collaborated with other editors and writers. During the fall semester this year, I worked on an article about COVID testing in residence. It was satisfying piecing the story together after some back and forth with Mark (what a cool fella!), scouring the internet for sources, and interviewing as many folks as possible.

Aside from *the Charlatan*, I also launched an arts publication last summer called the [French Press Zine](#). I run the zine entirely on my own. I edit, manage the zine's [social media](#), produce digital content, design print issues, collect submissions, and so much more. I learned better methods to hold myself accountable to my deadlines, and it has motivated me to explore the limitless world of online multimedia content.

Platform points

For new volunteers, news can be daunting, but there is a lot that we can do to help volunteers and encourage their involvement!

1. Integrate more City of Ottawa news

This point is very straight forward, but I think it's important to expand past student governance and campus news to cover important issues from the wider urban landscape. As news editor I would engage with city councillors and community leaders in Ottawa to stay current on city-wide news, and pitch more stories about City of Ottawa news. Our readership should have access to reliable, relevant news that speaks to the city they are living in.

2. Editor and volunteer socials

My initial hesitancy to apply for an editor position was because I previously felt like *the Charlatan* was a secret little club for the j-school elite, but I know that's not true. One way to motivate volunteer involvement is to make sure we are building a safe and

welcoming community. Regular socials (likely online, but eventually in-person) with editors, volunteers, and prospective volunteers ensures we are not only building a professional team of volunteers, but also a community.

3. Build stronger editor-volunteer relationships

As news editor, I would bridge the divide between editors and volunteers. Even though I have been a volunteer for two years, I have always felt like the internal working of *the Charlatan* was distant and inaccessible. Creating a Slack or Discord server would facilitate volunteer-editor interactions and provide a platform for more casual discussion and ~bonding~. If online school has taught me anything, it is how amazing Discord is!! Emails are great for blasting pitches and keeping people informed about *Charlatan* news, but I believe fostering a casual environment where we can share memes in one channel and talk story pitches in another would make folks feel more included!

4. A wee little website refresh!

The Charlatan's website could do with a bit of refreshing and for the news section, I think a refresh could be as simple as including a drop down menu so people can easily find the topic they are interested in reading about (like the navigation in the sports section). Additionally, I would love to add a bit of fun and personalization to the website through writer bios. Only a couple sentences long and with a little profile picture, and suddenly readers feel like *the Charlatan* is made up of real students!

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Laura Blanchette

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Laura is a journalism and humanities student from Edmonton, Alberta. Besides writing for *the Charlatan*, in her free time she enjoys watching the Great British Bake Off and sending letters to her friends.