



# REPORT

*From the office of the...*  
**Vice-President (Finance)**

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TO: Members of the Student Representative Assembly  
FROM: Jessica Anderson, Vice-President (Finance)  
SUBJECT: SRA 20D Report  
DATE: July 7<sup>th</sup> 2020

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Dear Members of the Assembly,

I hope you all are well during these unprecedented times, and I am very excited to share the things I have been working on over the past two months! The past two months have been filled with various challenges and have really opened my eyes to what students' concerns are and how we can spend the remaining ten months addressing them and tailoring the MSU's operations to better align with the student voice and values. I have had the opportunity to meet with so many amazing and passionate individuals from both the MSU and the university and I am really looking forward to the rest of the year. Every single day in this role is unique and presents its own set of challenges and problems to solve and has truly taught me so much in such a short period of time.

If you have any questions, comments or concerns for me at all, please do not hesitate to email me [vpfinance@msu.mcmaster.ca](mailto:vpfinance@msu.mcmaster.ca)

Wishing you all the best,

*Jess Anderson*

Jess Anderson  
Vice-President (Finance) & CFO  
McMaster Students Union

**Objective #1:** Continue September and January Transparency Weeks

**Status:** In-Progress

This objective will be picking up over the next month as I continue to plan for what an online/virtual transparency week/day could look like. I have begun my own brainstorming document to compile possible ideas and ways of hosting such an event that would be interactive and appealing to students. My next steps will be setting up a meeting with the communications department to gain their thoughts and perspectives on how an event like this could be orchestrated, and from there we will plan our next steps. Ideally, we will have a solidified plan by mid-August, so that we are prepared for have the event for about the second week of September.

**Objective #2:** Explore Ways to Reduce Student Costs

**Status:** In-Progress

This objective has been one of my main priorities over the past month as I recognize many individuals are experiencing very difficult times due to COVID-19. With this being said, I have been having discussions about the MSU operating fee and evaluating how we can make a reduction to the fee that students pay.

Additionally, I have been a part of the negotiations with HSR and have been actively advocating on behalf of students to receive a reimbursement based on the months the busses service operations were affected and when the bus was free for everyone to ride. The next part of these negotiations is in regard to what Fall 2020 operations will look like. While nothing has been decided as of right now, it is critical that we evaluate the cost of the U-pass to students and the amount of student riders that will be accessing the service for the online, fall semester. Myself, Giancarlo and John (MSU General Manager), have been in discussions with the Graduate Students Association to also gain insight on what proposal they are putting forward for the Fall as well. The next city council meeting that will be discussing the HSR negotiations further is happening mid-July, and I will be sure to keep the SRA & Students updated on the outcome.

The next component of this objective is advocating to the University to ensure they are adjusting their student fees to reflect the level of service they are providing. I will continue to have discussions with Giancarlo and university representatives to ensure student feels are actively being revaluated and lowered to align with the current limited service operations.

**Objective #3:** Educate Students on Financial Aid Available

**Status:** In-Progress

For this objective, I have already begun conversations with the communications department to ensure everyone is on the same page, and we are looking to release infographics on the various aids available to students in the next month or so! This

objective is collaborating with the other Board of Directors members as we have broadened the focus to include other forms of support and aid available to students in addition to financial resources.

**Objective #4:** Your Money/Financial Section of New Website

**Status:** Not Started

While I have expressed the importance of having a clearly laid out financial page on the new website, we have not begun the development of this page. I am planning to undertake this project in August/September, once the new website is fully created.

**Objective #5:** Develop Service Sponsorship Policy & Packages

**Status:** In-Progress

For this objective I have already begun the conversations with and established our working group. This group will consist of the VP Admin, Michael Wooder, Paula Scott, AVP Finance, AVP IG and myself. The first steps in completing this objective are researching and creating a service sponsorship & donation policy. After having conversations with Anika, and Michael Wooder, we have all come to the conclusion that having a policy to reinforce what groups our services can and cannot accept sponsorships from will be imperative going forward to avoid any personal biases. From initial research, it does not appear that many other universities possess a policy similar to the one we are hoping to create, thus, we may need to start from scratch and center the policy around the MSU's mandate to decide what groups we will and will not work with.

For the policy creation component, I hope to have further discussions with Anika and Michelle (AVP IG), as policy writing and updating generally falls more under their portfolios. Simultaneously to creating the policy, I will be working the Paula and Michael to determine what the sponsorship packages should look like to reflect our brand standards and uphold a high level of professionalism. Additionally, I plan to reach out to our service PTM's to gain an idea of what sort of events they are hosting this year that may be attractive to sponsorships. From here, the working group will come back together to determine appropriate pricing, make final additions or edits to the policy & packages, and share them with the services to utilize!

**Objective #6:** Adhere to Health & Safety Guidelines

**Status:** Ongoing

In the current climate of COVID-19, it is important that we are continuously assessing our operations and business units to ensure we are complying with the health and safety guidelines put forth by public health Canada and the Canadian government. This will continue to be an ongoing objective especially as we begin to open our business units for the Fall 2020 operations.

**Objective #7: Develop a Plan for the Long-Term Financial Stability of TwelvEighty**

**Status: Not Started**

While I placed the idea in the minds of our TwelvEighty Full-Time staff, we have not actively begun working on this objective. I plan to work on the creation of the student survey in August in hopes of releasing it sometime in September.

**Objective #8: Revamp Menu & Increase Plant Based Options**

**Status: Completed**

For this objective, I began conversations with the TwelvEighty Kitchen Manager, Stu, and Assistant Kitchen Manager, Kornelia, back in late May/Early June and they immediately began experimenting at home with new recipes! I am pleased to say that we are working on the next steps of this objective which include pricing out the ingredients from our supplier, and then pricing the menu items themselves. The new menu is looking amazing and includes an increase in the number of vegetarian and vegan options available. Additionally, this menu has been crafted to work extremely well for our 2GO operations, but when the time comes, are just as amazing when dining in.

**Objective # 9: COVID-19 Interim Reduced Operations & Shift to Take Out**

**Status: In-Progress**

Last week, I was able to go into the office and do a walk-through of TwelvEighty with our FT Staff to determine how operations could be managed within the space while also ensuring we adhere to the health and safety guidelines. This was a very productive day, and as a team we were able to propose slightly reduced hours for when we first reopen in the fall to help us gage the level of business we should be anticipating. Just to reiterate, our priority is student safety and ensuring we are still able to provide affordable food options to students and do so in a safe way. Our next steps will be placing orders for the various safety barriers and supplies required to operate in the fall. We will be order plexy glass to ensure the safety of both us customers and staff, as well as various signage depicting where to stand in maintain physical distancing measures.

As previously mentioned, our menu revamp has been done in such a way that it will be perfect as a take our menu as well. We will not be offering dine in options for the fall 2020 in order to adhere to safety guidelines and thus our operations will be limited to take out.

**Objective #10: Student Staff & Student-Centered Culture**

**Status: Not Started**

This objective has not yet been started as I am planning on working on this once students return in some capacity for the fall semester.

**Objective #11:** Increase Sustainability Initiatives within TwelvEighty & The Grind

**Status:** In-Progress

For this objective, I have already reached out to our TwelvEighty Kitchen Manager, Stu, who was able to get in contact with our provider of cups, cutlery etc. The conversations have been very productive and promising! As of right now, we have confirmed with our provider that they are able to provide all of our single use cutlery, cups, lids, straws and bags in a compostable & biodegradable form. This is amazing news and means we should be able to roll out our sustainable packaging in time for the Fall 2020 semester.

**Objective #12:** Implement Event Catering Packages

**Status:** Not Started

This objective will be started later in the Fall 2020 term, as there is currently no rush to have packages to promote with the current limitations on events and gatherings.

**Objective #13:** Incentivize Students to Eat at TwelvEighty

**Status:** Not Started

This objective will be implemented in the Winter 2021 semester as currently we are trying to avoid promoting students coming to campus, to help limit the number of individuals gathering in one place.

**Objective #14:** COVID-19 Interim Reduced Operations – Union Market

**Status:** In-Progress

While in the office last week, I was also able to do a walk around of Union Market as well and get a better idea of how the space can still be utilized while ensuring physical distancing. Currently, we are planning to move the coffee and bagels down to The Grind and have the employee at The Grind prepare the coffee/bagel for the customer to avoid self-serve and high touch surfaces. With this being said, customers will still be able to obtain their affordable coffee & bagel from UM, the only difference will be the location they go to pick it up! As for UM itself, we are going to cater it more towards a convenience/grab-and-go location where individuals can come in, follow the signage to ensure distancing, and grab snacks as well as premade and wrapped food that was prepped by our lovely TwelvEighty chefs. This will hopefully lower the amount of traffic going into Union Market. We will also be starting off the fall semester with reduced hours of operation, and be ready and willing to adapt as the need arises.

**Objective #15:** Increase Video Promotion for Union Market

**Status:** Not Started

This objective will be completed in and around October/November to allow time to create the promotional material in time to release it to students for Winter 2020.

**Objective #16:** COVID-19 Interim Reduced Operations -The Underground

**Status:** In-Progress

For this objective, I still need to arrange a time with Paula and John to do a walk-through of the space and determine our options for ensuring physical distancing, but to follow suit with our other business units and the number of students that will be present on campus, we will also be reducing the underground's front end operations. The nice thing about The Underground, is that even in the event of reducing front end service operations, the unit is still able to operate remotely and in the digital media sphere. This will allow for our creators to continue providing graphic design work and other services available remotely. More conversations still need to be had about what the reduced hours will look like and what the demand will be on campus for a printing center.

**Objective #17:** Contract External Advertising and Sales Position

**Status:** Completed

The objective was in the works of being completed when I entered the role, and I am happy to say that we have officially contracted out this position! This will be very beneficial especially during the current COVID-19 climate as there will likely be a reduction in the number of advertisers and having this position commission based ensure the MSU is only paying a percentage of each sale, and thus eliminates overhead costs.

**Objective #18:** Evaluate Potential of Establishing an Online Ordering System

**Status:** Not Started

Currently the Underground is quite focused on ensuring the development of the new MSU website is created and completed for our September 1<sup>st</sup> deadline, thus I plan to work on exploring this objective closer to August/September!

**Objective #19:** Build a Rapport with University Faculties & External Clientele

**Status:** On going

This objective will continue to be something that needs to be worked on over the course of the year. Building rapport is something that takes time and I am hoping to set up a conversation with Paula about what services we hope to highlight that we provide when having conversations with the university and external clientele.

**Objective #20:** Develop a Plan for the Long-term financial stability of the underground

**Status:** Not Started

Similar to the TwelvEighty long term plan, I am hoping to start this in the next month. I recognize this is a large objective, and thus why I have broken it down on my year plan into manageable, monthly/bi-monthly segments to ensure I have having multiple

conversations with Paula from the Underground to create a multi-year plan that can begin to be incorporated this year, and carried forward.

**Objective #21: Evaluate Purpose & Reimagine Compass Space**

**Status: In-Progress**

For this objective, the progress that has been made thus far is in regard to its fall 2020 operations. John, the MSU General Manager, and Debbie, the Compass Manager, have been working to reach out to university partners in an attempt to rent out the space for fall 2020. With the significant decrease in students on campus in the fall, Compass's services will be rarely utilized, and thus it does not make sense to keep the space fully operational.

As for the second component of this objective, we have not yet begun conversations on how we plan to reimagine the Compass space, but I plan to reach out to John & Debbie in the coming weeks to establish a plan moving forward. With this potential reduction in Compasses fall operations, I believe appointing the current Compass Manager as the project lead on Reimagining the space would work well.

**Objective #22: Conduct a Review of the Silhouette**

**Status: Not Started**

While I have not yet officially started this objective, I have reached out to Justin, The Silhouette Editor-and-Chief to ensure they are aware of my plan to conduct a review and are on board. The conversation went very well, and I am excited to work together to ensure our services are adapting to better suit the student need!

**Objective #23: Increase Collaboration & Shared Resources between the Sil & CFMU**

**Status: Not Started**

This is a project that I hope to undertake over the fall semester as I think it will be helpful to begin conversations on the similarities between the media services and look at where there is possibly room for collaboration.

**Objective #24: Create a Fund to Alleviate Financial Barriers to Attending Events**

**Status: Not Started**

Will be working to incorporate this into the 2021-2022 budget as a pilot project.

**Objective #25:** Assistant Accounting Department & Clubs Admin Through Internal Changes

**Status:** In-Progress

This objective started back in June and will be continuing forward until the end of the summer. I have been assisting the Clubs Admin in editing the clubs manual to ensure; the financial section aligns with the most efficient procedure possible, that the section is easy to understand and clubs will know how to access their funding etc. Additionally, I have had conversations with our Director of Finance, Sean Duncan to ensure we are ready on our side to move all of these clubs bank accounts internally after they are confirmed to be ratified by the SRA. After ratification occurs, I will reach out to the clubs admin (Jenna), and Sean to ensure we have contacted CIBC & PACE, and that the clubs balance can be withdrawn and provided to the MSU to redistribute back into the appropriate clubs accounts. So far everything is going well!

**Objective #26:** Work with VP Admin to advocate for reduced WW Levy, Levy Review & Implement NODA recommendations

**Status:** In-Progress

This objective has been something the VP Admin (Anika) and I have been working to accomplish through our positions on the Welcome Week Advisory Committee. As noted in the MOU that was previously signed by the MSU & McMaster University outlining how the levy would be allocated for the 2020 Welcome Week, we were able to make changes to the levy proposal due to COVID-19 implications. With this being said, Anika and I heavily advocated to WWAC that we reevaluate the levy, and reduce the fee that first year students pay. After working with Andrijana (Financial Affairs), we were able to put forth a proposal that would reduce the WW Fee by about 19% to sit at \$100/student. This fee will include all of the virtual programming for the 2020 welcome week, and also allows for an allocation to put on an in-person event for the class of 2024 when it is deemed safe to do so.

As for the levy review portion, Anika and I have begun conversations about the importance of conducting this review to ensure we are spending student money appropriately. When looking at last year with SCI, only \$105 of the about \$130 fee was deemed to be essential. This shows there is review to permanently reduce the fee that students pay, while organizing a successful, orientation filled, welcome week. This review should be taking place after WW 2020 concludes in and around the September/October timeframe.

As for implementing the NODA Recommendations, this is yet another project that I will be assisting our VP Admin with through WWAC. This specific project/implementation has not fully begun yet, but we hope to continue the discussion and implementation of these recommendations for the 2021-2022 welcome week.



**Objective 27:** Develop and Run a General MSU Info Campaign

**Status:** In-Progress

This objective is well underway and should be completed by the end of the summer/early September! The MSU info Campaign is being led by myself and Giancarlo as the Board members and then has the entirety of the communications department working to make the primary campaign video a success. We became our working group back in May for this project and established a timeline for when we wanted to have all of the information for the video compiled by, music chosen etc. Following this, Adit, our Video Production Coordinator has been working on developing a storyboard that will effectively outline the video sequences to provide an overall picture of how the video will be laid out. While the story board is being completed, Elizabetta & Khaleel have been working on finding graphics and videos that will accompany the information. Overall the project is coming along well, and I am very excited to see the end result! The next steps are working off of the storyboard to compile all of the information and video into one, cohesive video that effectively outlines what the MSU offers to students.

**Objective 28:** Utilize Information and Recommendations from the Org Review

**Status:** On going

For this objective, I have put it as ongoing simply do to the nature of the review. There are many different areas that we can improve within our own organization, and I have already begun discussions with Giancarlo and the rest of the board to establish what our main priorities are for this year, and what I should be included in the multi-year plan. As of right now, we are discussing what the priorities should be for this unique year as much of the work will need to be done virtually.

**Objective 29:** Oversee Implementation of New MSU Website

**Status:** In-Progress

This objective was passed along by the last VP Finance and is something that I will continue to oversee until it is fully implemented for September 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020. Paula is taking the point from the MSU's side to ensure the website is completed in a timely manner and is additionally our main point of contact with MPS. MPS has been working on our custom development pages over the past few weeks but there has been some delays and it is now likely to be completed by the beginning of August. After the framework is ready, the next steps will be running the website through a testing phase to ensure that all of the information is readily available and accessible.

**Objective 30:** Board of Directors Update Videos

**Status:** On Going

This is an ongoing objective for both myself and the rest of the board. We plan to produce monthly board updates, in a video format, to engage with students and maintain

transparency of the tasks we are working on. Additionally, these videos will provide a 'face' for the MSU in an attempt to humanize the projects we are working on and make our updates more personal.

**Objective 31:** Increase Promotion of the Student Assistance Plan

**Status:** Not Started

This will be a project that I will start in the fall (October).

#### **ADDITIONAL PROJECTS:**

##### 1. AVP Finance

I have officially transitioned our AVP Finance, Chen Liu into the role! Additionally, we have worked to update the sponsorship and donation applications and connected with Comms to get new graphics made to promote the funds. The AVP Finance, Chen Liu has been off to a great start in his role so far. I asked Chen to send in a quick update/outline of what he has been up to so far which is below;

“Please see below for a summary of my first two months:

- Week of May 11: I reached out to McMaster Solar Car, Incite Magazine, OPIRG and EWB. I explained to the groups that they are required to submit a budget to me and they must present in front of the Finance Committee during first semester.
- Week of May 18: I reached out to the SRA members of the Finance Committee and had them take on a project that the previous AVP Finance was working on.
- Week of May 25: I had my first check-in call with Jess and began the process to de-ratify three non-MSU, non-University groups.
- Week of June 1: Checked in with SRA members from the Finance Committee to share project updates.
- Week of June 7: Finalized de-ratification. EWB and Mac Solar Car wanted to attend Clubsfest and to be listed on the MSU Club page which we granted.
- Week of June 14: Worked on updating the Sponsorship, Donation templates and creating the Community Youth Bursary templates.
- Week of June 21: The three templates are now live.”

## 2. Provide Finance Training & Budget Trackers to all PTMs

This was another project that I started about a month ago. We wanted to ensure that all PTMs understood how to write purchase orders, especially with the current changes due to the shift online. Additionally, I created budget trackers for all of the PTMs to utilize throughout the year to help with consistency and ensure they know how much funding is available in each of their lines. I will continue to support the PTMs throughout the year should they require any assistance 😊

## 3. Child Care Centre

I have been working with Debbie Thompson and John McGowan to ensure that our Child Care Centre, while currently closed is being supported with the appropriate measures to meet the health and safety guidelines to reopen. This past week, the Child Care Centre underwent its health inspection and passed 😊 I am so proud of all the time and work that Debbie has put into ensuring the space is ready to reopen and I plan to continue to support in the reopening process and ensure that all of our employees feel safe to return to work!

## 4. Canada Wide VP Finance Group

After seeing the successful Canada wide presidential group chat, I thought it would prove beneficial to create a VP Finance Group chat. The reason for doing this is to share strategies and ideas across various student unions about how they are handling their unions finances and business unit operations given the current COVID-19 environment.

## 5. Established a FT Staff Reimbursement Form

Given the shift to online operations and the call to work from home whenever possible, many of our full-time staff were left with make-shift at home offices and were requiring some additional supplies to effectively do their job from home. With this being said and hearing the concerns of the FT Staff at the Full Time Employment Issues Committee meeting, I worked with John McGowan & the Board to create a reimbursement form that allows FT Staff to apply to have up to \$250 approved to purchase home office equipment. So far this has been a very successful initiative and is helping alleviate some of the discomforts and difficulties associated with working from home.

### **UPCOMING EVENTS, PROJECTS & ACTIVITIES**

- Continuing to work with the comms team on the MSU information campaign
- Creating graphics to educate students on financial aid available to them
- Continue to negotiate with HSR for Fall 2020 operations

## **CURRENT CHALLENGES**

The largest challenge I am currently facing is trying to ensure I am staying connected to the rest of the Board and Full Time Staff. It has proven quite difficult in this digital age to maintain connections via video chat when the majority of your day is already spent on the computer. Additionally, I have found it a bit challenging to stop working at the end of the day as my “at home office” is a separate section of my bedroom. This has proven a bit difficult to turn work off after a long and try to practice self-care. I have been trying to aid in fixing this by working outside on cooler days to create a separate workspace! ☺

## **CLOSING REMARKS:**

Overall the year so far has been quite different than I had originally anticipated, but I am very excited about the work myself and the rest of the team has accomplished thus far, and I am looking forward to what the rest of the year has in store!

Best,



**Jess Anderson**

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