Report

From the office of…

Space Allocation & Audit Committee

To: Executive Board Members

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Subject: Space Allocation & Audit Committee, Final Report & Recommendations

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# 

# Introduction

Every three (3) years, the Space Allocation & Audit Committee (SpAAC) convenes to review the use of space throughout the McMaster Students Union (MSU). SpAAC operates as a specialized audit group out of the Executive Board to ensure all MSU assets are used to their fullest potential. As part of this process, the committee typically incorporates a holistic feedback-collection procedure to gather information on the importance and urgency of space needs across the MSU.

In a normal year, SpAAC would have the opportunity to survey staff and spaces with a similar level of scrutiny. However, given the limitations of COVID-19, no in-person space audits were conducted as would be required for a thorough report. As well, the vast majority of staff members were required to reflect on their experiences within MSU spaces that were either (1) dependent on their most recent memories of the space, months prior to the submission of their responses or (2) limited to whatever minimal experiences they’ve had in their workspaces prior to their employment or the onset of the pandemic.

With this in mind, the committee took a very selective approach to the areas under review with the hope that those chosen would receive sufficient analysis to prove useful upon the return to campus. this year’s SpAAC targeted three (3) specific areas of the organization based on perceived needs of the MSU in the coming years:

1. Clubs Department
2. MSU Main Office
3. Student-Led Service Space

All staff involved with the above 3 areas were mandated to complete, though all staff were given the option to provide input of their own accord.

After leaving the SpAAC survey open over the course of several weeks, we collected responses from thirty-three (33) staff from Part-Time Manager (PTM), Part-Time Non-Supervisory, Student Opportunity Position (SOP), Full-Time (FT) Supervisory, and FT Non-Supervisory staff classifications, receiving feedback from close to every employee within each of the three (3) identified areas of focus along with staff from a few other areas of the MSU. Summaries of the results and recommendations are as follows.

# Summary by Theme

All areas for review were characterized into distinct themes to help with data collection and analysis. Those themes were defined as follows:

1. Size & Location: All items that relate to the amount and positioning of space on campus were included in this category.
2. Accessibility: All items the relate to the accessibility of spaces themselves for users with disabilities. This includes the ability for individuals to travel through spaces and AODA-compliancy with wheelchair-friendly entry-/passageways.
3. Storage: General storage needs include the ability to store equipment, documents, and tools sufficiently.
4. Technology: All points that relate to satisfactory internet speed, workstations (e.g., number of screens), printing services, network access, or any other technological requirements.
5. Optimization, Design, & Architecture: All topics relating to the workspace utility, its overall design, specialized tool/equipment optimization, and how the space flows from Point A to Point B, as well as access to things like a sink and refrigerator, where appropriate.
6. Privacy: All items relating to independent workspaces, a sense of privacy, the ability to enact confidentiality, and overall crowdedness of a space were included in this topic.
7. Maintenance: All points relating to the infrastructure of the space, water/other damage to ceilings/walls/floors, leaks, latent work orders, electrical power supplies, and temperature control.

## Size & Location

As noted from the review process, it was identified that the MSU needs a safe space for storing and testing equipment for AVTek that doesn’t involve keeping risers underneath a staircase in the McMaster University Student Centre (MUSC) where anyone can easily access or tamper with them.

For TwelvEighty and the Pride Community Centre (PCC), issues were discussed concerning the ease of which individuals could find the space. Being positioned closer to relevant departments/services. Similar concerns were raised by Diversity Services, who currently does not have a space to themselves beyond an office in Bridges Café. A lack of permanent Service space was also identified by all current Services who do not otherwise possess a space of their own (e.g., Macademics, Maroon, Spark).

## Accessibility

Issues with the accessibility of various spaces used throughout the MSU were identified through the 2019 MUSC Accessibility Audit in conjunction with discussions raised by Business Units and Services of the MSU. With reference to particular areas of the MSU, many Business Units were found to have either (1) poorly advertised or located lowered-counter customer service reception areas (e.g., Compass) or (2) none at all (e.g., TwelvEighty, The Grind, Underground). This presents a significant barrier for folks who may use a mobility aid or simply have a lower stature, as it challenges how they interact with the services in a fundamental way.

As for Services, many Student-Led Services [e.g., WGEN, PCC, Student Health Education Centre (SHEC)] operate out of spaces that are too small to permit passageway for those with mobility aids, including going so far as to prevent some individuals from even entering their spaces at all.

## Storage

A general need for additional storage space has been identified across various Departments and Services of the MSU. Notably, Campus Events, AVTek, Spark, Marketing & Communications, Food Collective Centre (FCC), Maroons, and Information Technology (IT) all indicated a need for additional storage areas to house equipment in a safe and accessible location. This includes a need for storage areas for high-priced technological inventory that may decay or otherwise experience damage when placed in inappropriate conditions.

## Technology

Technology concerns were found across multiple Departments relating to quality and satisfaction of workstations, equipment, and other systems. The most significant challenges arose within Campus Events, AVTek, IT, often relating to the inadequacy of workstation speed and general IT support in purchasing and maintaining appropriate equipment for highly technological demands involved in those areas of the MSU.

Other technology issues arose in HR and Accounting Departments, indicating a need for additional monitors and higher processing power, respectively, within their workstation setups. A similar concern with inadequate computer speed was brought forward by TwelvEighty, relating to their office workstations.

## Optimization, Design, & Architecture

Often one of the largest barriers to address due to the niche interior design and architecture discussions required, issues with the functionality of space were seen in almost every Service and Department of the MSU. Issues often related to a general lack of workspace utility, inefficient workflow and assembly lines to complete or collaborate on tasks, and a general dissatisfaction with the availability of dedicated spaces to perform specific tasks (e.g., meetings, peer support, events, etc.). While solutions to these issues may require careful consideration and investments (e.g., wall removal, safety inspections, space redesigns, space reallocations, etc.), they may prove to be the most profitable once addressed.

## Privacy

Several Services [e.g., Women & Gender Equity Network (WGEN), Spark, Maroons], as well as both the Clubs and Human Resources (HR) Departments, expressed a need for closed-off private spaces to ensure confidentiality for individuals who choose to access their services. Unlike in other cases, HR identified that this space was intended to be of a permanent nature, as is customary of an HR Department at any organization, to allow for any sensitive discussions to take place as they relate to conflict resolution, consultation, or any other matter appropriate for HR to address on a regular basis. Unlike with Services, this need presents significant legal complications if left unattended.

## Maintenance

Overall maintenance is a concern for the AVTek space, as they have experienced ceiling damage, along with electrical and temperature issues. Similar concerns have arisen within the Silhouette and Campus Events spaces, though Union Market has also recently undergone significant water damage in recent years due to maintenance issues. Additionally, TwelvEighty expressed a need for a paint refresh and for the ceiling tiles to be replaced to ensure general upkeep of the space and to enhance marketing for their goods and services.

# Summary by Service/Department

Given the localized topology of space-related discussions, SpAAC chose to include a breakdown of the major points outlined above in their Department- and Service-specific categories. SpAAC’s summary is as follows:

## Accounting

### Needs

#### Privacy

* Increase opportunities for confidentiality
* Reduce sound disruptions

### Wants

#### Size & Location

* Create permanent space for Clubs Accounting & Accounts Receivables Clerk
* Relocate closer to appropriate services

#### Technology

* Renew outdated workstations

## AVTek

### Needs

#### Size & Location

* Increase space to safely prepare for events
* Increase capability to produce loud noises without disrupting other offices

#### Storage

* Add storage space to maintain equipment safely and accessibly

#### Technology

* Obtain a computer with 3 monitors powerful enough to handle necessary software

#### Maintenance

* Fix leaking ceiling

### Wants

#### Size & Location

* Relocate to an office easily accessible to clients
* Increase client meeting space

#### Maintenance

* Repair temperature regulation
* Increase sunlight in office

## Campus Events

### Needs

#### Size & Location

* Sufficient storage space for all equipment

#### Technology

* Obtain a computer with 2–3 monitors powerful enough to handle necessary software

### Wants

#### Size & Location

* Relocate to an office easily accessible to clients
* Increase client meeting space

#### Storage

* Increase space for physical record-keeping

#### Accessibility

* Increase entryway accessibility

## CFMU

### Needs

**Optimization, Design, & Architecture**

* Increase workspace utility to facilitate workflow

### Wants

**Optimization, Design, & Architecture**

* Increase staff meeting space
* Increase desktop working space

## Marketing & Communications

### Needs

#### Storage

* Increase storage space for equipment

### Wants

#### Privacy

* Reduce sound disruptions

#### Technology

* Increase computer speed and functionality

## Diversity Services

### Needs

**Size & Location**

* Relocate to a space equipped to facilitate peer support
* Increase staff meeting space

### Wants

**Optimization, Design, & Architecture**

* Increase event space
* Increase space to facilitate collaboration with diversity-related clubs/organizations

#### Privacy

* Increase private meeting space

## Emergency First Response Team (EFRT)

### Needs

**Optimization, Design, & Architecture**

* Create clear space division for decontamination and treatment

#### Privacy

* Create clear space division for private areas

#### Maintenance

* Replace flooring

### Wants

**Optimization, Design, & Architecture**

* Install sink for washing dishes distinct from bathroom sink

## Food Collective Centre (FCC)

### Needs

#### Maintenance

* Install proper temperature & humidity regulation instruments

#### Storage

* Increase dedicated food storage space

### Wants

**Optimization, Design, & Architecture**

* Purchase freezer/refrigerator to carry perishable foods

## First-Year Council (FYC)

### Needs

**Optimization, Design, & Architecture**

* Acquire permanent workspace aside from committee room

## Human Resources (HR)

### Needs

#### Privacy

* Increase opportunities for confidentiality

#### Technology

* Renew outdated workstations

## Information Technology (IT)

### Needs

#### Storage

* Increase dedicated technology storage space
* Institute regular technology removal cycle

#### Technology

* Renew outdated workstations
* Install additional network port
* Fix network issues

### Wants

**Size & Location**

* Increase staff meeting space

**Optimization, Design, & Architecture**

* Create technology workshop space

#### Storage

* Create archived system storage space for donation/sale

## Maroons

### Needs

#### Size & Location

* Increase event space

### Wants

#### Storage

* Create dedicated storage space

## Macademics

### Needs

**Optimization, Design, & Architecture**

* Increase staff meeting space

### Wants

#### Storage

* Increase storage space

## PCC

### Needs

#### Accessibility

* Increase entryway accessibility
* Increase space navigation accessibility

### Wants

#### Size & Location

* Increase space visibility

## Spark

### Needs

#### Size & Location

* Create staff and student meeting space

### Wants

#### Size & Location

* Relocate near other leadership services
* Acquire access to a kitchen

#### Storage

* Increase accessible storage space

## TwelvEighty

### Needs

#### Accessibility

* Increase entryway accessibility
* Increase space navigation accessibility

#### Technology

* Renew outdated workstations
* Renew outdated point of sales systems
* Fix internet speed and connectivity issues

### Wants

#### Size & Location

* Increase space visibility

#### Storage

* Increase storage space
* Introduce improved inventory system

#### Optimization, Design, & Architecture

* Renew outdated kitchen equipment
* Renovate kitchen design and layout

#### Maintenance

* Replace lighting fixtures
* Replace paint job
* Replace ceiling tiles

## WGEN

### Needs

#### Accessibility

* Increase entryway accessibility
* Increase space navigation accessibility

### Wants

#### Storage

* Install bookshelves and cabinets for resource storage

#### Optimization, Design, & Architecture

* Create clear space divisions

#### Accessibility

* Install non-fluorescent or dimmable lights to accommodate sensory issues
* Remove carpet from floors

# Recommendations

The following section speaks to the recommendations brought forward by the SpAAC to increase functionality and efficacy of space usage within and across the MSU. Each recommendation categorized by the spaces themselves, rather than their Departments or Services, to speak to how each area could be best repurposed to suit the complex topological needs of the MSU. Recommendations took careful consideration of the multitude of spaces inhabited by the MSU and any potential expansions to that list within the near future (e.g., the Hub) to provide a holistic picture of how the organization may optimize its use of space in a prudent manner. Each recommendation has also been grouped within either a high or low priority category to reflect the combined importance and urgency affiliated with that particular course of action within that space.[[1]](#footnote-2)

## The Hub Space

### High Priority

1. Consider relocating Campus Events and AVTek to the Hub to address issues with size, location, technology, maintenance, and all other reported issues.
2. Investigate consistent bookable meeting areas for Services through the Hub to facilitate private conversations for community groups and provide additional executive or volunteer meeting spaces—especially for Services without a permanent space of their own.

### Low Priority

1. Investigate the potential acquisition of spaces that can be used for meetings with clients of Campus Events and AVTek to showcase equipment, staging, capacity, expertise, or any other aspects of either Service.
2. Investigate the use of the Hub for permanent housing of Services’ operations, including those of:
   1. SHEC, to increase its proximity to the new Student Wellness Centre (SWC) location in the Peter George Centre for Living and Learning and increase storage capacity for their health supplies and related services; and
   2. Diversity Services, to increase its proximity to the designated interfaith space and opportunities to collaborate with diversity-based services in the new facility.
3. Relocate FCC to the community kitchen space, as this space would ameliorate many of the problems brought forward regarding infestations, lack of refrigeration, and overall storage shortages.
4. Investigate health and safety considerations for the community kitchen space (e.g., training required for use, collaborations with other Services like Spark).

## Main Office Space

### High Priority

1. Reallocate closed office space to accommodate the needs of HR & Accounting privacy above the wants of other Departments.
2. Investigate the efficacy of all board and committee rooms to ensure an appropriate balance between bookable office meeting space and the need for private offices.
3. Consider the introduction of additional closed office spaces through formal renovations in corner offices (e.g., Communications Officer, Compass Manager, Network Administrator).
4. Investigate the potential for a shared Student Opportunity Position (SOP) community work area with dedicated storage space for each employee to facilitate the needs of the growing Permanent Full-Time Staff infrastructure, the idiosyncratic return-to-work schedule, opportunities for community-building, and overall workflow.

### Low Priority

1. Introduce new network port to facilitate infrastructural maintenance and developments from IT.
2. Investigate options for sound suppression within various areas of the Main Office, perhaps through a rotational bookable single-occupant space, to facilitate work done by the Communications Officer and other media production staff.
3. Investigate the possibility for a permanent working space for the Assistant Clubs Administrator, potentially through a shared Part-Time Staff and volunteer workspace.
4. Investigate opportunities to catalogue inventory within the Main Office, including the server room and the file storage area in the back of the office, to better serve the needs of staff in need of that storage space.

## ClubSpace

### High Priority

1. Investigate logistics for providing bookable private meeting areas for Services through ClubSpace offices.
2. Investigate the use of the Clubs Department space (incl. Assistant Clubs Administrator office space) to house:
   1. Diversity Services to increase its proximity to the chaplaincy, diversity-based clubs activities, and central campus life; or
   2. The Clubs Accounting & Accounts Receivables Clerk, to provide them with their own individual space that still connects them with a supervisor outside of the Main Office.

## Compass Space

### High Priority

1. Investigate the use of the Compass front of shop (MUSC Room 102A) for use by external vendors, Club/Service promotions, and other potential short-term rentals.
2. Research options for the continued use of the Compass front of shop for information-sharing through a kiosk system.

### Low Priority

1. Install clearer signage with relation to accessible service counters at the Compass front of shop.
2. Investigate the use of the Compass Office (MUSC Room 102) for EFRT staff.

## Student-Led Service Spaces

### High Priority

1. Work with the MUSC Board of Management to ensure AODA compliance in Service spaces, in line with the 2019 MUSC Accessibility Audit.
2. Work with Part-Time Managers (PTMs) to make improvements to Service spaces that don’t require significant renovations.
3. Investigate opportunities to provide a clear division of space in the EFRT Office Space for decontamination and treatment of patients vs. privacy and recreation of volunteers.
4. Coordinate with the MUSC Board of Management to renovate the flooring of the EFRT Office Space to reduce the potential for retained contaminant particles within the floor material.

### Low Priority

1. Investigate wayfinding (i.e., accessibility improvements to entrance/exit, clear signage) as it relates to the PCC.
2. Request quotes for the installation of wider doorways so that spaces are accessible for those with mobility aids.
3. Consider options for perishable & non-perishable food-storage at the FCC prior to their relocation to the Hub.
4. Request quotes for renovations to Peer-Support Service spaces to replace carpet floors with an alternative flooring medium.
5. Request quotes for the installation of non-fluorescent lights and/or light-dimmers in Peer-Support Service spaces.
6. Investigate ideas to introduce additional shelving and/or storage space for Services to house their inventory.
7. Coordinate with the MUSC Board of Management to evaluate the possibility of adding a dish sink to the EFRT office space.

## Business Unit Spaces

### High Priority

1. Investigate possibilities for providing accessible service counters at TwelvEighty, The Grind, Union Market, and the Underground.
2. Install visual indicator strips along the retail outlet glass walls and sliding doors at Union Market.

### Low Priority

1. Investigate wayfinding (i.e., accessibility improvements to entrance/exit, clear signage) as it relates to TwelvEighty.

## Ancillary Operation Spaces

### High Priority

1. Investigate opportunities for improved ventilation at the Chatime coffee shop to prevent accessibility issues arising from scent-related allergies.

## MUSC (General)

### High Priority

1. Work with the MUSC Board of Management to prioritize capital expenditures required for AODA-compliance.

### Low Priority

1. Work with McMaster’s Security Services and University Technology Services to assess the feasibility of a centralized campus access card system to prevent wasteful magnet card redundancies.

## Bridges Space

### High Priority

1. Investigate the potential for storage options within the current FCC space for office supplies upon FCC’s relocation the Hub.

### Low Priority

1. Investigate the potential of purchasing mobile humidity and/or temperature control units to mitigate food spoilage and infestation frequency.

## Campus Events & AVTek Space

### High Priority

1. Work with the MUSC Board of Management to request repairs to address any potential leaks that may lead to significant asset damage.

### Low Priority

1. Investigate the potential of purchasing mobile temperature control units to mitigate technological damage to expensive assets.

## Ombuds Office Space

### High Priority

1. Investigate space options to effectively facilitate the addition of staff member within the Ombuds Office.

## CFMU & Silhouette Space

### High Priority

1. Investigate areas for easy space optimization within the current space available through equipment relocation, small furniture purchases, or equipment reconfiguration in the CFMU space.
2. Investigate opportunities to bridge the CFMU and Silhouette offices into a joint work area to better suit the needs of both organizations to increase dedicated workspaces, improve communications, facilitate discussion, and reduce inefficiencies for shared staff members.

### Low Priority

1. Investigate opportunities to increase collaborative work/meeting areas within the CFMU space to facilitate community-building and overall collective workflow.

Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns prior to the meeting.

Kind regards,



**Graeme Noble**

Vice-President (Administration) &

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1. Please note that these recommendations significantly depend on the ability of the MSU to navigate its return to campus effectively within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The implementation strategy and timeline for these suggestions may thus transform as new information comes to light surrounding all areas of the MSU and how they are each uniquely impacted by the pandemic and any restrictions that may follow. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)