**MSU President Transition Report**

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Prepared for Denver Della-Vedova 2021-2022



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### Introduction

First of all, congratulations on beginning your term, and for finishing off your undergrad in such an odd way online. It’s been a pretty weird year, and while the upcoming year might also be a bit unique, I know you’ll be great given how much work you’ve already put into understanding the role.

The transition into this role is challenging. I know from experience. It’s hard to know how many meetings you should schedule and how many documents you should read before you start, and to help with that, I’ve tried to make this document as comprehensive as possible for you. The best thing for me was reading past through old transition reports, year plans, and SRA reports of presidents and VPs. I particularly found reading old VP transition reports helpful for me to better understand the unique challenges of VPs so that I could factor that into my own work as president. I also found it helpful to just ask questions whenever I had them, even if that was months into the role. It’s impossible to wrap your head around the entire history of the MSU, university, and various levels of government, in time for you to actually do something with that information. For that reason, this role is a constant exercise of having faith in yourself with the information you do have, while recognizing you are probably not the expert in anything. I found it really hard to make any decisions without first understanding the context for how a problem came to be in the first place. Take the time to go through emails for context, or reach out to John, or myself if you have a question. More often than not, if you ask me a question, I might have 40-60% of the story, but I can direct you to the person who would know best. That said, while I would love to answer questions forever, I know that you’ll get the hang of things pretty quick and learn how to find more information on situations faster than it would take to shoot me a message.

I’m going to take a piece of advice Josh gave me and share it with you: trust the process. It can feel at times like the sky is falling. Know that you are not the first person to experience that. Know that every MSU president has gone through their own unique challenges, and that the process is what has allowed the organization to move on. I like to think of us as little pegs in the chain. We make decisions to keep things moving, but in the grand scheme of things, one year in the MSU is unlikely to have a huge influence 20 years down the road. The more you learn about problems and gaps, the more you will want to do, and the more you will feel like time is running out. That is okay; it’s how I felt too. I found that I only really started to get the hang of things near the end of the year, and you start to understand why some students’ union presidents at other PSE institutions run for two terms. You can only do so much, but at the same time, make the most of the time you have. It runs out quick. By the time you get to know things at the end of the Summer, you start thinking about the next presidential election in January, and by then it’s time to start thinking about VPs too. Make sure you are planning ahead and figuring out projects you want to do early on, but do NOT put too many projects on your year plan. The more projects and goals you add to your year plan, the lower the chances are that you will make progress on any of them. You will have so many things come up in your job that will require attention, that there will always be things to do. Keep a couple important goals and tasks for you to work on throughout a term, but other than that, stay vigilant and try to make progress on other things that have already been in the works.

The other thing I will note is that VPs do most of the work. (Don’t tell them I said that) Sure there were a few things that I did by myself from start to finish, but most of the big projects that you will be working on will fall more directly into the portfolio of one of your VPs. That means you will be there as a support role. It can also sometimes make you feel like you don’t have something for yourself and aren’t doing enough. This is how I felt at first, but then I realized that’s not true. You exist to pull together the entire community. That includes students, volunteers, pt and ft staff, and other community members. You will have a unique lens not shared by anyone else in the MSU or university community. Use that to support your VPs. If you can help them do their jobs better, it will make your job easier too. The best teams work as a team and treat each other as teammates. You’re not their boss, but they will look up to you to lead them. You will want to build a strong team dynamic on the Board. That can be challenging, especially when you have to make decisions that feel like unfair compromises. But at the end of the day, it will be important to think about the costs of pushing your perspective too hard. Sometimes I felt like my unique positioning gave me a more wholistic viewpoint that VPs couldn’t see, but I couldn’t always push on every detail or it would have shattered Board dynamic. You will get invited to attend various events that are pretty cool. Remember that your VPs don’t get those opportunities. Remind them that they’re doing a great job, and when a fun opportunity comes up, offer it to a VP once in a while. The job is thankless, but if your VPs are always in your corner, that will be all that matters.

I also found that a big challenge of the year for me was just navigating the portfolios of two different VPs for two different VP roles. I think this was the first year ever where we had five VPs during one term. Going through two VP by-elections was very challenging, not because of the actual process of the by-elections, but because it meant there were some Board members who just had different experiences in the role than others. Some Board members wanted to keep pushing on new projects and goals at times when other Board members wanted to settle on the ones we already had. This was partly because we rode on different waves of informed ambition. You will find you will want to do a lot in the first half of the year, and about halfway through you will be more hesitant to take on new goals and projects. But when a Board member starts halfway through the year, they may be feeling that new ambition for the role at a time when other Board members want to focus on fewer priorities. This can be really hard to navigate, and while I don’t anticipate you will have to go through two VP by-elections, I’m writing this in case you experience something similar. Take the first few months of the year to really outline the Board priorities and then stick with them. Trust me it will be easier in the long run to agree on these early.

The last thing I’ll say here is that you are the leader of this organization. You are the president and CEO. Everything you say and do in every email and in every meeting reflects the MSU. This can feel daunting, but it just means you set the tone. The way you present yourself and the way you respond in meetings will reflect the rest of the organization. This can feel isolating and challenging, and my advice is to find a close friend who you can talk to this about. I think you are like me and like to talk things out. You will need someone to talk to about it all. You are still you, and one of the best things about you is that you are approachable. That will be important because it will help students think the MSU is approachable. Let students know who you are, and don’t be afraid to get to know the part-time staff. There can be a natural divide between some of the pt staff and the Board, but I think trying to break down some of those walls can be helpful for everyone. All that said, take breaks and moments for yourself. Sometimes you will just need to step back and breathe. Those moments can mean all the difference. The organization will steam forward if you take off a morning or a Friday once in a while.

You’re going to amazing in this role, mainly because you care so much for students and for the community, but also just generally because of who you are. Don’t ever lose faith in yourself. Remember that and you will get through it all.

Good luck,

GC

Ps. Sorry this document is so damn long

### Governance

#### SRA

You’ve already been an SRA member so I don’t need to tell you about Robert’s Rules and all that. Instead I’ll give a brief recap of the more important parts of SRA meetings that will be relevant for your job.

Within SRA you will also have MSU inc and CFMU inc. These are meetings you chair. All capital budget requests and expenditures go through here so make sure you are communicating with your board if you want to make any requests. If I had motions here regarding capital requests, I would have asked Jess to move the motion since it would have been awkward to chair and move at the same time. We didn’t really have any though this year since early in the year we decided to pause capital purchases due to the pandemic. This is much more formal than executive board so even more important to follow Robert’s rules and lean on Victoria/Daniela if you need help.

SRA is all about politics, so you want to make sure you are doing the best for the students and you are supporting the assembly members in doing that. In the end, everyone is fighting for the same thing, which is to improve student life. People just have different ways of getting there. Try to facilitate discussion where possible, find common ground, and avoid creating situations where you may build animosity between the board and SRA. The SRA is there to help you. Some will argue against your motions, but it comes from a good place. They will listen to you as long as you are communicating effectively. Make sure you are listening to them as well.

Board attendance technically isn’t regulated at SRA but I would recommend going as often as you can. (I went to all of them) If you are planning on missing a meeting make sure you check the agenda and ask for items to be rearranged if needed. The last thing you want is for something contentious to come up and you miss it. Since you are the only one not voted in by the SRA, the board will lean on you for contentious decisions since you don’t have to be as worried about repercussions in the role. Make sure you are supporting your VPs and understanding that they experience these meetings differently.

#### General Assembly

This is a beast of an event and is definitely something that will be hanging over your head. We obviously had to do this one online, and it went pretty well on Zoom. We tried our best to increase attendance this year by advertising that students can put forward motions and that I would be assisting them in doing that. The biggest reason why we have such low attendance is because nobody really brings motions, so I found supporting the process this year helped gain some interest. Support the speaker is planning this event, and I would recommend sitting on the planning committee to give advice and take tasks where possible.

You will be presenting a state of the union so make sure you think about this is advance and summarize projects. I also helped edit some motions that were being brought forward. This makes sure that anything passed is structurally sound and also shows that GA isn’t just an opportunity to circumvent the SRA and BoD, it’s an opportunity for everyone to get involved.

#### Bylaws, Operating Policies & More

These are all on the website so there isn’t much I need to put about those in here, but you should familiarize yourself with these when you have time. Key ones would be:

* Constitution
* Corporate Bylaws
* Bylaws
* Operating Policies
* Employment Policies
* CFMU Corporate Bylaws
* CFMU Operating Policies

Victoria is your biggest asset with these and can help you when it comes to understanding bylaws and knowing what bylaws apply to what situation.

### Corporate Structure/Support

#### Full-time staff

The full-time staff are one of your greatest assets when it comes to creating change in the MSU. They are the ones who provide the departmental expertise, institutional memory, and support for the projects that you want to take on. Keep in mind the challenges that come from working from the MSU. Having a whole new set of bosses each year who most of the time don’t really know what they are doing can be hard. Make sure that you listen to them, value their input, and appreciate them.

#### Job Descriptions

These need to be developed further since a few are out of date and some positions to do have appropriate job descriptions. I think you should prioritize this since lack of job descriptions can cause confusion amongst roles and challenges with wage review. We did make some good progress on this over the last year, but it will be helpful to work with the Board on continuing this. I would recommend allowing HR to take the lead on this if there is the capacity to do so.

#### FT Staff and the Board

Each board member interacts with full-time staff differently so take the first few weeks to understand their roles and your own and think about what that might look like. Communicate with your board about full-time staff communication and support so everyone can be on the same page. Your decisions have implications on every full-time staff member so understanding who they are is very important. That said, in terms of direct day to day interactions, those will likely be a bit more concentrated depending on your plan for the year. That isn’t to say you can’t/shouldn’t work with each staff member if needed. I just wanted to go into more detail about those I worked with most closely

#### General Manager

John is your biggest support. He can provide insight on your projects and guide towards the best way to achieve them. He will not overstep and won’t impose his ideas on yours so don’t be afraid to ask for advice when needed. I would recommend setting up a standing meeting with him. He and I did pretty chill weekly ½ hour meetings and I found this really helpful since it was an online year. If it was in person and I could pop into his office I might have made them biweekly, but there are really not a lot of opportunities to touch base in a virtual environment. Make sure you stick to those meetings; whenever I missed one I found it challenging to work through problems the upcoming week.

#### Executive Assistant

Daniella is a really useful resource for help with a number of things. She will set up meetings with higher up university administration and meetings that take more coordination like president’s council. Chat with John about the role since Daniela has now been in the role for a year. I always was nervous to ask Daniela to do things since I didn’t want to bother her so it’s always good to chat with John, so you know what does/does not fall within her role.

#### Administrative Services Coordinator

Victoria is an all-star, and you will work together on executive board, SRA, and other projects. She has so much institutional knowledge so if you have a question about anything you can always go to her. She is also the go-to person for anything related to health/dental/SAP so feel free to reach out to her for those if you have any questions.

#### Marketing and Communications

Wooder is a incredible support for stakeholder relations. As the profile of the MSU grows so does the need for PR support. Wooder is a superstar when it comes to media training, issue management, and a number of other issues we saw this year and really helps fill those gaps. Whenever you have a challenge that has to do with anything external, he’s a good person to include in that conversation. I became more and more independent throughout the year from his work, but we still had great conversations about how to handle problems before they became problems, and I think it made a huge impact.

#### Network Administrator

Pauline is another great source of institutional memory. I obviously went to her with computer issues, but I found her really useful when I had questions about SRA meetings from a long time ago, old contracts, and historical issues within the MSU. She is able to track down our online archives and is really helpful when it comes to understanding context from previous issues such as the change in CAF agreement.

#### Human Resource Generalist

You will work with Maddison for anything HR related, and also most items related to clubs and Ombuds. If there is a larger club issue she will loop you in since there is a high change it can escalate to a PR issues. Additionally, with the implementation of the review she will be an important person to involve since she is our HR and has a lot of knowledge and good input on implementation of recommendations. I know you were on CAC so you have a pretty good idea about what needs to be done with regard to reviews, and so just make sure you are lending support when needed to Maddison for this.

#### Clubs Administrator

I ended up working with Jenna a lot this year for clubs issues, and she was an absolute icon. Jenna is amazing at handling clubs problems, and you can expect she will loop you in when needed for larger problems. Most of the time she just wants to ensure you are okay with a direction, but sometimes she might ask for advice on how to handle a situation that could escalate. Jenna will also be a great person to work with on international student support, since she will be on the International Student Advisory Committee hopefully long-term. Work with her to see how you can implement better support to international students through things like Clubs training and club-related WW events.

#### Full-Time Staff Meetings

These happen in the first week of each month. The first 15 minutes or so of these staff meetings is where the Board and John will attend to give updates and talk about anything you want to. Usually we used this time to update the full-time staff members on something related to the pandemic that we learned from the university, but we also used them to share information about decisions that were made at SRA that would impact them. It’s important to talk about things in open meetings so they don’t think you are hiding information, especially considering they will likely already know most of what happened at the last SRA meeting via internal conversations. The later part of these meetings are spent amongst themselves without the Board and John and they can discuss issues they would like to be brought up at the full-time issues committee. John chairs the general full-time staff meetings and will ask the board if they have updates. SCI might be a large conversation depending on what happens, but most of your updates will likely be related to the pandemic and return to campus. You have everyone in the room for this so if you have any updates or would like feedback on any issues this is the time to do it since things can get lost in transition when it comes through email.

#### Full-Time Staff Appreciation

There is a budget for this! With Daniela or Maddison’s help you could always have a virtual escape room, or maybe if things are in person, an ice cream social! We were in #savemode this past year so we didn’t spend too much on larger socials. Instead, we tried to find safe, virtual ways to appreciate our staff. Definitely use money from this line for the staff members, as they do an incredible amount of work and it is important to make efforts to make them feel appreciated.

#### Full Time Issues Committee

There will be a BoD member present at FT issues meetings along with John. Chat with your board as to who best fits to solve issues presented at this committee. The past couple years they have been more finance focused so the VP Finance has sat on it, which I predict will continue onto this year. However, if you notice they have more of a wholistic organizational focus that extends over a few different portfolios, you may be better suited to sit on it.

#### Benefits

This applies to you and the board as well! After a three-month probationary period you have access to the full-time staff benefits. Since you are no longer eligible for the Student Health & Dental plan make sure you use this! I didn’t use it as much as I would have liked so get a massage, buy new glasses, or get acupuncture. They are there for you to use so might as well use them to your benefit! Jenna from Everwel is a star who we unfortunately didn’t get to use due to the pandemic, but if you have the chance I highly recommend!

#### Workplace Culture

This is important and setting a tone earlier will definitely benefit you later on. There will be a lot of fear going into this year, which is fair given COVID 19, possible SCI, and the financial situation, so it’s your responsibility to make sure that the workplace culture remains intact. Your online videos have been super fun, so make sure you keep that energy going forward. Find ways throughout the year to appreciate staff, recognize staff, and create a fun workplace culture. Figure out the culture that already exists and how you would like to improve it. Our Board originally tried to formalize the workplace culture a bit, but then wanted to bridge the gap between BoD and staff, and also formal clothing went out the window with the pandemic. It is definitely a unique structure so you want to make sure the culture allows for people to work optimally and efficiently while still being connected to the BoD and the governance aspect of the MSU. Things like birthdays, retirements, holidays, and other milestones are all great opportunities to get everyone together and celebrate. If it is in person at all, when in doubt do karaoke!!!

### Boards, Committee, Councils, and Task Forces

#### Ad Hoc Academic Return to Campus Committee

This was one of the groups that I sat on throughout the year related to COVID-19., albeit I was added pretty late (March 8 2021) so I don’t know a whole lot about their work early on. That said, the main purpose of the group was to think of the academic considerations for return to campus. They also think about what considerations need to be made before academic-related student groups can get together again in person again, which was the main reason I was interested. This will be important for you since faculty society presidents will ask you questions about this. You will want to make sure there is consistent language being used for faculty groups and msu clubs when thinking about returning to in-person meetings/activities.

#### Administration-Student Consultation

This is the Student Administration Consultation Committee which consists of senior leaders throughout the university, MSU, and MAPS. It is chaired by you and the president of the University, though I found I chaired most meetings and David was more hands off letting the BoD take the reins which was appreciated. We would go around the table and ask for updates and from those updates’ questions were posed and discussion occurred. This is a great opportunity for you to discuss university wide issues. We started the year with tangible agenda items but it was slightly awkward in the first meeting, and then we just decided to do informal updates later in the year. The rest of the Board might also not be as familiar with the dynamics you have with upper administration folks so they might not know how formal or pushy to be with agenda items. You should definitely go over these things with them in advance.

Prior to your first AdminCon meeting, meet as a board with John to go over what it is so everyone is on board. Discuss with a board what agenda items you would like and how you would like this meeting to go. It is sometimes difficult to get conversation going so utilize the VPs to ensure people are asking questions and ensuring the meeting is productive. I feel like you will have a few things to talk about though with return to campus, so I trust they will be productive.

Typically, these are coordinated by Kerry from the President’s office and Daniela, however, Eva from Student Affairs has taken a larger role in organizing this as well. Eva is retiring at the end of April though so it may be organized by her replacement

#### Board (CFMU)

These meetings are held once a month, typically on a Friday. These meetings are generally updating about the happenings of CFMU. Some previous conversations included the insect infestation in the basement, the flood and the damages it had on some equipment and Sandeep’s and Jamie’s want to renovate the space for their volunteers and space users. Daniela is the one who coordinates these meetings and it is comprised of yourself, the vice-president administration, vice-president finance, John, Daniela, Jamie, Sandeep and two community radio show hosts. To be honest this committee for the first few times I didn’t really get what to do; however, with the pandemic and the campus media ad hoc committee work, I think it would be great to use this space as a brainstorming tool for moving forward. See where the MSU channels could support the promotion of CFMU and connect with SSC to promote their jobs on OSCAR plus. This is a good committee, just sometimes challenging to see how it can be leveraged for improvements.

#### Board (MSU)

As you know, we held these meetings every week on Tuesdays from 12-2pm and had the communications meeting following with Wooder and his people. Earlier in the year though they started on Mondays from 2-4pm. We then switched it to Tuesdays 2-4pm so that people could take Mondays off in the Summer, and we then switched it in January to 12-2pm to accommodate the calendars of student staff on comms team. You can put these meetings whenever you would like, but I think Monday would be the best time because it helped set up the week, discuss what was going on with that week, and debrief issues that happened the week prior. I would avoid Fridays even though they could provide similar benefits, just because people tend to take days off these days.

As we spoke about in transition, this is a meeting that no one should be missing unless they are not in the office that day. There are lots of meetings folks can book over, but the BoD meeting should not be one of them. Obviously, you can decide how much you would like to prioritize these meetings, but I found them to be very useful. You will also have to work on setting the tone for what is and what is not appropriate for Board agenda items. At the beginning of the year, we only had a few agenda items and then folks gave lots of updates as we were closing, which I found really helpful. But into the Fall we started to have an enormous number of agenda items (close to 20 some weeks), and this meant it was really challenging to keep us on track and also ensure we were able to talk at length about things that were really important. Try to talk to your VPs to let them know what would be better to discuss outside of Board meetings so that you don’t run into that problem. It also got awkward later in the year when it would repeatedly happen and I wasn’t sure at times how to best handle this, so try to set the tone early.

These meetings are fully closed, so only you, the VPs, John, and Daniela will be present. We did not invite people into board meetings as we would with executive board. We operated solely on memo-based asks or had a board member meet with the person bringing forward a request beforehand if they wanted to make sure there was more context provided for a decision. Try to get team members to send context for agenda items in advance of it being discussed at Board meeting so that you can maximize the time you have together.

You also might find that two hours is too long depending on the week. I know that online meetings get really draining so I tried to cap them at 1.5 hours later in the year, which I found helpful and I think Daniela and John appreciated. The two hours is there if you need it, but you don’t have to use the whole thing.

#### Board (UCRU)

These meetings are biweekly with representatives from UCRU member institutions across Canada. Depending on whether you want to run for elected positions on UCRU, you may end up chairing them, taking minutes, or just being a regular Board member. I ran for vice-chair and then lost so I would just attend as a regular board member. Most schools didn’t have their president and vp ed equivalent attend all the meetings, but because our situation was different with the election mid-year, I thought it would be helpful for Ryan to attend them too even though I was more familiar with UCRU work. I think you should talk with your incoming VP Ed to talk about how you want to do this. You might want to have only the VP Ed attend and bring their AVP PFA. That way we have a Board member there, but they can pass off work to the PFA if need be. Again, it will be totally up to you on how you and your VP Ed want to handle it. I really enjoyed these meetings, but I think that’s also because we had a great dynamic on the team.

These will also be good meetings to check in with other UCRU Board members about challenges you are all facing in the online year. We had a standing COVID-19 agenda item which was helpful for us just to talk about federal challenges that all of our students were running into. (ie. International students, technology issues, exam fairness) I would highly recommend you use this group to stay up to date on the challenges facing students across Canada.

#### Board of Governors

Board of Governors is the highest governing body of the university. They are sort of like the MSU Inc. for the university, and all financial considerations have to go through this. The budget is also approved through BoG. You likely won’t be bringing many items to BoG as an observer, but there may be some things that go through this from Ombuds. The meetings are pretty efficient, so you should take a look at the documents in advance to see what you might want to ask questions about. There were a few protests this past year at BoG meetings so that might be something you experience again next year. If you know a protest is going to happen, it’s good to touch base with Wooder in advance in case you want to strategize. David also reports to BoG so you will see most of his formal reports here, similar to how you submit reports to SRA.

#### Board of Management (MUSC)

So technically the president doesn’t have to chair this meeting, but typically it is chaired by a student, so I chaired it this year. You were also on it last year so it would make a lot of sense for you to be on this Board again. These meetings are scheduled by Victoria and act as the MSU inc equivalent for MUSC. They will be a key partner for your accessibility points and the MUSC renovations as a whole. Chat with Lori about any agenda items you plan to bring to this meeting prior to it happening as she is likely the one who you will work with if they get approved.

#### Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion Strategy Steering Committee

You’ve chatted with Arig already, so you may be fairly familiar with the work of this committee already, but they are a great way for you to get an idea of the EDI work that’s happening around the university. This is a committee Arig started as a part of the EDI action plan, so I encourage you to read through the outline of the plan to get an idea of short term, medium term, and long-term projects the university will be taking on to support this work. I found that the time that came prior to this committee was really useful for getting projects we have been hoping for on the universities radar. There have been a lot of really great conversations from this committee that turn into larger plans for the university, especially surrounding metrics and targets for the university as a whole. Review this committee with your VP Ed and chat about how you will approach this committee and all its subcommittees. Come prepared because you are the one who they will often turn to for the student voice. You should make notes on EDI work the MSU is working on so that when they ask you for updates you have things to say.

#### Executive Board

Executive Board is the committee where you oversee the day to operations of the MSU. At this meeting agenda items from HR issues to approving new logos are brought to the table. In the summer they meet bi-weekly and in the school year they meet weekly

How you conduct these meetings are up to you, Victoria as the secretary of the meeting will want it done in a certain way but do ensure there are no issues, proactively discuss with her about how you would like these meetings to be ran but be courteous as she needs to do her job as well. It’s okay for this meeting to be less formal than SRA, but make sure you are running it in a way the minutes make sense and you are abiding by all the bylaws. If you have any ideas about EB and how you would like to run the meetings, chatting with Victoria is always a good first step.

When topics that are heavy or need discussing a head of time are likely going to come to EB, please discuss with your board in advance. You don’t want your VPs bringing up something and that be the first time you hear about it. We tried to make sure that as a board we were all on the same page with bringing something up to EB and were able to gather our thoughts prior to closed session. This doesn’t mean you all need to have the same view on a subject, just make sure no one is blindsided going into the meetings. Always good to go over these in the BoD meeting prior so you can talk it out.

Attendance is monitored through a bylaw but also through you and Victoria. It is important that you’re on the ball with this as I am sure there are other passionate SRA members who would love this spot on EB so make sure people are following the bylaws with attendance and that you are keeping track of it. Again, make sure your board is on top of it too. If they are going to be away, they need to let both you and Victoria know for quorum. In addition, your board should never book over EB. If they are going to be late, they should let you know as well. As with Board Meetings, please make sure folks are not booking over these meetings

John and Wooder are observers, so if there was a topic I thought they may not want to be present for or if they just had a busy schedule, I would give them the option to miss that meeting. If you are going to do this chat with John first and let Victoria know.

Previously, there was a section for committee as a whole as a standing item where people could just discuss any topics they would like. I found this was not the most effective because people would either force discussion so there were things to say or people found it fit better in information and question period. If you want some time for more free flow discuss you can always add it back, I just always preferred things going by agenda items and am only really a fan of committee as a whole if it is subject specific.

I think it would be great to include our MSU departments more with EB, whether that be through you or having people come to EB themselves. With the review always good to keep them in the loop that way you are constantly getting student input. Executive board is technically in charge of the long-term vision of the organization so big decisions regarding the organization as a whole should include them, including work from the campus media ad hoc committee.

Part-time issues committee is run though EB and acts like a part time version of the Full-Time staff committee. VP Admin and Maddison should be organizing this, but feel free to check in with them on the progress of this as it is not the most reliable meeting.

If big things are going to the SRA, it is never a bad idea to discuss them at the EB meeting the day before. This allows you to get an idea of where members are at and if you can get them on your side you have 5 more advocates. Leverage the executive board, we used them a lot last year and it was super helpful. We had a bit of turnover throughout the year on Executive Board, but I think based on the election at 21A you will have strong EB members, so make sure you value the members on EB this year because they can be a huge asset to the BoD and the organization as a whole.

We also did run into some challenges that ptms were facing throughout the year, and their frustrations bubbled up into Executive Board meetings and public documents. Your VP Admin should be on top of this and hopefully giving you a heads up if there is anything contentious in documents that are being submitted, but you should be reading all the documents as well in advance to know what would be contentious.

#### General Assembly Planning Committee

This is led by the SRA speaker and has support from Campus Events Director and Wooder, so if you don’t show up, they can continue without you. Keep in mind you are the only BoD member on this committee, and you have a decent role in GA so it would benefit you to be a part of the planning process. I mostly gave input on ensuring students were aware of what GA is an what they can do there as well as assisted in problem solving. Wooder will give you insight on what your role in this committee might look like this year but try to ensure you are keeping informed about what is happening with GA regardless, so you ensure it is progressing at a rate you are happy with.

#### McMaster Accessibility Council

This was a committee that traditionally the VP Ed sits on but I was really interested in accessibility work and wanted to sit on it as well. It is up to you if you want to sit on it with the VP Ed or just have them sit on it and update you on the work of the meetings. This is a very productive group, and I’ve listed below a few things that we discussed throughout the year below:

* McMaster AODA Compliance Reporting Tool
* Accessibility Reporting for the University
* New McMaster Accessibility Policy
* Feeding AODA standards into Teaching & Learning practices
* Barrier-free design work (there is a subcommittee for this)

#### McMaster Okanagan Committee

Traditionally there has not been student representation on this committee, but early on I realized that the MOC was being referenced a lot in other committees I was on ,so I reached out to also sit on this. I would suggest you also sit on this over the upcoming year, as the committee has a decent pool of funding and does a lot of work at the direction of the Provost. The MOC also just started out a couple years ago and since there’s not a lot of sustainability governance for the university, this committee doubles for some sustainability work. The Mental Health Task Force was also created sort of as a subcommittee of the MOC, even though there are a lot of people on the TF that were not on the MOC. (It just made the most sense from the Provost’s POV to not create a whole new thing, and to just create it out of something that already existed within her portfolio.

I would suggest doing your best to go to as many of these as possible, especially since it’s new and not a lot of student groups or even folks in the MSU really know what it’s about or how it can be useful for students. You should be the one helping to get the word out to students when they are doing calls for nominations for funding projects and such.

#### Mental Health Task Force Oversight Committee

The Okanagan Mental Health Task Force was inspired by the mission of the Okanagan Charter and was developed to identify the key mental health and well-being issues affecting faculty, staff and students at McMaster, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, and to recommend potential solutions and future directions.

The task force is supposed to make recommendations to improve the mental health and well-being of individuals and groups on campus through education and mental health promotion and recommendations to create more psychologically healthy and inclusive learning and working environments at McMaster through systemic changes, building on existing strengths and resources.

The McMaster Okanagan Mental Health & Well-being Task Force was formed at the request of McMaster’s Provost Dr. Susan Tighe. The task force, under the direction and leadership of Dr. Catharine Munn, the leader behind the Professor Hippo-on-Campus program, was tasked with making short and long-term recommendations to the university around mental health education, programming, and policies affecting McMaster’s staff, students and faculty. The task force is made up of three committees who will present a final report to the Provost in early summer 2021.

I sat on the Oversight Committee which is basically in tasked with vetting the recommendations that come out of the subcommittees to see if they are feasible or possible. All this info is also available on the MOC website but I figured I would keep it here so it’s all in one place. You will likely be invited to a couple of the final meetings before the recommendations are submitted to Susan in early-mid Summer.

#### Multi-Model Transportation Committee

This group was created fairly recently and has been struggling a bit to find its place but I think it will be super helpful. The whole premise falls on the fact that transportation for healthy communities requires mobility strategies that address users’ diverse transportation needs in a way that maximizes opportunities for supporting health and wellbeing, encourages environmental sustainability and ensures accessibility. That approach integrates the principles of transportation polycultures, which recognize the advantages of multiple transportation possibilities for diverse needs. The committee also works as a subcommittee of the MOC, and seeks to support the health, safety, and wellbeing of the McMaster community while contributing to increased sustainability.

Due to some weird circumstances, we had myself, Ryan, and John all on this committee. This is definitely overkill, and I think in the future it would make most sense to have the AVP MA and the chair of the sustainability education committee sit on this committee. The AVP MA can update the VP Ed who can update you on anything that escalates from these conversations. The only big conversations that you might get involved in are related to transportation hubs on campus and anything related to SoBi referendums. They have talked about both of these items a lot. I don’t think SoBi should fall on the backs of students to survive in the future as it is a municipal transportation system, but there might be interesting conversations about student deals in the future similar to HSR. With regard to transportation hubs, I think this could be really cool if done right! They really wanted to revive MaCycle and didn’t understand the problems that led to its original demise. Even if we wanted to bring it back, we wouldn’t be able to until May 2022 anyway, but anything is possible after that. If they really push on that, it would be a good idea to try to link those conversations to long term planning discussions for Facilities services to maybe do some kind of partnership, otherwise it would fall squarely on the MSU to create a new service and sustain it.

#### Okanagan Physical Activity Committee

This is another subcommittee out of the MOC which Wayne chairs. I only went to a couple of these, but I found them pretty useful to get an idea for other work that was going on around campus (mainly in A&R) that was related to healthy active living. Again, this is just another opportunity for you to have a bird’s eye view on different committees doing different but similar work around campus.

#### President’s Advisory Committee on Community Relations

This is a committee with Mac Government Relations, you, and various members of the community. Essentially your role is to communicate on the MSU’s behalf of what the student’s union is doing regarding community relations and the City of Hamilton. At these meetings I found it fitting to discuss COVID cases and student behaviours, GO Busses, lighting on and off campus as well as over-policing and student’s concerns pertaining to this. Most of what I was doing at this meeting was highlighting the student point of view, highlighting student needs, and finding opportunities to improve community relations while maintaining student needs at the forefront, which is where a lot of our community clean ups came in.

Earlier in the year when it comes to **Welcome Week**, I encourage you to bring VP Admin to this meeting so that they can speak on behalf of the MSU about welcome week. The Campus Events Coordinator can come too. Either Mary will reach out or you should do this on your own accord. Introduce them as members of the MSU and have them discuss with the community the plans for welcome week as it pertains to community relations.

Discuss with the VP Ed if you believe that the AVP Municipal should sit on it with you. They can speak on what the Ed team is doing and their relations with the community is a bit more sustainable.

At these meetings, some hot topics are: Homecoming and Saint Patties, of course. Obviously, these are all different depending on what classes look like and how the pandemic develops, but I’m writing this as if it is a typical year and you can adapt to the circumstances at the time:

* Homecoming/FOCO: Bring Campus Events Coordinator to the homecoming meeting so that they can discuss plans of alternative programming. The Public Relations team would likely ask you to proactively film a video to go alongside their messaging. Decide what you would like to do as it is your choice. HOCO wasn’t very big this past year so they didn’t ask me but it is very common for them to reach out to the msu pres for this.
* The year before me, we planned a number of our own provisions and had a lot of discussion surrounding what homecoming would look like for the MSU. As we did not do programming that year since it was on reading week, Trish wasn’t brought to the meeting since there was nothing to discuss. Similarly this year there was no programming due to the pandemic so I didn’t invite her either. Also, since FOCO was before homecoming the year prior, everything really went under the rug. That said, for FOCO, Josh planned a community clean up with really helped at the PACCR table. There are typically a number of other harm reduction strategies deployed for other large events but depending on the pandemic you may or may not be doing those.
* The strategy has been to refer to FOCO as an unsanctioned student event. Josh never spoke out against or in favor of it, since in the end we do represent students and they planned this so in his view, it’s our responsibility to ensure we add provisions to reduce impact and ensure safety, but he was not going to go and try to get it to be cancelled. Make sure you communicate with Mary and the PR team about all thing’s homecoming and your comfort level regarding partnerships. Transparency with the university is always better in the long run with these things so they don’t assume you will be partnering with them on things if you don’t want to.
* St. Patties for the past few years have been very contentious and assumed the worst of students, and in practice nothing happened. Both times the MSU expressed concerns and asked to not get additional police or security presence, and they said they would register our concerns, but personally we did not see much come from that. Again, they will ask you to partner on a video, decide what’s best for you. Due to the pandemic, there were very few students around and while they still got additional security presence, there were ultimately no parties. (as expected)

When you chat with Mary, she will tell you who to contact regarding public relations concerns. Always good to chat with them earlier on about strategies for the years and your comfort level and concerns so you can try to address them earlier rather than later.

#### President’s Advisory Committee on Natural Lands

PACNL is a committee that the MSU pres has not traditionally sat on, but I was asked to this year and since I was very interested in sustainability work I decided to do it. The meetings can feel a bit chaotic and Rob (chair) will do his best to keep things going according to the agenda. The general purpose of the committee is to work on behalf of David to preserve biodiversity and natural lands on campus, often with the support of research projects and major donations. One of the large projects that came up was related to the West campus parking lot that they want to turn into a stepwise natural land area, and also some projects related to bee populations on campus. I personally found that I didn’t contribute too much to these conversations, but I always found them interesting which is why I stayed on. If you have any ideas for projects regarding biodiversity or natural lands on campus this would be a great group to talk to about it. You might also know of student groups that are thinking of doing projects that fall under the purview of this committee, and you may wish to invite them to this committee at the approval of Rob.

#### President’s Awards for Outstanding Service Committee

This is a committee that you will be asked to sit on near the beginning of the year that will operate near the end of the year in March. I totally forgot about it by the time it came around, and because everything moved to digital this year I found that it took a lot of time to go through the nominations and submit everything on time.

That said, this was a very cool experience that I really appreciated being a part of. You get a really unique bird eye view of the incredible efforts of staff and groups on campus that are advancing the work of the university, and it was really inspiring after a hard year to see all the folks who used innovation and teamwork to come together during a crisis. Reading through the nominations is a really humbling experience and I think you will really enjoy it too. I had no idea about most of the work that we were discussing until I went through the documents, and it gave me a deeper appreciation for the work of the university community. Deb Garland will coordinate all of this, but Wanda McKenna will chair the meetings and ensure the committee does the work they need to do.

There is a Presidents Awards for Outstanding Service Policy that Deb will send to you in advance of the work you will do for this so that you can better familiarize yourself with what the purpose of the committee is. The main purpose as outlined in the policy is below:

*The purpose of these awards is to provide an annual recognition for employees or groups of employees who have made an outstanding contribution beyond that normally expected for their positions to the mission of the University through:*

* *the provision of exceptional service to staff, faculty, students, alumni, donors or visitors;*
* *the identification of measures which contribute to the efficiency and effectiveness of University operations;*
* *a direct or indirect contribution to the community or the University which impacts the reputation of McMaster.*

#### Presidents’ Council

We already chatted about this and you’ve been to one of these, but these meetings really improved this past year compared to years prior. They are meant to connect with other stakeholders, share best practices, and demonstrate what work the MSU is doing. I found that some people were not super interested in connecting and sharing best practices, but most of them were amazing. Some things I talked about at these meetings and things I would recommend improving the committee would be:

* Use it as an opportunity to discuss controversial topics in the MSU. We talked about HSR, lifeline, PCC, and opened up the floor for other questions on issues. This helps set the record straight and make sure information getting to faculty societies is correct. Though it may not be applicable to their role, they are still students and have questions. I know this have be nerve racking and sometimes people can be not so nice, but it’s always better to address issues here then stifle conversation.
* Make an agenda and send it out earlier. I found a formal agenda really helped to direct and guide conversation. (even if it was just sent around the day before) Folks tended to prefer a balance between specific topics and conversational items. If you ever have the opportunity to use this table to brainstorm ideas or talk out problems, definitely do it. I think this could be a cool way to chat about best practices for student groups during COVID-19 and to make sure student life is still active at McMaster with respect to the physical distancing guidelines.
* Check in on them frequently and see if there’s any way you can assist them. They all have difficult positions and oftentimes when they are working through challenges you might be is a position to assist them. It might take extra time, but I always found it was worth it because it helped connect faculties to the MSU in a more meaningful way. If you need assistance with this committee, your VPs will likely be helpful to bounce ideas off of!
* This committee is mandated through bylaw so make sure you review it and edit it if necessary
* Connect with Daniela to coordinate schedules whenever you would like to have a meeting. It’s a lot to schedule so give her lots of notice and try to set up standing meetings to prevent having to go through the coordination process each time because people don’t always respond super quickly. I recommend having the first meeting in late May if possible, to really get these going early. The year before me they started in October and it was a struggle, but we started mid-summer and I found they were really great. It became a good little vent session now and then for folks dealing with low engagement or challenges within their teams.
* It would also be a good idea to meet with each of the faculty society presidents outside of this first meeting to see what they want to get out of these meetings and how you can support each other throughout the year.
* Use this group to talk about any projects you want to do with the faculty society presidents, like the LOTUS project if you end up diving into that.

#### Return to McMaster Teaching, Learning, & Student Experience Committee

This was one of the subcommittees of the Return to McMaster Committee (below). I’ll put the main purpose as outlined in the ToR below:

* Review the Virtual Task Force Report to inform recommendations and the upcoming Teaching and Learning Strategic Vision.
* Considers the teaching and learning experience from the student and instructor perspectives.
* Identifies teaching and learning priorities.
* Consults with undergraduate and graduate students on student needs and priorities

#### Return to Work Operations Group

This group met very frequently last Summer (twice weekly at 8am) and then it turned into weekly, and then biweekly later in the year. The main purpose of this group is to operationalize the decisions being made regarding what is allowed in person and what has to be virtual. There are a number of AVPs and Directors at this meeting, and you and John will be the MSU reps. This is co-chaired by Debbie Martin and Wanda McKenna, and you usually will get good updates from Andrea on the province or municipal updates. This includes case numbers, projections for next couple weeks/months, testing, and vaccinations. Be prepared to give updates at these on what the MSU is doing related to COVID-19 that is front-facing. I usually gave updates related to our services and business units, and John is there if you want to rely on him. Feel free to ask him in advance what updates he thinks are relevant. You usually don’t get any notice when they want you to update on MSU work, so be prepared to speak without being told in advance.

#### Space Allocation & Audit Committee

I gave a more wholistic update on this in a later section!

#### Senate

At first, I was confused on how Senate differed from BoG, but the main way it was explained to me was that Senate deals with the more academic side of the university, and BoG is more related to finances. You will be an observer on Senate and will get invites throughout the year for all of them. There is an online portal that you will have access to that has all of the documents related to the next meeting, and usually I would read through them in advance and just skim to see what was relevant/interesting. I would recommend letting the VP Ed know if there is anything relevant coming up on an upcoming Senate meeting agenda. You might want to brainstorm together what questions you have during Senate, or the VP Ed might want you to discuss it with the AVP UA. A lot of the updates Kim has been working on ends up being materialized through Senate, and there will also be updates here regarding return to campus. You don’t have to attend all of the Senate meetings, but I would suggest attending the first few to see what they are like and then attending the ones later that you think are relevant based on the agenda items.

#### Sexual Violence Prevention & Response Task Force

The main purpose of the Sexual Violence Prevention and Response (SVPR) Task Force is to support the mandate of the Sexual Violence Prevention & Response Office (SVPRO) and to advise on the effectiveness of campus sexual violence prevention and response efforts. I know you have already attended a couple of these so you probably know more about than I do. I trust you will be able to use this to connect different advocacy projects and individuals working on SVPR work in the MSU. Maddison and Carolyn are also on it which will be really helpful since they will be there year after year.

#### Student Services Advisory Committee

You have been to this meeting and it is with Student Affairs and the MSU so you get the gist of how they go. Eva’s replacement will reach out to you for agenda items and it is imperative you’re proactive with this as she needs to send the agenda out in a timely manner. Of course, you can always add on the floor; however, it is good that the university members are aware a head of time of what the MSU will be discussing so they can plan and have answers ready and information readily available. Some of the topics we discussed at this meeting were SLEF, The Hub, Student Wellness Center and Mental Health Support, and International Students Support, and rebates for students due to decreased or inaccessible service operations. From the MSU it is the BoD and John who attend, and it is important that they are all present. Similar to before, they are not to book over these meetings. I would recommend adding SSAC to the Board agenda the week prior to these so that you can all chat about anything you want to talk about and send those items to Eva’s replacement so it gets on the agenda. You may also want to let Sean know in advance what you want to bring up in your 1:1s with him so that he has time to think about it. He should be doing this with you also.

This is the committee where you should discuss the CAF agreement and review of the subcommittees so allow for more student input on the allocation of the student services fee. Josh did some research on trends regarding this fee so you can find those on the desktop if you are interested in what they look like at some other schools. He utilized the presidents from other student unions as well when reviewing the fee to determine the best course of action as well. Every school as one of these fees and agreements and committees, so you have examples of different options.

We also talked a lot about subcommittee effectiveness, and you will know from the last meeting that we think this should improve in future years. I think having presentations from different departments at the beginning of the year would be a really smart idea since each subcommittee operates differently with different effectiveness. It would also be a good idea to maybe have those presentations happen at the SRA so that they are aware of what’s going on, or to have a few SRA members present for the presentations so that they can ask questions and then present the main discussion items for the rest of the SRA at a meeting. But I think having reps actually present at SRA could be a good idea if not too logistically challenging, since the main purpose of subcommittees was to have students engaged in the process and it wouldn’t be great if it just became the BoD that was engaging in the conversations, even if it’s only the BoD that is on SSAC.

#### Sustainability Advisory Council

I have a larger update on this in the next section!

#### Sustainability Education Committee

This was a committee that needed a bit of support throughout the year and which I put a lot of effort in to support when I started. We tried to put a lot more structure into the committee this year and give them a proper direction, but the operating policy might need more adjusting throughout the year. I tried to outline most of the main summary points in the Sustain Ed Committee document I submitted at 21B but the main points you need to know are below:

* Make sure they create a year plan
* If you are not on the committee, talk to the Board member who is about their plans for the year early, and chat with Kate Whalen about how you think the committee and ASP can work together
* Make sure the final work/summary of the committee is communicated with appropriate stakeholders near the end of the year
  + Ex. If they do a research project, make sure the results are actually sent to someone so that it is useful in the future and doesn’t die. Similarly, if they have ideas for a possible future student project, make sure that is communicated with ASP

#### Sustainability Report Committee

I have a larger update on this in the next section!

#### Task Force on the Fall 2020 Virtual Learning Experience

You have probably heard me give lots of updates on this, and I give a bit more wholistic update in the later section, but I’ll link the recommendations here for quick [access](https://www.mcmaster.ca/vpacademic/documents/Taskforce/Fall_VLT_Final_Recommendations_Report.pdf).

#### Teaching & Learning Strategy Steering Committee

This was the SC to develop the new Teaching & Learning Strategy that Fawziyah and I sat on. We met fairly regularly last Summer and finished most of our work by August. We then met near the end of the year again to talk about how things are continuing. I think you will likely be involved in the implementation of the strategy items, which are really just guiding themes and principles for Faculties to implement into their own action plans. The actual T&L strategy should be released in early May, and then there will be a few ad hoc committees to implement each of the different themes across the campus teaching and learning community. This was a really cool opportunity to insert teaching & learning related advocacy items into the university’s long-term planning. If there is an oversight committee it would be good for you or the VP Ed (or both) to sit on it.

#### UCRU Governance Committee

The Governance Committee was one of the subcommittees of the Board. Since we had not been incorporated before this past year, we literally wrote the new bylaws for UCRU. They can be found in your emails from Mackenzy. We also wrote new Operating Policies

#### Wireless/O365 Steering Committee

This committee met over last Summer and a bit into the Fall to oversee the migration of staff and faculty emails from G-Suite to O-365. I’m not sure why I was on this one to be honest because it didn’t have an impact on students, but it was helpful to see what the migration process looked like for when the migration would happen for students. This committee is over so you won’t have to worry about sitting on it.

#### Wireless/O365 Student Email Steering Committee

You will however sit on this one! I know you already attended a couple meetings so I trust you have a bit of an idea on how this is going to go. The biggest thing you will need to do is keep your team in the loop on what is happening and give updates to SRA when necessary. I think it would also be a good idea to utilize your SRA drop-in meetings that you are thinking of having to discuss this, and see if SRA members want to meet with anyone from the office of the CTO to ask questions about the process. Students are going to be pretty frustrated with this shift so it will be good to just ensure they are getting all the info they can from the comms people on this steering committee. Students will want to know when their emails are shifting over and what that means for google drive and such, so you will probably be the one coordinating with SRA and the SC to make sure the questions of students are being answered promptly. Keep Wooder and Pauline in the loop as well so they know what’s going on.

### Organization Review

I know we went over this in training and you may have spoken to Jess and/or Graeme about this so I’m mostly noting this for historical context for future years. The year before us, there was an organizational review with KPMG. What initially sparked the review was noticing a lot of overlap with roles and some roles being very overburdened. The main objective for the review was to determine what our organizational structure should look like moving forward and what the direction of our revenue generators should be. You have access to the review, so I won’t go over the recommendations here, (there is a short summary in the projects section) but the main one would be to create a senior leadership team which we currently do not have. Currently, we have a few clear department heads, but I think that really cleaning up our organizational structure and putting in place a leadership team of 6-7 positions would do wonders for our efficiency, organizational growth, employee support, and allow for improvements across the board. I would focus this year on the Director of Human Resources & Administration position, but ensure you have a direction you would like to go towards for the organization as a whole, so you don’t end up with a bunch of ancillary positions that don’t fit under any particular department head. We have our suggestion for what this could look like which we will ensure you and the incoming Board have access to, but feel free to change that as you see fit and reach out if you want to brainstorm new possibilities.

### Month by Month Summary

Since this role is so project based, I don’t think this is a super useful section but I’m including it anyways because it’s in the bylaw. I am just going to put general projects that occur or things to guide that month, but it will be very bare bones because you will fill it up with projects as you see fit. Also, I am sure I am forgetting things but hopefully this is at least a little bit helpful. Second also, this is very different because of COVID 19 but I’m putting things that occur in a typical year because I don’t know how they will change.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| May | * Training * Set up standing meetings times * Set up email distribution lists (ie. president’s council) * Staff training * BoD Goal Planning * UCRU elections |
| June | * Summer projects * Transition everything online |
| July | * Summer projects * Transition everything online |
| August | * Elections |
| September | * Elections * Welcome Week |
| October | * Elections |
| November | * Provincial lobby week * Federal lobby week |
| December | * BoD communication/support to students for exams |
| January | * Elections * Re-visit Goal Planning |
| February | * Possible second Federal lobby week |
| March | * General Assembly * Student Recognition Night |
| April | * Elections * Transition |

### Important Dates, Deadlines, and Bylaw or Operating Policy Requirements

Again, all of this is pretty dependant on what your specific projects are so I’ll just try my best to highlight what I think will be helpful.

Dates + Deadlines:

* SRA + EB Documents: Tuesdays at 12pm
* MSU/CFMU Inc. Documents: Thursday the week prior to the meeting (not the week of the meeting)
* Clubs Applications Due: December 1st
* General Assembly: Lots of different requirements so review the bylaw (the speaker will actually do it but still good to know)

Bylaws and Policies to Review:

* Constitution: highest governing document
* Corporate Bylaw 1: will help you understand what MSU inc is
* Corporate Bylaw 3: highlights how the financial approval process works
* Bylaw 3: All things SRA
* Bylaw 4: What you need to do as officers of the organization
* Bylaw 5: Executive Board
* Bylaw 6: General Assembly
* Bylaw 10: External Representation
* All the Clubs Operating Policies
* Central Support Services Operating Policies
* Operating Policy: Presidents Council
* Probably other ones I’m forgetting

### Projects, Summaries, Evaluations, Status Reports

#### **Accessible Academics**

##### Access to Technology & Internet

In a predominantly online academic year, there have been major challenges with regard to differential access to both internet and technology. We advocated for these concerns to be incorporated into the planning of fall- and winter- term course delivery, especially after the University said on multiple occasions that quality of education would not be lowered due to an online term. Our advocacy to demand that the University prioritize students who are living in rural or other locations with poor internet connection was met with a number of wins. Internet boosting devices were brought to some rural areas, and HCS included poor internet access by way of CRTC mapping as one of the criteria for on-campus housing. Students were able to access the McMaster COVID-19 Bursary for payments related to unstable internet or lack of available technology, as these would both be categorized as exacerbated challenges due to the pandemic. The Government of Canada also announced a $2-billion internet investment plan to bring 98% of Canadians to high-speed internet by 2026. While there were some wins, many students faced challenges to meet the needs of a virtual year due to unstable internet access or lack of available technological resources needed to thrive in the virtual academic setting. This advocacy will need to continue next year, especially if students are studying remotely again.

##### Course Waitlist Concerns

There have been a number of concerns over recent years regarding course waitlists. Many McMaster courses do not have a waitlist option, meaning students do not know when a seat is open for courses. Not to mention, when there is a seat available for a course that a student is interested in, there is no way for that student to be notified of the seat availability. This is understandably frustrating for students and these concerns have been voiced to a number of senior student and university leaders over past years. While the course waitlist pilot initiative in 2018 was deemed unsuccessful, it is important to continue pushing for this priority so that it is fair for students to who wish to fill seats once they become available, and so that mental stress can be alleviated from students when they are waiting to see if a seat will open for a course that they are interested in. I have had conversations with the Dean of Students as well as the Vice-Provost (Faculty) regarding these concerns, and I worked with the Vice-Provost (Faculty) to try to find a long-term solution for this in the teaching & learning strategy. Students should be able to access a course if they are eligible to take it, and so ideally in the future, there is no need for a waitlist option because there is room in the course for anyone who wishes to take it. This may need to be a priority of the incoming AVP UA to continue pushing for short-term solutions that include a waitlist option given that these waitlists are common at other universities already.

##### Digital Learning Strategy

While online courses have existed for decades before the onset of COVID-19, McMaster has never experienced such a large shift to the online teaching and learning environment in such a short amount of time. While we applaud the university for acting so quickly to transition everything online, it should also be fair to say that much of this year we were all in survival mode to work in a virtual environment. It is clear that there are numerous benefits to the online teaching and learning environment—hence my platform point surrounding increased use of Echo360 in courses—but there have also been numerous challenges. As we come to the end of this academic year, it is important to reflect on the benefits and drawbacks of the online world so that we can move forward. It is impossible at this moment in time to accurately predict what the teaching and learning environment will look like next year, but it is safe to say online learning will not be completely eradicated. The benefits and challenges of this past year has necessitated a Digital Learning Strategy for the university, to guide the future of hybrid and hyflex learning environments. While we tried to push for most of this work to happen in the Winter term, it seems that due to logistical and timing complications of other higher ed initiatives, this work will primarily occur between April-August. The new MSU team should be highly involved in this process, and I have faith that this new strategy will point us in the right direction.

##### Digital Technology Accessibility Strategy

There has been a huge focus this year to ensure that our online learning spaces are accessible. Unfortunately, there has been no guiding university document to outline how we can accomplish this. That said, there has been a great deal of work, via teams such as the McMaster Accessibility Council, to implement AODA standards into teaching and learning. This university should be applauded for these efforts that have kept us ahead of many other universities. To advance this work, there have been discussions surrounding a Digital Technology Accessibility Strategy to be created alongside the Digital Learning Strategy. This document will aid our digital learning to ensure that the working, teaching, and learning environment at McMaster is accessible and in line with AODA standards/best practices. This will likely be similar timeline as the Digital Learning Strategy, and the MSU should be highly involved in this work.

##### Respondus Proctoring Software

Students have been very vocal about their concerns regarding the proctoring software, Respondus. The MSU has been very involved in these discussions with the Office of the CTO, Office of the Provost, MI, and Privacy Office. Answers to student questions have been slow to roll out, primarily due to the numerous sets of eyes that have been required to review documents before their public publishing. We worked with the university to release two FAQ documents and build a dynamic website with information regarding Respondus. There exists a false dichotomy between academic integrity and privacy concerns, and both can be protected with the advancement of alternative modes of assessment. I urge future MSU teams to work with other students’ unions in Canada to learn their strategies to combat proctoring concerns, and to maintain strong communication with the Office of the Provost on this issue. The current contract will be up at the end of August, and then there will need to be a decision on whether they will renew the contract or not. There have been very few (basically zero) cases of academic integrity from exams that use Respondus, while there has been a record number of academic integrity violations from students using websites like Chegg. My recommendation for future teams is to start conversations with the Privacy Office early to build trust and communication lines between the university and students.

##### Teaching & Learning Strategy

For an institution that is highly regarded in teaching and learning, there is a lot of work to be done to address longstanding issues that students have with their academic experience. I sat on the Teaching & Learning Strategy Steering Committee that worked to build the university’s long-term strategy for Teaching & Learning at McMaster. This project was being spearheaded by the Vice-Provost (Faculty) and Director of the MacPherson Institute. We were able to bring the student voice to the table in multiple ways, and amplified concerns primarily around decolonization of course material, digital fluency of instructors, re-evaluation of assessment styles, traditional program structures not fitting the needs of students, the redevelopment of course evaluations and increases to experiential, interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary program and course offerings, amongst others. This visionary document should be finished in early Summer and will act as a guiding document for Faculties to use. It will then be up to each Faculty to determine how they will fit their own plans into this larger visionary document. I urge the next MSU team to work with Faculty Societies and SRA to push Faculties to incorporate the important themes that come out of the Teaching & Learning Strategy into their own action plans. If action plans do not reflect the direction of the T&L Strategy, these concerns will continue to be unaddressed.

##### Virtual Teaching & Learning Task Force

In the Fall term, the VP Ed and I sat on the Virtual Teaching & Learning Task Force. The mandate of the TF was to collect feedback from students and instructors regarding the online teaching and learning experience to inform recommendations to improve the experience for winter 2021. The findings were informed by the experiences and insights of 30+ members drawn from across the university, as well as various surveys commissioned to assess various aspects of the students and instructor experience in this unique environment. As the TF undertook its work, its findings helped inform some early recommendations that were forwarded to university leaders as their timely implementation was important for students and instructors. These included the need for a focused look at mental health and supports for well-being. While there are many existing supports and programs, McMaster’s Okanagan Charter Group, which looks at the health and well-bring of the overall campus, was asked to take on this challenge. The TF also recommended a delayed start to classes in the second term. This was supported by university leaders and the delayed class start was announced on November 19th. The final report with short-, medium-, and long-term change recommendations can be found [here](https://www.mcmaster.ca/vpacademic/documents/Taskforce/Fall_VLT_Final_Recommendations_Report.pdf).

##### Provincial Advocacy

One of our provincial advocacy priorities has been quality of education. There are primarily three recommendations tied to this priority:

1. The provincial government should task eCampus Ontario and Contact North with consulting experts and faculty with developing a framework for the development of quality online courses
2. The Ontario University Council on Quality Assurance should expand institutional Quality Assurance Processes IQAPs requirements to include program delivery criteria for online courses and include an assessment of online learning in its Final Assessment Report.
   1. I did a significant amount of research on this item specifically, which led to some very fruitful conversations with the Director of MI as well as the Vice-Provost Faculty.
3. The Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario should conduct research on the effectiveness and fairness of final examinations practices and establish a best practice framework for final examination pedagogy.

**Campus Infrastructure**

##### MUSC Accessibility Audit Implementation of Recommendations

One of the items on my presidential campaign platform was to conduct an accessibility audit of MUSC by Sterling Frazer Associates. Little did I know—nor did the past MSU president or Manager of MUSC—this was completed in November 2019. The goal of the audit was to evaluate the level of accessibility for persons with disabilities (students, staff, visitors) as they interact the various services throughout the selected buildings. Findings of the audit have been compared with the updated Ontario Building Code (OBC) [effective January 1, 2015] and the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act – Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation, Design of Public Spaces (DOPS). These two documents (OBC and DOPS) form the legal requirements for accessibility in the province of Ontario. However, under the current legislation, existing facilities are not required to pro-actively modify the built environment to meet these new standards. Only at a time when renovations or significant modifications to the space will they be required to comply. Therefore, while SFA identifies shortcomings in accessibility, the University is not under any legal requirements to modify the existing spaces. The document includes recommendations, building access, path of travel, vertical transitions, wayfinding, retail shops, service counters, washrooms, and drinking fountains. While there were some frustrations given that nobody was consulted prior to the initiation and completion of this audit, the document is a great starting step to determine was small and large changes should be made to make the MUSC environment more accessible.

##### MUSC Third Floor Enclosure Feasibility Study

MUSC is our main student space on campus, with students utilizing the space 24/7. There have been very few large renovations over the past 20 years that MUSC has existed, and we need a feasibility study of the third-floor terrace to identify options for how we can better utilize the space for student needs. This has been a project that has spanned a few presidencies, and unfortunately was not completed this past year either. Much of the conversation was just trying to fill gaps in historical knowledge on the purpose of the study and what money was available for the study. There should be about $15 000 from SLEF funding for this feasibility study from previous year allocation, and the consensus is clearer now that this study should look at just the terrace and not the whole third floor. This will have to be completed by the next president and should be completed in Summer 2021.

##### Space Allocation & Audit Work

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. 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 available in the document that was submitted to EB on March 11th, 2021.

##### Strategic Accessibility Planning & Management AODA Compliance Reporting Tool

This year, I sat on the McMaster Accessibility Council, where they worked to create the Strategic Accessibility Planning & Management AODA Compliance Reporting Tool. This work was primarily spearheaded by the EIO, and I am excited about this direction by the University. The project falls on the premise that, in accordance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA 2005, S.O. 2005, c.11) and the McMaster University Policy on Accessibility Policy (2021 draft), McMaster must submit annual internal reports to the University Senate and Board of Governors and biennial external reports to the Provincial Government, outlining progress in meeting the University’s Multi- Year Accessibility Plan (2012-2025) (undergoing review) and describing progress toward achieving AODA compliance goals established by the Government. This AODA Compliance Reporting Tool has been developed to support the strategic planning and management of accessibility initiatives required to meet AODA compliance and to progress towards aspirational accessibility goals beyond compliance. The tool should be completed by the early Summer 2021. The MSU should work with the MAC to complete this tool and work to advance this work as best we can.

#### **Equity & Anti-Racism Work**

##### Census & Student Experience Survey

Since the beginning of my term, I have been working with the EIO on these two projects: a campus census and student experience survey. The past MSU team before us worked with the EIO on what questions would be asked in the census, and we then continued to work with them on the planning and implementation of the tool. Essentially, the census tool will be a voluntary tool on Mosaic for all students to share their self-identification information. This will also be dynamic since aspects of one’s identity can change over time.

This has been a huge step forward for McMaster, particularly since a 2017 study showed that 63/76 Canadian universities said they couldn't answer the question on racial demographics because they don't ask students to provide information about their racial identity. It is incredibly challenging for universities to address demographic-related concerns on their campuses when they don’t even know the demographic makeup of their campus. This new census tool, spearheaded by Arig al Shaibah, is connected to student numbers, and the information is housed by McMaster’s Institutional Research & Analysis (IRS) team. Since the tool is connected to student numbers, any future or past surveys that asked for a student number can now be tied to demographic information from this census. The census will need to be re-advertised each September when new cohorts begin their studies, so that we continue to have the information of new students. I am very happy with this step forward by McMaster.

The Student Experience survey project was another project that was meant to understand the demographic trends of students regarding their experiences with a number of campus services, supports, resources, and offices—including various services and departments of the MSU. This information will be critical in guiding the future MSU administration towards improving services to adapt to the needs of our students. The results of this survey will also help to highlight where additional research is needed; if one service shows that there is a large difference in the experiences of students of different identities, there will need to be further research into why that is and what needs to change. This includes the MSU.

While we originally worked on these two projects separately, they ended up bring combined into one survey that was launched in late January 2021. As of the time I am writing this report, there are roughly 7000 responses, which is incredibly. The next step is to look at the results of the survey and determine where future efforts should be directed.

##### Internal Equity Strategic Planning

There have been evolving conversations throughout the year on how we can build a more equitable organization in the future. This has included various specific examples, such as intentional language in operating policies surrounding anti-racism and anti-oppressive frameworks; equitable hiring practices; improved anti-racist and anti-oppressive trainings for full-time and part-time staff; best practices regarding consultation processes; and metrics of equity work for our organization. The fact that these initiatives are so uncoordinated necessitates a larger organizational equity strategy. It is believed that some of this work will fall under the Director of HR & Admin—who will hopefully be hired in next year—but a more fulsome strategy is needed. The university has great resources for this, and other students’ unions are ahead of us in other aspects of internal equity work. This needs to be a priority of future teams.

##### Provincial Advocacy

One of our provincial advocacy priorities has been racial equity. There are primarily three recommendations tied to this priority:

1. The provincial government should mandate universities establish a baseline, minimum standard level of training to provide faculty and student-facing staff with inclusive educational tools and sensitivity training and principles
2. The provincial government should develop a common standard for universities to collect demographic data for the purposes of furthering the goals of a comprehensive access strategy
3. The Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario should conduct research on the effectiveness of police on campus and their effect on 2STLGBQIA+ students as well as racialized students.

There are also items of our provincial advocacy on mental health resources that integrate with this priority. OUSA helped push this priority in at least 50 provincial stakeholder meetings, excluding our own MSU meetings where this was identified as a priority.

#### **Federal Advocacy**

##### Incorporation of Undergraduates of Canadian Research-Intensive Universities (UCRU)

The MSU has been an informal member of UCRU for roughly five years, as the organization has never been formally incorporated. This year, the top priority of UCRU was to become a formally incorporated entity. This included significant work by the UCRU Board and Governance Committee, both of which I am a member of. It has been a very long process, but we have learned lots about not-for-profit corporations in the process, and we are very proud of the work we have done to get as far as we have this year. There are still a few weeks left, and we hope to finish the process before we all leave! Future teams will have to have discussions surrounding fees for full-time staff, as this is the eventual goal for UCRU. We pushed hard to not have many of these conversations this year since the focus from many organizations has been to decrease fees in the pandemic, not increase them. Future MSU teams will have to figure out how we want to navigate this.

##### UCRU Brand Recognition & Communications Strategy

One of the challenges of UCRU is that not many people know about it. Brand recognition is really important, especially as we hope to build a reputation and strong long-standing relationship with MPs and Ministers in the government of Canada. As the Social Media & Comms Coordinator this year, my job was essentially to build that reputation through website, social media, and front-facing comms work. I am happy to say that from our efforts on social media platforms, we increased our IG followers by 125%, and we now have a LinkedIn & Facebook page. I was also in charge of any press releases, engagement pieces, and blog posts, and often had to respond quickly to the changes of the federal government. This was not always my priority as I was focusing on MSU work first and foremost, but I am happy that I was able to advance the brand recognition significantly for UCRU through this work. I’m looking forward to seeing the future of this work.

##### UCRU Strategic Long-Term Planning

Part of the UCRU Governance Committee’s work this year was to develop a UCRU Strategic Plan. The purpose of this plan is to be a guiding document for where we want UCRU to go, and then to give future Boards the autonomy and freedom to decide how to get there. This has also been an interesting experience, because we want to ensure that UCRU follows the values that are important to it as an organization, but we did not want to be too prescriptive with the language of the plan. There are 10 core values, 4 core functions, and 5 strategic priorities in the plan. This document will aid future Boards to improve the work of UCRU and continue building upon the foundation of the organization without feeling too constrained by the vocabulary in the document.

#### **Financial Aid**

##### Advocating for Extension of CESB

The Canada Emergency Student Benefit (CESB) was introduced by the federal government to provide financial support to postsecondary students who are unable to find work during COVID-19. This benefit was specifically for students who do not qualify for the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) or Employment Insurance (EI) and was valid from May – August 2020. CESB provided eligible individuals with $1250/4-week period or $2000 for 4-week period if you have dependents or a disability. While the government announced that CERB was extended by 8 weeks, there was never an announcement to extend CESB. We advocated heavily via UCRU to try to have CESB expanded by 8 weeks like CERB, especially since this year has been unprecedented in the need by students for increased financial support. These efforts unfortunately were to no avail.

##### Advocating for Reduced Ancillary Fees

The MSU advocated early to the university for the reduction of ancillary fees during the 2020/21 year. This was for two main reasons: 1. Students desperately needed financial assistance, and 2. Some of the services were could not feasibly transition their resources and supports to the online environment, so students should not be paying the same amount as past years. It was decided through the Student Services Advisory Committee (SSAC) that the only fee to be reduced would be for Athletics & Recreation. The A&R fee was reduced by 75% for each term that was online, and students were rebated the summer portion of the fee. These rebates will be given back to students at the end of the term, and the MSU expects that 75% of both the Fall and Winter fee will be returned to students.

##### Financial Aid Education

One of my platform points surrounded financial aid education and promotion to students during the pandemic. This platform point was primarily completed by the Board in the summer with the help of the Comms team, and also by the VP Finance via her Financial Transparency Week in the Fall. I recommend future teams to try to think of creative ways to improve these advertising strategies to students so that they are aware of all of the financial support options available to them. One of the ways this can happen is through better collaboration with the university’s financial aid office, student success centre, and office of the registrar.

##### Internal Fee Reductions

We were able to reduce a number of fees for students that we were in control of . These are displayed below:

* 25% reduction of MSU Operating fee
* 25% reduction of CFMU fee
* 25% reduction of MUSC fee

##### HSR Fee & Negotiations

We had many conversations between August and November with City Transit and with the university on our HSR contract. It was decided after long deliberation and negotiation that we would suspend the Fall bus pass, and then that we would bring back the bus pass for the Winter and Spring/Summer terms at an even greater discount to students. The overall fee savings for students on the bus pass was roughly 75% of what they would pay in a normal year. Communications with students on these decisions was challenging because none of our ideal outcomes were able to be accomplished. City Transit did not allow for any kind of opt-out or opt-in options that we pushed strongly for and were only interested in all or nothing approaches. Ultimately after months of negotiations, we came to the agreements of suspending the pass in the Fall 2020 and bringing it back in the Winter/Spring/Summer 2021.

##### Provincial Advocacy

One of our provincial advocacy priorities has been financial aid. There were six recommendations tied to this priority:

To ensure students have financial support they need, the provincial government should:

1. Eliminate expected parental, spousal, and individual contributions in OSAP calculations
2. Increase OSAP grants for students who need additional financial assistance to start or continue post-secondary education
3. Review its student financial aid program for the 2020=2021 year to assess opportunities for temporary spending towards students with greater financial need.

To ensure recent graduates are able to repay their OSAP loans, the provincial government should:

1. Reimplement the moratorium on OSAP loans payments and interest until September 2022
2. Implement a two-year, interest-free grace period after graduation
3. Set the interest rate on OSAP loans to the government’s borrowing rate, Canada’s prime rate, or an average inflationary adjustment—whichever is lowest.

##### Federal Advocacy

One of our federal advocacy priorities has been financial aid. There were two recommendations tied to this priority:

To ensure students have financial support they need, the federal government should:

1. Invest $230-million per year to implement a 2-year grace period on all federal student loans for new graduates
2. Increase the 2019 Canada Student Grants by $1200 per student for the 2021 federal budget

#### **Communications**

##### LinkedIn Presence

While the MSU has strong media presence on multiple platforms, LinkedIn has not been one we have strongly utilized in past years. We took steps this year to start posting more on LinkedIn, and I look forward to seeing how future MSU media/comms strategies better utilize LinkedIn to improve our engagements with students and community members.

##### MSU Info Campaign

Due to the nature of 1-year MSU positions, our organization relies heavily on an efficient and sustainable transition strategy. A significant number of students at McMaster do not know what the MSU is, what resources, services and benefits we provide, how we operate or how they can get involved. To ensure that students are aware of MSU operations and can gain a baseline understanding of what the MSU is, I worked with the Vice-President (Finance) and Media & Production Coordinator to launch a campaign at the beginning of the academic year with a video that explains how what the MSU is and how it operates. The video can be re-posted in future years when we have surges of students each September, and I am incredibly proud of this work. The video is on our socials and remains the background video on our new website. It looks amazing!!

##### Online BoD Presence & Communications

Early in the Summer, the BoD made an effort to move our communications presence away from “a logo” and more towards “people” and “community”. This was heavily supported by our comms team, and this turned into the BoD video updates that students have been able to watch on our socials all year. These video updates have heavily increased our engagement with students, I hope that students have begun to see our organization more as a group that brings people together and that is built of people, as opposed to just our strong brand recognition via graphics and or logo that we have relied on in some past years. I hope that the next BoD continues these efforts, as I think building a brand around people will be more inviting to students and will increase our engagement. Huge shoutout to our comms team for pushing us to do this and then supporting us throughout the year. It required additional effort at times, but it was definitely worth it.

##### Presidents’ Council

I made a big effort this year to better use the Presidents Council as a resource and tool for all members. Our first meeting was in the early Summer, unlike the year before which was in October, and I think that made a huge difference for team dynamics and for us to all get on the same page for campus projects and strategies. I also saw the need early on for quick communication between student leaders, and this became a platform to do that. I have to shoutout all of the members of Presidents Council who attended some late evening meetings, especially when I didn’t have all the answers. That said, I was always honest about what the MSU was doing and what I was hearing from the university. PC became an incredibly resource not only to bounce ideas around and vent about how challenging the year has been, but also to clear up miscommunications that spread around the virtual environment in such a fast-changing year. I have already begun supporting the transition of my successor to better use the Presidents Council during his year, and I think it will be an incredible resource for him to use. We also created communication groups that will continue year after year, to ensure that there is not a gap in the use of this council one year due to poor transition.

#### International Student Support

##### Advocacy for International Students during COVID

One of our federal advocacy priorities has been international students. There were three recommendations tied to this priority:

To ensure students have financial support they need, the federal government should:

1. Make $20-million dollars available to support Student Work Placement Program opportunities for both international and domestic students
2. Include international students in the Youth Employment and Skills Strategy
3. Prioritize international students in Canada’s Immigration Levels Plan

##### International Student Task Force

One of my platform points was to develop the foundational work for an international students advisory committee at McMaster. The purpose of this advisory committee would be to bring broad representation from international students at McMaster to the table for topical conversations on the student experience. With the help of Ana Pereira from SSC and our own AVP University Affairs, Brittany Williams, we have built an international student task force this year as the first step in this plan. The TF would exist to inform university decisions as we plan for Fall 2021, and act as a sounding board for university administration on how their decisions may impact international students. The goal is for this group to turn into an advisory committee next year, and eventually for this work to be solidified by an MOU between the MSU and the SSC. We have also identified the important role that our Clubs Department plays in the international student experience, and so we have decided to bring our Clubs Administrator into these conversations. It is my hope that the Clubs Administrator sits on this ISAC in the future, and that it is co-chaired by our AVP UA and by the SSC’s International Students Coordinator. There should be broad representation from Faculty Societies—ideally at least one representative that is on the society and one that is not. This group will then work in parallel with Presidents Council, and information will flow between the two groups by the president and AVP UA.

##### International Student Tuition Advocacy

There have been many conversations over the summer months regarding tuition concerns, specifically the increasing costs of tuition for international students. This is a complex issue that requires advocacy efforts at the faculty, university and provincial levels. In order to maximize our advocacy efforts, I worked with the first Vice-President (Education) and AVP UA to create a document that would provide context to these increasing costs of tuition. The document would also provide recommendations on how SRA can work with Faculty Societies so that all of our advocacy efforts are complimentary. While this is a long-term goal, it will be very helpful to have everyone aware of the background context for these tuition increases so that we can all work together to cap increases to international tuition. This document was circulated to all SRA members as well as Faculty Society Presidents. It should be reviewed prior to re-circulation in the new fiscal year if the new team wants to continue this as a priority.

#### **Mental Health Support**

##### Mental Health & Wellbeing Task Force

The Okanagan Mental Health and Wellbeing Task Force, which convened for its first meeting in January 2021, was tasked to explore ways to help students, staff and faculty address the additional stress and anxiety caused by the pandemic and remote learning. The Okanagan Mental Health and Wellbeing Task Force was launched as part of the [recommendations made by the Virtual Learning Task Force](https://dailynews.mcmaster.ca/articles/new-campus-wide-task-force-to-explore-challenges-and-best-practices-in-virtual-learning/) and is made up of faculty, students and staff from across the university. It is being led by Dr. Catharine Munn, associate clinical professor in Psychiatry and Behavioural Neurosciences, reporting to Dr. Paul O’Byrne, dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences and chair of the McMaster Okanagan Committee. The task force consists of an oversight committee of 10 representatives (including myself) and two sub-committees:

* A Workplace and Educational Environment Sub-committee with 18 members examining systemic issues influencing mental health and potential solutions; and
* A Mental Health Education and Promotion Sub-committee with 18 members, identifying the mental health and wellbeing challenges faced by individuals and groups, as well as potential solutions.

The task force has been working fast to provide updates and interim recommendations that have been shared on the [Okanagan Charter](https://okanagan.mcmaster.ca/) website over the term. There will be a final report delivered to the provost in June 2021.

There was also no MSU presence on the Okanagan Committee until this year when I joined.

##### Provincial Advocacy

One of our provincial advocacy priorities has been mental health. There are primarily three recommendations tied to this priority:

1. The provincial government should communicate the respective responsibilities of each ministry that has a role in meeting the mental health needs of post-secondary students, ensuring there are no service gaps
2. The provincial government should provide dedicated funding for community-based mental health providers to supply culturally relevant and diverse counselling on campuses
3. The provincial government should through the ministry of education, develop a mandatory K-12 curriculum that emphasizes resilience and coping skills, ensuring that students will have an understanding of mental health concerns and the resources to effectively deal with them.

##### SAP Improvements

The MSU Student Assistance Plan is a free and confidential online platform available to all MSU members and their immediate family members that offers psychological counselling and academic-life services, including legal, financial and nutrition consultation. However, resources are only available during the normal academic year between 8am-8pm with extended hours during exams to 10pm, and many students are unaware of this plan. Students need access to these resources outside of the hours of 8am-8pm beyond just exam time, and we need to improve our promotional strategies for the Student Assistance Plan. There is also an issue that some counsellors in Ontario are unable to accept new clients outside of Canada, introducing a barrier to accessing mental health resources for our international students. This was a challenge for the predominantly online academic year.

Most of our work on this was to gain data on how the SAP was being used, and to try to come up with unique ways to advertise the plan to students. The data has been helpful, but this is the first year we have it, so we do not have a non-pandemic year to compare the data with. Future teams will be able to compare future data with the data of this year to see if more students are using the services. Additionally, I have tried to work with Okanagan Committee to find new ways to advertise the services. Info on the SAP is now available on the Okanagan website as part of its mass directory for mental health resources.

##### Culturally Relevant & Competent Mental Health Support

One of the major concerns that has been exacerbated by the pandemic is the lack of culturally relevant and competent support for Black students, Indigenous students, racialized students, and 2SLGBTQIA+ students. This problem was also highlighted in the Systemic Review of the Black Student-Athlete Experience and the McMaster Athletics Climate. While there are racialized counsellors on our campus, this cannot be the whole solution to this gap in resources. There has to be a stronger plan from the university to ensure that the mental health and wellbeing of Black students, Indigenous students, racialized students, and 2SLGBTQIA+ students on campus. I have begun these conversations with Clare Warner, the new Senior Advisor to the Dean of Students on Anti-Racism, Equity, & Inclusion. It is clear however that there is a lot of work to be done and hiring more racialized counsellors is not a systemic solution. The next MSU team needs to work with student affairs to improve these supports for students.

#### **Ombuds**

##### Additional Support

The Ombudsperson needs more support. Without additional personnel in the office, there is no time to write annual reports, update the website and improve promotions and visibility of the office while also handling all cases submitted to the office. Annual reports from the Ombuds office are common across Canada, though they have never been produced from our office at McMaster. These annual reports are vital in summarizing the work of the office over the year and providing recommendations to other offices and departments at the University, as well as direction with policies. Many other Ombuds offices across Canada also have an online intake form for students to fill out, though this is not something we currently offer. We need to hire an additional staff member to assist the Ombudsperson with these valuable tasks and improvements to the office. The steps this year to do this have stopped at creating a Job Description for the assistant role. The JD needs to be approved by the university so that it can undergo a wage grade process and then they can open hiring for the role. It is our hope that this can all happen in the Summer, but we recognize there will be challenges trying to onboard a new staff member in the online environment, and so this might be delayed depending on the state of the pandemic.

##### Advisory Committee

McMaster Ombuds has traditionally had a management committee consisting of the VP Education and Dean of Students, with ultimate oversight by the MSU President and President of the University. The structure of the management team has not been productive or helpful for the office and is in need of changing. It is common for Ombuds offices across Canada to have advisory committees consisting of both student and University representation, and the past MSU President started much of the groundwork for a shift in this direction. I continued this work and formalized the advisory committee this year. This advisory committee will provide advice and guidance to Ombuds, act as a sounding board, make recommendations to the MSU President and President of the University related to finance and resource requirements and assist the Ombudsperson in accessing relevant individuals and information as necessary to fulfill the mandate of the Ombuds Office. They will also organize and oversee regular reviews of the office, investigate complaints, assist with promoting and enhancing visibility of the office and provide feedback on annual reports from the office.

I spearheaded a new Terms of Reference for Ombuds that included an Advisory Committee, which was approved by SRA, Senate, and BoG. The first meetings of the Advisory Committee have already begun, and I have heard great feedback from the Ombudsperson that she has never felt more supported than she does now with this new team

##### Change of Location

There have been many conversations regarding the addition of a staff member to the Ombuds office and the office space changes that would be needed to accommodate an additional staff member. There are also challenges with the current visibility of the Ombuds office at McMaster, and many students either do not know what kinds of support can be provided by the Ombuds office or they do not know the office exists as all. It is not obvious at the moment where this new space will be, if it is not just an expansion of the current office space. The plans for office changes will have to be finalized in the Summer so that we can move forward with any necessary renovation via MUSC BOM before the Fall 2021.

#### **Operations & Strategic Planning**

##### CFMU & Silhouette Merger Planning

The BoD has been working closely with the GM, CFMU, and Sil on what a future of closer collaborations can look like. There are multiple reasons for this, including a need for better full-time support for the Silhouette Editor in Chief. I doubt there will be final decisions on what a staffing structure will look like for at least the next year, but the first steps are to transfer assets over from MSU Inc. to CFMU Inc. We hope to do this at SRA 20Q. The plan is that this will then be a phased approach over three years. We will be transitioning the next Board on these plans to ensure next steps are taken carefully, and that the spirits, licenses, and mandates of both CFMU and Sil are not compromised in the process. I am very excited that the MSU is taking this direction, and it is exciting that we are able to stay ahead with regard to multi-media operations. This will be the first of its kind in Canada—true trailblazers.

##### Clubs Department Improvements

Our Clubs Department underwent massive changes this past year. Some of the new changes were not well received by students, including the 25-person minimum and the $5 fee minimum for clubs to charge their members. We immediately waved both of these requirements and began working closely with clubs to adopt new changes that would better suit our needs. Through close collaboration with the Clubs Administrator, Assistant Clubs Administration, Clubs Advisory Council, VP Finance, and Clubs Accounting Clerk, we enacted a number of changes at the last SRA meeting to resolve these problems. The changes are outlined below.

Operating Policy- Clubs Status

* New membership minimum- 20 members including executive team (MSU club application requires minimum 4 executive members at the time of application, meaning clubs will require 16 general members)
* If a club applies with less than 20 members including their club executive, there will be an opportunity in the application to provide justification for why they were unable to hit this minimum. This will be reviewed by the Clubs Advisory Council (CAC) who will make a decision on whether or not to ratify the club based on the information provided
* The clubs department will require that all club members sign up for their respective club on the MSU clubs website. Each club member/student must submit their name, McMaster email and student number. Club membership tracking will allow the Clubs Department to verify that clubs have hit the 20-member minimum. Club membership data will not be wildly broadcasted or posted to ensure members privacy is upheld
* Club membership tracking through the website will reset every year on May 1st, returning club members will have to register each year for their club

Operating Policy- Clubs Financial Procedures

* New proposed $0 membership fee minimum, however clubs can increase their membership fee to whatever they choose
* Clubs will be encouraged to charge a membership fee during the financial portion of clubs training as an additional source of income, however charging a fee will not be mandatory
* If a club chooses to have a membership minimum, it will be reflected on the MSU clubs' website where club members can register and pay for their membership fee
* Membership fees paid through the website would be deposited directly into the respective club's bank account, for the club to use as an additional source of income

##### Health & Dental Insurance Coverage

Another challenge this year was for OOP and out of country students who could not use the benefits of our insurance plans. This is due to the fact that many of the benefits are not available outside the country. This necessitated an opt-out process for students who were OOP or out of country. We were very adamant on this change and we hope it helped our many students not living in Ontario. We are also planning for the possibility that some of our international students who opted out may return to campus in the Winter if it was decided that classes were back in person. In anticipation of this, we created an opt-in option specifically available for international students who opt-ed out and who would be able to use the benefits of the plan in the Winter and Summer. The university did not decide to have in person classes in the Winter, and so this opt-in process was not required even though we prepared for it.

This kind of strategy might be needed again next year depending on what Fall 2021 looks like, but it will not be available in years after when we reach herd immunity.

##### Organizational Review Implementation of Recommendations

Led by expert consultants from KPMG, the MSU concluded a wide-ranging review of the organization’s structure and functions in Winter 2020. The goal of the project was to examine the service delivery, capacity, reporting relationships, and staffing structures across the MSU’s array of operations. Specific objectives of the review were the following:

* Identify structural inefficiencies and areas of resource duplication
* Highlight savings and revenue generating opportunities
* Streamline roles and responsibilities
* Identify any staffing gaps and/or leading practices in operating policies and job descriptions

The project was broken up into multiple phases. The first of which included stakeholder feedback sessions. The consultants conducted one-on-one interviews, focus groups, and a survey to articulate staff concerns, and better understand the scope of issues present within the MSU. Specifically, KPMG conducted approximately two dozen one-on-one interviews with folks from both McMaster and the MSU. Additionally, KPMG provided multiple focus group opportunities to both full- and part-time staff. Lastly, the consultants generated an anonymous survey, accessible to all staff members of the MSU. Nearly 100 people provided responses, focusing on themes of service delivery, organizational structure, decision authority, and risk elements.   
  
 Following the information gathering phase of the review, the consultants from KPMG provided analysis along with more than a dozen recommendations for the MSU. Some priority recommendations which will be prioritized first, include:

* Improve and update the organization’s “core capability” resources, (website, social media, vendor management, student feedback collection/analytics, e-commerce, etc.) in order to create a more connected organization.
* Explore ways to leverage opportunities to better share resources across departments and more proactively manage turnover and vacancies.
* Develop short instructional videos and leverage LinkedIn learning modules to accelerate onboarding processes and manage the natural turnover of student positions.
* Conduct a deeper dive into the marketing and communications areas of the MSU to ensure we are creating a “Connected Student Experience” to drive change and ensure we are adequately serving student needs.
* Leverage the prime location of Compass to increase students’ awareness of all services and activities available to them through the MSU. Explore the idea of installing self-service kiosks for a visually appealing, eCommerce experience.
* Gain a better understanding of the HR and IT activity that is performed within the MSU by conducting activity surveys and use the data gathered to identify the required capacity and skills to support the HR and IT needs of the organization.

We have been able to make progress on a number of these items, as displayed below:

* Partnership with HCS to build core competencies into our hiring practices
* Begin taking steps towards better collaborations between CFMU and The Silhouette
* New LinkedIn learning modules to improve onboarding and training processes for all full-time staff
* Begun research on self-service kiosks for the Compass location in the future, and planning for what the Compass space can be used for in the future.
* Expansion of IT team with addition of Junior IT Tech & Senior IT Tech. JDs should have finished going through wage review this month and should be hired for May 1st start date
* Working through a draft of the JD for Director of Admin & HR

##### Supporting Our Full-Time Staff through COVID-19

It has been an incredibly challenging year for the MSU, particularly for our employees. We have tried to facilitate environments where it is okay for staff to find new productivity levels that accommodate the challenges of this unique year. I have worked with our GM and BoD to provide a number of recommendations for our staff to consider, relating to workload, schedules, Use of Meeting Time, and Reimbursements.

##### The Hub Construction & Planning

The Hub timeline has been pushed back as a result of the pandemic and because of a change in the management of the project. It appears that The Hub will not be completed until April 2022 at the earliest. The next BoD will be more involved with furniture choices and will have to figure out the details of funding and management of The Hub. Some conversations have looked at moving aspects of Campus Events & Avtek to the new building, but these will ultimately be the decisions of the next team. There may also be opportunities to find a location for Diversity Services to use in The Hub since they are planning to transition into a peer support service next year. I look forward to the next 12 months of planning for The Hub and am excited for students to hopefully be able to use the centre in the Spring/Summer 2022 term!

##### The Lotus Initiative

As we work through the tumultuous years of the COVID-19 pandemic and prepare for a post-pandemic world, we are reminded of the power of collective efforts in supporting our communities through challenges. This brings us back to the purpose of student leaders; each student leader plays a unique role at McMaster in supporting the changing needs of students. Collectively, our synergistic efforts have continued to enhance the undergraduate experience across campus. While the mandates of our teams may differ in scope and details, we often share similar goals that align with the needs of students today

In order to be most effective in our synergistic efforts, we need a mechanism to determine what the changing needs of students are, so that we can collectively work to prioritize them. When student leadership works to tackle similar priorities across campus, we are able to make stronger progress than when our priorities are aligned. This is not to be interpreted as restricting the work of future teams to a centralized plan; it is to ensure that student leadership are merely aware of the largest priorities of students so that we can work to make progress on them.

There is a need for stronger due diligence in determining what the changing needs of students are. These will naturally shift every couple of years, and so this process needs to be one that can be replicated by our successors’ successors. The results of this process also need to be publicly available to the student body and broader McMaster community. A public-facing document will also allow for new student leaders to focus their platforms or leadership applications on priorities that have been through a due diligence process and which are widely accepted by the campus community.

I have been working with my successor to develop a term of reference for this project in consultation with incoming and outgoing faculty society presidents. I hope to complete the first draft of this document before I go, and then to pass it off to my successor so that he can use it how he wishes. I have no doubt the processes in the draft will shift and change to fit the vision of the project.

##### Virtual AGM

This document was submitted before the MSU 2021 AGM, but I will provide some basic information here to preserve institutional knowledge. We decided to use Zoom for this event even though SRA took a stance against Zoom, since it was the only available platform that we identified that could accommodate the quorum for our AGM. There are over 100 people currently registered for the event and five motions will be coming forward at the meeting. If we do not hit quorum and any motions pass, they will be added to the last SRA meeting of this 20/21 assembly.

##### Website

One of my platform priorities was to create a new MSU website before January 1st, 2021. Thanks to the immense efforts of multiple team members within the MSU, the new website went live in the Fall of 2020, and it looks fantastic. This new website definitely brings a revitalized look to the MSU and has already increased student engagement with website information. There have naturally been some challenges that we have had to work through with the new website, but it is primarily finished. The new website is meant to be much more static than the last website, and there are very few dynamic pages. This means there are also very few people who will need access to the website, since there won’t be much that needs to be changed year after year. This should ensure we do not forget to update information, minimizing outdated information on the website.

#### **Student Safety**

##### Advocacy for On-Campus Testing & Vaccination

The closest COVID testing location to campus is currently at the Main Street West Urgent Care Centre. Their website mentions that both an appointment and referral are required; while both of these requirements can be secured by students, they increase the difficulty of students going to get a COVID test. In prioritizing the safety and wellbeing of surrounding neighborhoods to campus, I have voiced my support throughout the year for a COVID-19 testing center on or adjacent to campus. After working with the University to advocate for an on-campus testing center, there were ultimately plans to do this, but the project was paused by Public Health. There are now also plans to potentially have McMaster be a central location for vaccinations in the near future. These will ultimately be the decisions of public health, but I hope that McMaster is able to become a testing and vaccination centre over the next few months.

##### Student Safety during the Pandemic

This is a very unprecedented year where the safety of our students and communities are threatened by the COVID-19 pandemic. The University closed campus and planned for a predominantly online year in the interest of the safety of the community. As the University decides whether or not to slowly open up again in different capacities for the next year, there are complex coordinated efforts to ensure all decisions are keeping the safety of the community in mind. Return-To-Work meetings allow representatives from different pockets of campus to come together and discuss what they are working on and how they can assist each other in the campus planning as it relates to the pandemic. I attended these meetings to throughout the year to provide the student perspective on the University’s proposed plans and solutions, as well as to give MSU updates. These meetings were critical as coordinated efforts will ensure we are all keeping safety of the community as our top priority. The MSU also needs to continue working with Hamilton Public Health to ensure we are promoting social distancing information to our students. There may be a third wave and we must be continuing to promote the importance of social distancing and proper mask-wearing. While all of these efforts are quite coordinated currently, it will be imperative to continue this coordination as we begin the Spring/Summer term. It is quite unknown what the next year will, and the MSU must work closely with the University to ensure we are matching our messaging and are complimenting each other’s efforts to ensure the safety of our students and the community.

##### Re-Imagined Campus Safety Plan

Defunding police systems has been an advocacy priority this year for the MSU at different levels of government. At the university level, we have continued to have conversations with members of senior administration regarding McMaster’s campus safety plan. More specifically, I have had numerous conversations with Arig al Shaibah (AVP E&I) as well as David Farrar (President) regarding these concerns. We also have had conversations with leadership at the GSA and CUPE 3906 to ensure that our advocacy is as strong as possible. At the municipal level, outgoing Vice- President (Education) and I have had conversations with Maureen Wilson regarding the defunding of HPS, and we have also sent in a letter of delegation on behalf of the MSU to Mayor Eisenberg and members of City Council voicing our support for the defunding of HPS. We also hosted a panel event that included Leo Johnson, Maureen Wilson, Shawn Hercules, Fawziyah Isah and me to discuss BLM and Defunding Police Systems. At the provincial level, the MSU signed on to a letter to Premier Ford calling on the Government of Ontario to 1. allocate funding to community-led public safety measures to make non-criminal incidental response the default to non-violent community calls in Ontario, and 2. to fund upstream, community-driven programs to reduce the need for incident response services and build healthier, safer communities in the first place.

David Farrar has also said to Board of Governors that he will be conducting a review of the campus community safety & security needs, to better understand the gaps in the current safety model for our campus. We did some planning on the MSU side to compliment these efforts by starting to research various safety models that are used by other universities in Canada, so that we could then consult with BIPoC and 2SLGBTQIA+ students on these alternative models. Much of this work will need to be conducted by the incoming teams, and we will have to keep up the pressure on the university to get this work done ASAP.

The MSU must continue to push for change at each level of government regarding security and police systems. This advocacy will undoubtedly continue past my term as President, and so I will ensure that we are setting up Boards after us to continue this advocacy in a way that is effective and that includes the voices of students. I want to thank all of the students and community members who have advocated for a future campus that is safer for everyone, and I look forward to seeing the developments of this advocacy over the next few years.

##### Return to McMaster Planning

As we look towards the Fall of 2021, and the expected gradual return to campus as the community receives vaccinations and the pandemic eases, it is important that we pause to consider the lessons learned from remote work, teaching and research over the past several months as well as the experience of those whose remained on campus. These lessons can be both constructive and challenging and will help us reimagine the activities of the university to help create a more dynamic, supportive and effective community.

The mandate of the Return to McMaster Oversight, Advisory and Working Committees (together, the Return to McMaster Group) is to consider the remote experiences of 2020/21 and emerging public health guidelines and research to guide planning as we deliver on the university’s academic and research mission. The collective efforts of the Return to McMaster Group will work towards the following goals:

* Determine planning scenarios to be used for the upcoming 2021/22 academic year.
* Submit a final report to the President and Vice-President (PVP) group outlining key findings, recommendations, and best practices to best inform how we reimagine the future of McMaster.
* Monitor the implementation of planning scenarios over the course of the 2021/22 academic year by providing updates on implementation, impacts and challenges.

The Return to McMaster Group includes broad representation with health and safety, excellence, innovation, productivity, technology, space planning and infrastructure needs expected to be common themes. The Group has also considered issues of accessibility, equity and inclusion in their work and recommendations. Both the VP Ed and I have been working hard on both the Oversight Committee & the Teaching, Learning and Student Experience Working Committee to ensure that the student perspective is front and centre in this planning process.

#### **Sustainability**

##### Campus Waste Management During COVID-19

In addition to reductions in generated waste by our campus, we need to improve our waste diversion programs so that we are above the provincial objective of 60% outlined by the MECP. As we are in an unprecedented year, there are changes to waste management strategies on our campus. This includes the temporary removal of satellite composting bins, leaving only bins in the MUSC. There will need to be a plan to not only re-open waste bins across campus but to improve our waste management strategy afterwards. Students have been asking for improved composting efforts for a long time, and the McMaster’s 2019 Solid Non-Hazardous Waste Audit shows that organics were 51.9% of all campus waste diversion, yet the capture rate for organics was only 72.3%. Cross-contamination is a large issue that needs creative solutions and commitment from upper administration for the implementation of large-scale change. While there were some initial conversations about this, those conversations took place when we thought it was possible to come back to campus for the Winter or Spring/Summer terms. When it became clear that we would not be returning to campus at those times, those conversations stopped happening. They need to continue during the Summer, as the university is optimistic that if they cannot bring many people back in the Fall, they will definitely try in the Winter 2022 term.

##### Climate Emergency National Polling

One of my projects this year has been a national poll of undergraduates to gauge their opinions on the climate emergency and the prospect of a Green New Deal. I have been working primarily with UCRU on this project. The survey was modeled after a 2019 national poll from Abacus by Seth Klein to see how Canadians feel about climate change and the prospect of a GND. This undergraduate audience version will be compared to the national poll by Abacus to understand where students fit among those national views. This survey has been created via Qualtrics, with an English and French version. The survey was open for 6 weeks, and the last update I received mentioned that there were over 5400 responses. This survey information will provide both the MSU and UCRU with data to support our climate justice advocacy efforts now and in the future. Future MSU teams will be able to use this data to support McMaster-specific advocacy initiatives that related to the climate emergency. We will also gain province-specific data, which will be interesting when comparing provinces that are more progressive like BC with provinces that depend more on fossil fuels like Alberta. This is an urgent matter of national security, and it is necessary that we mobilize quickly, and all do our part.

##### McMaster Sustainability End-of-Year Report

I am also on a committee to develop the end-of-year campus sustainability report. This is a massive project, and the university has hired an independent consulting team to assist with the process. I have been pushing for this report to include goals of the campus community and metrics to achieve those goals. I think this will be tremendously helpful to provide direction for all the passionate students who want to engage in climate justice on campus. There isn’t any direction or clear goals that students can work towards that will advance our campus community in the fight against the climate crisis. One of the larger challenges recently with this committee has been that we do not have a campus definition for sustainability, and it is not currently clear what the purpose is of this report. This has led to debate and frustrations from multiple parties, and it seems like a good lesson for why we should take our time to ensure at the beginning of projects that all relevant parties are on the same page as to why something is happening and what the purpose is. I hope that the committee can pull together a report in the next month or so that tells a story of sustainability on our campus, and that we can start to build some better foundational structure on our campus for sustainability work. There is lots of room to improve the coordination of these sustainability efforts.

##### McMaster Sustainability Office

McMaster’s Office of Sustainability is not really an office; it is basically a few individuals who are already operating at capacity and who have broad portfolios—sustainability is just one of their priorities. An office used to exist, but then the Manager built an Academic Sustainability Programs (ASP) office, and the university did not replace that role for the general office. As it stands, there is no high-authority figure at the University who directly oversees sustainability work. (like an AVP Sustainability) This is significant for two reasons; 1. There must be an individual at the University who can take an idea and bring it forward to the VP Administration so that it has approval of the University President & Vice- Presidents. Without this, many ideas are simply base-level and may not be fully engrained in the work of the campus. 2. There needs to be an individual who can dedicate 100% of their time to creating a campus response to the climate crisis, and then actually execute that plan. There is currently no campus overall plan for sustainability. There is actually not even a consistent definition for sustainability at McMaster. We need all of these things, but it is important to balance organizing the work and keeping the work decentralized. With too many levels of approval, it will be difficult to make anything happen. I have been working directly with President Farrar to try and push this idea forward. I really hope that we can get some momentum on this over the next four months. My greatest concern is that in the next few months we will also have a new VP Administration for the university, meaning the VP Amin, provost, and president will all be less than a year into their positions. Gaps in institutional knowledge might be harmful for the future of sustainability work, and I worry budgets will be cut when they are already so underfunded and under resourced. I urge future teams to push for better governance models and structural support to advance sustainability work at McMaster.

##### Sustainability Advisory Committee

This committee has been really exciting at times and challenging at others. The main challenge is that it is not clear what the purpose of the committee is. I tried to re-write the terms of reference late in the Summer, but nothing was approved because the team thought it best to wait until David Farrar released his sustainability plans and wanted to ensure we were in line with that plan. This means the team is unsure if it is supposed to be project based or advisory based, and not a lot has happened after a year on the committee. My recommendation for future years is to solidify the purpose of the committee, finish the terms of reference, add one or two faculty members to the committee, and create a pot of funds that student groups can apply for to advance their own sustainability projects on campus. I think this would be a really great next step for the committee.

##### Sustainability Network for Students

The McMaster community is home to many students passionate about climate action and sustainable development goals, though there does not currently exist an infrastructure for students to get involved and grow their passions. This can make it difficult for students to understand what projects have already been done, the progress of current sustainability projects on campus, barriers to advancement of climate action work on campus and lack of experience regarding how students can push forward their own climate action projects on campus. We need to develop a network for students passionate about climate action to get involved on our campus. I have had conversations with sustainability folks in facilities and academics on campus, and I think a great first step towards this, in addition to ASP’s SSAP, would be to create a Student Sustainability Advisory Team (SSAT). This team could be co-chaired by the Manager of ASP and by someone from the MSU and could be used to bring students to conversations regarding university plans on sustainability. Examples include reviewing the university’s sustainability report, collaborating with groups like McMaster Energy Conference, and expanding the network of sustainability-minded students and community members at the university.

##### Sustainability Operating Policies

I have been working on a Sustainability Policy with our AVP Internal Governance, Michelle Brown, for the past few of months. We have decided to split this work into two policies and hope to introduce them to the SRA before the end of my term. The final steps are consultations with staff members and campus stakeholders to ensure everyone is in agreement and on board with the language in the policy. This project has had two purposes: to combine outdated policies and to root MSU work in Sustainable Development Goals. This is only the first step towards aligning MSU work with SDGs, and we will need to continue that work over the next few years. I look forward to seeing the completion of this project hopefully before the end of my term, and the next steps taken by my successor to align the MSU with SDGs.

##### Water Access & Plastic Reduction

According to the most recent Times Higher Education Impact Ratings, McMaster has ranked 17th in the world and #1 in Canada for Good Health and Well Being and Decent Work & Economic Growth. As a globally recognized research-leading institution, we have a responsibility to do our part when it comes to climate action. One step that we are behind the ball with is water access and plastic reduction on campus. There are currently plans for a Canada-wide ban on harmful single-use plastics to be legislated as early as 2021, and so if we do not get on board with large-scale single-use plastic reduction, current federal plans may make that decision for us. If this happens, we must be ready to adapt our campus. Beyond the need to prepare for federal legislation that bans single-use plastics, we must improve our waste diversion rate. The waste diversion rate through existing programs at McMaster University was determined to be approximately 52% last year, which is lower than the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation & Parks (MECP) 60% provincial objective. According to the McMaster University 2019 Solid Non-Hazardous Waste Audit, mixed containers, which include plastic bottles, are the second most diverted material behind cardboard from landfills. However, out of all of the divertible waste materials, mixed containers had the second lowest capture rate on our campus last year: 39.7%. This means that only 39.7% of mixed containers generated were successfully diverted from disposal last year.

While there is a clear need to improve our waste diversion programs on campus, it is also common sense that by reducing the amount of divertible waste that our campus generates, we are ultimately reducing the amount of waste that goes through our diversion programs. Plastic water bottle sales are banned at 14 other Canadian Universities, including Queen’s, Ryerson, UoT and McGill. Currently, plastic bottled drinks are sold in many locations on our campus including various Hospitality Services locations, Union Market and other 3rd party locations such as Starbucks in the MUSC. The high majority of plastic bottle sales are from Hospitality Services on campus, of which only 37% are water bottles. We must move towards eliminating the sales of plastic bottles on our campus, but we must also recognize that this environmental sustainability issue is also a water access issue. Bottle-filling stations are not available in all of our residences, nor are they on all floors of all of our buildings. Any campus solution that involves the reduction of plastic bottles on our campus must include addressing our water access issue.

This project has been a roller coaster throughout the year, and it is obvious that a wide-scale ban is not going to happen on our campus within this year. University administration wants more research to be conducted before we make a decision, and Coke has offered to work with our campus to improve our waste reduction sustainability strategies. My suggestions were that Coke, with their net worth of $80.83 billion, help us in two main areas: promotions and research. When we have larger social media campaigns over the next year and after, we will need to reach students where they spend the most time: social media. Instagram and Facebook ads are pretty cheap, and I suggest we get Coke to put money into those ads to make sure we are reaching as many students as possible. With regard to research, I think it would be most productive to have Coke pay for our research costs, rather than conduct research for us. This would allow more students to engage in research efforts, support faculty who are doing plastic-related research, and ensure we are able to hire consultants and pay for platforms like Qualtrics when we need to.

The other question in this project is: what is the ultimate goal? Is it to reduce CO2e? Is it to preserve biodiversity? Is it to reduce waste from our campus? It’s honestly not clear, and this needs to be answered. Ambiguity around why we do what we do has been a common theme among university committees this year, and I recommend that future MSU teams really try to push committees and councils to think critically about why we are doing something. This will help to guide what we should do and how we get there.

### Expenditures

I really didn’t spend a lot of money on anything this year, mainly because we put a pause on capital spending. To be honest, I still don’t really know how to fill out a PO, so if I did need to purchase something, I would probably just ask Jess what I need to do.

The only things that I had to make transfers for were when we gave money to SSAP at the beginning of the year and when we helped finance the planting of 100 trees on campus and had to transfer money over to the office in A&R. Jess and the accounting team helped me for this, so I would recommend just asking your VP Finance how to purchase things when and if you need to. (but you will likely very rarely need to do this)

As a Board, we used the Board Special Projects line for donations, but that was mainly handled by Jess!

### Important Contacts

I’m not going to include anyone from the MSU here, because all of that should be in the Who is Who document on the website. Instead, I will only focus on university people or external stakeholders.

**President’s Office:**

David Farrar – President & Vice-Chancellor

Kerry Scrivens – Executive Assistant to the President

Esme Davies – Senior Advisor & Legal Counsel to the President

(Reach out to the president’s email and Kerry will direct it to whoever the email applies to)

**Provost’s Office**

Susan Tighe – Provost & Vice-President (Academic)

Kim Dej – Acting Vice-Provost (Faculty)

Robyn Obermeyer – Communications Manager

Depending on what projects you have you may work with them or you may not. They were very helpful especially when it came to COVID planning so make sure you connect so they know to loop you in on large changes. Your VP Ed will definitely work with them so if you do want to meet with them or have a project you want to work with them on you two can work together.

**Student Affairs:**

Sean VK – Associate Vice-President (Students & Learning) and Dean of Students

Arlene Fajutrao – Director of Student Success

Clare Warner – Senior Advisor (Equity, Inclusion & Anti-Racism)

Either reach out to one of them directly for basically anything or you can email the avpstudents email directly and Eva will direct to the appropriate person. If you don’t know who to go to for something, this is a good first step

**Student Success Centre**

Gina Robinson

Gina is a great first contact to reach out to if you want to even have a broader discussion about opportunities for collaboration and she can loop people in as needed.

Andrijana Olaizola – Manager, Finance & Administration

Gisela – Oliveira – Associate Director, Career & Employment

Ana Pereira – Coordinator for International Students (on mat leave)

**Student Accessibility Services**

Allison Drew-Hassling - Director

**Student Wellness Centre**

Rosanne Kent

I didn’t work with her a lot since my SWC projects were higher level so I tended to just work with Sean, but if you have operational suggestions Rosanne would be a good contact to have.

**Equity & Inclusion Office**

Arig al Shaibah – Associate Vice-President, Equity & Inclusion

I mostly worked with Arig and Sarah worked with others in the office. It’s a good idea to connect with Arig first and then she will direct you to different folks in the office if needed

**University Advancement**

Mary Williams - Vice-President University Advancement

The UA department is pretty widespread so I couldn’t really put everyone into one, but Mary is the main contact and you can always reach out to her if you have questions on any external relations aspect of the university. She is a very important contact to have when it comes to PR, GR, and the events you will be asked to attend and speak at throughout the year

Andrea Farquhar – Assistant Vice-President, Communications & Public Affairs

Wendy Battram – Senior Development Officer

She is typically the go to person for advancement events. She will make sure you have lots of information prior to events and are fully prepared to attend and complete your tasks. If you have any questions about an upcoming event, reach out to her.

Alex Lawson – Executive Advisor, Public Affairs

A superstar who we worked with a lot this year when it comes to federal elections, in case there is a snap. Good to connect to let her know your lobby priorities and discuss opportunities for collaboration.

**Facilities Services**

Debbie Martin – Assistant Vice-President/Chief Facilities Officer

**Administration**

Roger Couldrey – Vice-President (Administration)

Dee Henne – Assistant Vice-President (Administration) & CFO

**University Technology Services (UTS)**

Gayleen Gray – Assistant Vice-President & Chief Technology Officer

**Academic Sustainability Programs Office**

Kate Whalen – Senior Manager

### Year Plan

**YEAR PLAN**

**MSU President**

**Giancarlo Da-Ré**

**2020-2021**

(submitted July 7th, 2020)



### 

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

INTRODUCTION

Dear Members of the Assembly,

This year as President of the MSU, my focus revolves around 11 core concepts:

1. **Campus Infrastructure**
2. **Financial Aid**
3. **Accessible Academics**
4. **Mental Health Support**
5. **International Student Support**
6. **Student Safety**
7. **Training**
8. **Environmental Sustainability**
9. **Ombuds Support**
10. **Front-Facing Communication**
11. **Internal MSU**

Each core concept contains a number of objectives that I will be working to complete, or in some cases make strong progress towards, over the course of my term.

All of these core concepts revolve around themes that are not new to the student body. Students and representatives have been working for years towards positive change in all of these core concepts, and any progress that happens under my leadership will be the result of foundational work done by individuals who have been here before me. I owe all of my work to them and to the students of McMaster who have continued to vocalize on these issues, and who ultimately voted me into this position. This document outlines the work that I plan to do this year related to each core concept and should act as a mechanism for my own accountability throughout the year.

Much of the progress that I hope to make over the course of my term as President relies on information that I am continually exposed to surrounding the changing and complex operations of the McMaster community. While much of this helpful information is public, it can be difficult to find for students who are not exposed to this work on daily basis. I will periodically be providing comprehensive reports to the SRA on the progress of my work, but I encourage anyone who is interested in learning more about any of these core concepts, (or others), to reach out.

My goal is not only to make progress on these objectives, but to share any information that I accumulate with students and future leaders so that the work can continue. I also recognize that this is a year of unknowns, and while I have taken the past two months to create this comprehensive year plan, I anticipate priorities shifting as the year goes on. Nonetheless, I look forward to working diligently on of all of these projects and advocacy priorities.

Thank you,

A close up of a logo

Description automatically generated

Giancarlo Da-Ré

MSU President & CEO

### Goals

#### Campus Infrastructure

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| Objective 1 | ***Third Floor Feasibility Study*** |
| Description | MUSC is our main student space on campus, with students utilizing the space 24/7. There have been very few large renovations over the past 20 years that MUSC has existed, and we need a feasibility study of the third floor to identify options for how we can better utilize the space for student needs. The third floor is well used currently, but students need more workspace and bookable rooms and it will be helpful to have a study done that provides options for future changes. Diversity Services has also been in dire need of a physical space where they can have peer support sessions for a long time, and so that will be something we prioritize in this feasibility study. |
| Benefits | * Increased use of space by students by potentially improving study spaces, increased bookable rooms for clubs and student groups and increased storage for facilities and Hospitality Services. * Physical space for MSU Services that have not previously had a space that meets their needs. |
| Difficulties | * Cost is the only difficulty with this project. |
| Long-term implications | * More useable student space that reflects the needs of current and future students. * Physical space to meet the needs of MSU Services lacking physical space. |
| How? | This has already been approved by MUSC Board of Management, so all that is left to do is move forward with priorities and hiring someone to complete the study. We can accomplish this feasibility study during the Fall 2020 term since there will be fewer students on campus. After the feasibility study is complete, we will have recommendations to review, and can create next steps for future leadership to take on. |
| Partners | VP Finance, MUSC Manager |

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| Objective 2 | ***MUSC 3rd Floor Enclosure*** |
| Description | MUSC was built when McMaster housed 7000 students. With an increase to over 25,000 undergraduate students, we constantly find ourselves in need of more space.  We will revitalize MUSC through the addition of the MUSC Student Lounge. Through renovating and enclosing the 3rd floor terrace, we will create a lounge space ideal for students who need a place to sit, study, and hang out at any time of day |
| Benefits | * Additional space for students, more place to sit, study, eat that have are well lit and sunny. This space goes largely unused currently, and as space on campus is limited it is creating a new usable space for students at a lower cost and shorter timeline than starting from scratch. * Some of the goals for this will be a mixed type of seating to allow for group work and individual work, meeting rooms/board rooms to allow for more bookable space, large windows for natural lighting, and more power outlets for students to use. |
| Difficulties | * I am continuing this project from last year, and timelines can be difficult as it is important that the project does not impede the student experience and provide a hindrance for students. * As this is not currently a space used by students it will be less of an issue, but on-going construction and noise can be a nuisance. Additionally, budget is a challenge as it is a costly capital investment in the building. |
| Long-term implications | * A new student space that will benefit students for many years to come. |
| How? | We will utilize the MSU MUSC surplus fund, which is an ancillary fee that is specifically to be allocated towards maintenance and improvements to MUSC. We will also utilize funds from SLEF and will be looking for other investments from groups such as student affairs, alumni, President’s office, and other university groups. We first need to complete the third-floor feasibility study and then can secure quotes and funding. |
| Partners | VP Finance, General Manager, MUSC Director, SLEF, MUSC BoM, Facility services, other funders |

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| Objective 3 | ***MUSC Accessibility Audit Implementation of Recommendations*** |
| Description | A comprehensive Accessibility Audit of MUSC was completed by Sterling Frazer Associates within the last year to evaluate the level of accessibility for individuals in MUSC as they interact with various services and spaces within the building. Findings of the audit have been compared with updated Ontario Building Code and Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act – Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation, Design of Public Spaces. While these two documents form legal requirements for accessibility in Ontario, under current legislation, existing facilities are not required to pro-actively modify built environments to meet new standards. The audit also uses a third document, the Facility Accessibility Design Standards, as a supplement to the legal documents listed earlier as suggestions for standards that have been accepted across Canada in meeting accessibility needs of people. While the recommendations from this audit are not legally required under current legislation, they are important to consider and implement in our commitment improving accessibility of spaces and environments on campus. |
| Benefits | * Having a professional group comb through the MUSC environment to produce a list of concerns and recommendations as to how we can create more accessible spaces or features in MUSC so that everyone can enjoy the MUSC. * The comprehensive list of recommendations will be integral to all future renovations and construction in the MUSC. * Also having a stronger sense of what we can do in the immediate future that will create a more accessible environment for students in the MUSC. |
| Difficulties | * There are lots of small recommendations and we have limited sums of money. * We cannot implement all of the recommendations immediately, but we can work on them every year. * Some recommendations require larger changes than others and may be more expensive than others. |
| Long-term implications | * Having a document to consult and review for all future renovations and construction projects in the MUSC. * By implementing these recommendations, we can continue to create more accessible spaces in a building that is heavily used by students. |
| How? | We will consult this document whenever we are looking to implement new changes or construction projects in the MUSC, including plans to renovate the third-floor terrace. We will plan to utilize the MSU MUSC surplus fund each year, which is an ancillary fee that is specifically to be allocated towards maintenance and improvements to MUSC. |
| Partners | VP Finance, General Manager, MUSC Director, MUSC BoM, Facility services, Maccess |
| Objective 4 | ***Campus Physical Accessibility*** |
| Description | Over the past year, the McMaster Accessibility Council saw the completion of a number of campus audits including one for Mills & Thode library, for accessible entrances of all buildings on campus and of all washrooms on campus. This council has a mix of university and student representation, allowing for a diverse set of perspectives to be brought into account. A lot of work has been done over this past year to promote the accessibility of campus and it is absolutely necessary for the MSU to continue supporting and pushing forward this work to ensure student perspective is involved. This coming year, the council will be development the University’s Accessibility Plan (aspirational and compliance-related goals) as part of the EDI strategy out of the Equity & Inclusion office, and there will be progress on the new Barrier Free Standard Committee. |
| Benefits | * Developing a plan to reaching a more accessible campus * Working with University staff to ensure coordinated efforts and long-term sustainability of efforts |
| Difficulties | * There are limited resources in terms of funding toward facility updates, so it is important we have coordinated efforts to identify key priorities on campus * There is a lot of work to be done |
| Long-term implications | * An in-depth Accessibility Plan for the University will ensure work is being sustained for the future, including plans for future action related to accessibility of our campus. |
| How? | This is a long-term goal of increasing the physical accessibility of our campus and eventually making campus fully accessible. It’s important to acknowledge the individuals on campus who are already doing this work and how we can lend our support. We will work with the McMaster Accessibility Council to outline important next steps that need to be taken in order to reach our accessibility goals. Through this council we will also work with campus partners to develop a long-term campus accessibility plan to allow for a defined commitment to accessibility with metrics for follow through. This work needs to be done in collaborations with our university and MSU partners who have all been doing this accessibility works to allow for a coordinated effort towards making campus for accessible. |
| Partners | VP Education, AVP EIO, McMaster Accessibility Council, Maccess, Facility Services, Accessibility & Disability Inclusion Programming & Support Coordinator |

#### Financial Aid

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| Objective 5 | ***Advocating for Extension of CESB*** |
| Description | The Canada Emergency Student Benefit (CESB) was introduced by the federal government to provide financial support to postsecondary students who are unable to find work during COVID-19. This benefit is specifically for students who do not qualify for the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) or Employment Insurance (EI) and is valid from May – August 2020. CESB provides eligible individuals with $1250/4-week period or $2000 for 4-week period if you have dependents or a disability. While the government has announced that CERB is being extended by 8 weeks, there has been no announcement to extend CESB. This is an unprecedented time and students need financial aid assistance more than ever. We need to advocate for the extension of the CESB. |
| Benefits | * Extended financial aid support for post-secondary students in Canada |
| Difficulties | * There is not much time left in the period when CESB is available to students, so we will need to act quickly. |
| Long-term implications | * Financial concerns for students extend beyond the 2020 Summer and Fall. Any financial support we can provide students is valuable now and in the future. This is necessary to help students with financial concerns for the immediate year ahead. |
| How? | This will be done through federal lobbying and utilizing our lobbying resources. Through working with UCRU and the VP Education, we will include this in our federal lobbying efforts during the summer. |
| Partners | VP Education, UCRU |

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| Objective 6 | ***Advocating for Reduced Fees*** |
| Description | In this unprecedented year, the MSU Board of Directors is pushing for reductions in student fees wherever possible. While it is frustrating and disappointing that tuition has not been lowered for domestic or international students, (international tuition continues to increase), we have spent a great deal of time focusing on fee reductions. These costs add up and students pay a significant amount of money for services that they either cannot access this year, or that are being adapted for the predominantly online Fall term. These efforts to reduce fees are respective to the MSU fee, Compulsory Ancillary fees and HSR Transit fee. |
| Benefits | * Reductions in fees for students so that there is a lower financial burden on students during the pandemic * Finding a balance to still deliver as many services as possible in the best way possible to students, while not charging students what they traditionally pay for services that are either not able to meet their mandate or are not accessible for students. |
| Difficulties | * We are only one voice on the table for negotiations outside of our own fee. * Depending on the fee we are looking to change, sometimes we have to submit a proposal to City Council or go through multiple committees which can lengthen the process * The MSU will be generating very little revenue over the upcoming year, which means we must strike a balance of reducing our fees as much as possible while still allowing our services to operate and be available for students. |
| Long-term implications | * This is an unprecedented time and students will not have to pay as much in fees as they usually have in past years. This is one part of our strategy to support students during the pandemic. * We are understanding how fees can be reduced in the future should a future unprecedented year have to consider something similar. * We are working with many partners to accomplish these fee reductions, and in part are building long-term partnerships that will be beneficial to both sides in the future. |
| How? | Through the Student Services Advisory Committee, we are working to reduce ancillary fees for this year. We are also in the final stages of our own fee reduction, so students are paying less to the MSU. Later in the year we will also be re-evaluating our financial situation to see if it is possible to rebate students back more money than we are currently saving them through our fee reduction. We are also in weekly HSR transit pass negotiations with representatives from the University and the City for the upcoming year. This should be finalized and communicated to students near the end of July/early August. Our Board will also be reviewing the Compulsory Ancillary Fee agreement that we have with the University and will be focusing efforts on ensuring our SSAC subcommittees are effective in their reviews of the Student Affairs fee over this unprecedented year. |
| Partners | VP Finance, General Manager, VP Administration, Dean of Students, SSAC, Fees Committee, City Transit Representatives |

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| Objective 7 | ***Advocating for Capped International Student Tuition Increases*** |
| Description | While domestic tuition remains frozen under the current Government of Ontario, international tuition continues to increase at large numbers. As can be found under the June 4th Board of Governors Meeting Materials on the University Secretariat website, not only does the University plan to increase international student tuition over the next few years – they plan to increase the percent that international student tuition is increasing depending on the level. In “*Table B: International Student Tuition Phase-In”*, level 1 student tuition will increase by 10%/year until the 2022-23 year, level 2 will increase by 6%/year until the 2022-23 year, level 3 will increase by 4% this year and then 6% in following years until 2022-23, and level 4 will increase by 4% this year and next before increasing by 6% for the 2022-23 year. It can also be seen on page 320/364 that some programs increase by more than this amount; international student tuition for Computer Science students in the Faculty of Engineering will pay increases of 20.93-27.91% depending on their level during the 2020-21 Academic Year. As another example, B. HSc. Level 1 students pay 25% increased tuition this year. The fact that these increases are also happening during a pandemic for a year that is predominantly online, necessitates that there must be a cap on the percentage for which international student tuition can increase by. |
| Benefits | * Preventing international students from paying astronomical increases in what is already high tuition. (some international students will pay between $50k - $60k for this year alone. International McMaster medical students pay $95k) |
| Difficulties | * The University has very little financial relief from the current Government of Ontario, which makes it difficult to advocate for lower international student tuition. * The current provincial government has not shown much interest in further supporting either international students financially or universities in Ontario through increased financial relief. (There is actually a head tax of $750 on every international student that goes back to the Government of Ontario each year) * International student tuition can increase by different amounts depending on the Faculty, ultimately making these faculty-specific decisions. The only Faculty that will be freezing international student tuition this year is the Faculty of Business. |
| Long-term implications | * Prevents international students from paying astronomical amounts in tuition * Regulates the amount by which international student tuition can increase by |
| How? | I will ultimately work with the VP Education to push this objective forward. On campus, we will work with the Faculty Societies and Student Representative Assembly to help everyone understand the process and to assist with advocacy tools for a coordinated effort. At a provincial level, we will continue to work with OUSA to advocate to the Government of Ontario for a cap on international student tuition increases. |
| Partners | Faculty Societies, SRA, VP Education, OUSA |

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| Objective 8 | ***Financial Aid Education*** |
| Description | During such an unprecedented year, on top of advocating for increased financial aid, our Board is also directing efforts towards ways we can help students be aware of financial aid options available to them. I had originally planned to host financial aid education and application events with the VP Finance in The Grind, but like all other plans this year, this platform point has been adapted for implementation during a predominantly online term. It will be important not only for students to be aware of deadlines for grant and scholarship applications, but also how to apply for federal financial aid. |
| Benefits | * Increased awareness of financial aid options available to students will allow for more students to access financial aid |
| Difficulties | * With the predominantly online Fall term, we will be limited to our social media reach. |
| Long-term implications | * Students will be aware of deadlines for applications for future * Students can plan their future with knowledge of available financial aid options |
| How? | We will primarily work with the Communications Team to produce campaigns and infographics that will help students learn of the various financial aid options available to them. We will also be working with the Financial Aid Office to ensure we are promoting correct deadlines for applications and we will work with SRA and Faculty Societies to expand our outreach. If the Winter 2020 term is in person, we will explore the feasibility and effectiveness of hosting an in-person Financial Aid applications workshop in collaboration with the Financial Aid Office. |
| Partners | VP Finance, VP Education, Communications Team, SRA, Faculty Societies, Financial Aid Office |

#### Accessible Academics

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| Objective 9 | ***Re-Examining Exams*** |
| Description | This is a continuing priority from last years board. The current exam policy states that students can report issues to the Registrar’s Office if they encounter scheduling difficulties, and who wish to have an examination rescheduled. These difficulties are defined as “more than one examination scheduled at the same time”, “three examinations in one calendar day” and “three consecutive examinations over two days”. A long-term goal is to alter issues in the initial exam scheduling, provide an alert on exam timetables if there is a conflict and standardize conflict resolution of exam scheduling. In the interim we are working to revise the exam policy to extend the 24-hour period for multiple exam scheduling to 36 hours. Our current exam structure puts undue stress and hardship on students, creating an environment which is not conducive to thriving in university. This is also an unprecedented year and students will be experiencing a number of increased difficulties. Along with this we will also work to create an additional deferred examination period at the end of exams. This would give students the option to write their deferred exam at the end of the current exam period or during the traditional deferred examination period. |
| Benefits | * Relieves stress during exams * Allows student adequate time to prepare during the exam period * Prevent undue hardship on those who have to defer exams * Gives students more options and more opportunities to succeed during the examination period |
| Difficulties | * Similar to previous years there are multiple stakeholders involved in this change * Requires more resources for our already growing student body * Exam space is already at capacity * Staff are already at capacity |
| Long-term implications | * This is an initial step in working towards tangible change in societies flawed way of testing students * Allow for the success of our students and helps to remove current barriers to success |
| How? | The change in one calendar day from 24 to 36 hours would ultimately be a change in the Undergraduate Examinations Policy which has to go to Senate for approval. While this can be challenging, these conversations will begin with the Dean of Students. We can also explore the option of including an additional part-time student staff to ensure we are mitigating scheduling conflicts in our University budget submission. This will also include advocating with the VP Education towards to provost council and working with university staff to understand their priorities during an unprecedented year and how our goals shape and help work towards our common priorities. It must be recognized that this is an unprecedented year and students’ mental health must be recognized as equally important to their physical health. |
| Partners | VP Education, Office of the Registrar, Dean of Students |

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| Objective 10 | ***Access to Technology & Internet*** |
| Description | With a predominantly online Fall term, there are major concerns with regard to differential access to both internet and technology. It will be necessary for these concerns to be incorporated into the planning of fall term course delivery, especially after the University has said on multiple occasions that quality of education will not be lowered due to an online term. The University needs to prioritize students who are living in rural or other locations with poor internet connection, and students who do not have access to necessary technology that is required for online courses. |
| Benefits | * Differential access to technology or internet is a barrier to academic learning for students during an online term, and these barriers need to be addressed by the University |
| Difficulties | * How to improve internet connection in various locations of students * Students have different needs depending on the courses they are enrolled in; multiple solutions may be required |
| Long-term implications | * Working to see that these barriers do not negatively affect academics of students after the University made the decision to hold an almost entirely online fall term |
| How? | I will primarily be working with the VP Education on this objective. We will be working with the CTO for McMaster to identify what options are available to improving the internet connection of students who do not have great access to internet. We will also be working closely with the Vice-Provost (Faculty) to see how these barriers are addressed in the planning of online course delivery by instructors. I will also have ongoing conversations with the Dean of Students related to these barriers. |
| Partners | VP Education, Acting Vice-Provost (Faculty), Chief Technology Officer, Dean of Students |

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| Objective 11 | ***Long-Term Course Accessibility*** |
| Description | For an institution that is highly regarded in teaching and learning, there is a lot of work to be done to address longstanding issues that students have with their academic experience. I currently sit on the Teaching & Learning Strategy Steering Committee that is working on the next long-term strategy for Teaching & Learning at McMaster. This project is being spearheaded by the Vice-Provost (Faculty) and Director of the MacPherson Institute. The MSU must work to ensure that the student voice is at the table to speak about much needed changes to the Teaching & Learning Strategy at McMaster as it relates to decolonization of course material, digital fluency of instructors, re-evaluation of assessment styles, traditional program structures not fitting the needs of students, the redevelopment of course evaluations and increases to experiential, interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary program and course offerings, amongst others. |
| Benefits | * This means students will no longer have to work within a “one-size fits all” mechanism of assessments. * Improving the effectiveness of course evaluation strategies * Improving digital fluency of instructors * Decolonization of program and course material in the long-term * Re-evaluation of traditional program structures that do not fit the needs of students * Increased experiential, interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary program and course offerings * All of these improvements will help establish our institution as one that is for everyone, not just one that only allows a very specific type of individual to thrive. |
| Difficulties | * We are advocating for large-scale change, and in some instances, this is very much reinventing the wheel. This is not an easy or fast process and often times there is not an easy answer. * Improvements and innovation in the area of teaching and learning will require a long-term commitment. This can be threatened by transitions in leadership or shifts down the road in the plan. * Decolonization of course content is a large and complex process that will require commitment from all faculty staff. * Shifting faculty culture away from just research to both research and teaching and learning will likely result in push back and will take time. * Faculty needs to move beyond simple technological literacy towards digital fluency which allows for adaptation to new technological systems and how they fit situations and needs. * Need for re-designing of classroom learning spaces from traditional designs can be expensive, and flexible designs require much more space which can have an effect on available seating * Interdisciplinary learning can lead to complex scheduling across faculties |
| Long-term implications | * Making our programs and courses more accessible * Better preparing students for the world after graduation * Allowing students to thrive in their assessments * Work toward changing a campus culture that favors certain types of assessments over others |
| How? | Work through the Teaching & Learning Strategy Steering Committee to provide leadership and oversight to the process from a student’s perspective. The Steering Committee will play a centralized role by providing guidance to the process, input to the strategic plan and ultimately champion the strategic plan. We assisted in coordinating opportunities for student leaders to attend a focus group where they could share their input on Teaching & Learning at McMaster, and voice and concerns or comments on the current progress of the project plan. |
| Partners | VP Education, Vice-Provost (Faculty), MacPherson Institute, Teaching & Learning Strategy Steering Committee |

#### Mental Health Support

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| Objective 12 | ***SAP Improvements*** |
| Description | The MSU Student Assistance Plan is a free and confidential online platform available to all MSU members and their immediate family members that offers psychological counselling and academic-life services, including legal, financial and nutrition consultation. However, resources are only available during the normal academic year between 8am-8pm with extended hours during exams to 10pm, and many students are unaware of this plan. Students need access to these resources outside of the hours of 8am-8pm beyond just exam time, and we need to improve our promotional strategies for the Student Assistance Plan. There is also an issue that some counsellors in Ontario are unable to accept new clients outside of Canada, introducing a barrier to accessing mental health resources for our international students. This will be essential during a predominantly online term in the Fall when many students cannot access these resources in person. |
| Benefits | * A number of free, confidential resources for MSU members and their immediate family members * Improving our promotional strategies will ensure that students are aware of all of these resources available to them * Allowing students to access these resources outside of the current timeframes will make these resources more accessible for students who are busier in the day, or who wish to access the resources outside the traditional timeframe * International students are facing unique challenges during this pandemic, and we need a solution so that they have access to everything our Student Assistance Plan has to offer. * We have a quick access to our We Speak Student representatives and are able to fix small problems quickly |
| Difficulties | * Expanding the timeframe that counsellors are available may be challenging * Our increased promotional efforts may be limited by social media outreach * The jurisdiction of practicing counsellors in Ontario may be out of our control, and waiving this rule due to unprecedented times may be challenging |
| Long-term implications | * Once students are aware of the Student Assistance Plan, they will be aware of it for future years as well. * We will be able to compare usage reports of this upcoming year with this last year’s data to determine trends after increases in our promotional strategies * Long-term increased accessibility to mental health resources outside traditional time frames |
| How? | I will be working closely with the VP Finance on this objective. We have already reviewed usage report data from this past year and met with our We Speak Student representatives to voice current concerns and priorities for the upcoming year. These will be ongoing discussions as they work to expand timeframes that students can access resources and provide updates on jurisdiction of counsellors. We will also be working closely with the Administrative Services Coordinator and Communications team within the MSU to improve our promotional strategy for the upcoming year. This will include utilizing the SRA and Faculty Societies in expanded outreach of our promotions. I will also be utilizing a network of other Canadian Students Union Presidents to gain a better understanding of how this works on their campuses, since we are all facing many of the same issues this year. |
| Partners | VP Finance, We Speak Student, MSU Administrative Services Coordinator, Communications Team, SRA, Faculty Societies, other Canadian Students Unions |

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| Objective 13 | ***Support During COVID-19*** |
| Description | Students experience mental health barriers to their post-secondary education in any given year, and concerns for these barriers have greatly increased with the upcoming online Fall term. This has also been confirmed as a top concern by students through results of a recent survey conducted by the Equity & Inclusion Office. Increased mental health resources has been identified as a priority by many individuals in upper administration, and the MSU needs to hold the University accountable for forward action on this priority. The fact that the upcoming year will be accompanied by increased mental health barriers for students needs to be incorporated into the University’s course delivery and other plans. The University also needs to increase racially and culturally diverse mental health resources for students beyond the pandemic, as these resources are already under-funded and greatly needed on our campus. |
| Benefits | * Improved mental health resources for students during the pandemic and afterwards * Consideration of increased mental health barriers in the planning and implementation of online course delivery |
| Difficulties | * Mental health struggles can largely impact a student’s experience not just with academics, but with all aspects of their undergrad * These barriers and struggles will affect different students in different ways, and instructors will need to be aware of this in their teaching and assessment * Many students are now unable to access mental health resources in-person, which causes increased barriers |
| Long-term implications | * Mental health affects all parts of your life, and for students, the effects of poor mental health on academics can be significant. There are also varying degrees of effects on students, and for some students, these effects can be long-term and complex as it relates to their undergraduate journeys * Increased mental health resources for students after the pandemic as well |
| How? | I will be working closely with the VP Education on this objective since mental health resources touch different corners of campus. I will be working with the VP Education in our communications to the Vice-Provost (Faculty), specifically as to how mental health barriers are being considered in the planning of the Fall online course delivery. The MSAF was originally created during the SARS epidemic of the early 2000s to assist students who could not be physically on campus because of health concerns or sickness. It must be recognized that mental health is as important as physical health, and during a year when productivity is undoubtedly being affected by the pandemic, the University should improve the MSAF option for students. This includes considering a re-adjustment of the number of MSAFs students have available to them in one term as well as the length of time the MSAF option provides students with. I will also be working with the Dean of Students on mental health resources through our ongoing discussions of what can be done in such unprecedented times. Those conversations will be helpful since he oversees the SWC and we will be able to discuss gaps in support for students as they roll out a specialized plan for the Fall. |
| Partners | VP Education, Dean of Students, Vice-Provost (Faculty), Director of SWC |

#### International Student Support

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| Objective 14 | ***International Student Advisory Committee*** |
| Description | In any given year, international students face very unique challenges in post-secondary education at McMaster. Oftentimes, solutions for students are heavily influenced by overrepresentation of domestic student voices and underrepresentation of international student voices. While there are international students in student leadership positions, this is subject to yearly change. We need a long-term plan that can allow for the identification of gaps in international student support and resources that centers the voices and perspectives of students. A couple years ago, a potential solution for this was created with the Student Advisors on Global Engagement (SAGE). However, this group was not formalized and so it disbanded with yearly turnover. In the spirit of this effort, we will create an International Student Advisory Committee with wide representation from across campus. The goal will be that once the group is formalized, students that sit on this committee will receive monetary compensation for their efforts as an incentive to continue long-term interest in the positions. |
| Benefits | * Long-term formalized committee to identify gaps in international student support and resources * Centralized group to identify wide range of concerns and issues faced by international students * Direct communication between the MSU and the committee through MSU representatives on the committee * Monetary compensation for the international students on the committee |
| Difficulties | * An equivalent to this committee does not exist at many Universities across North America, and so we will have limited guidance in forming this committee * To ensure this committee is sustainable, we will need to ensure it is completely formalized this year so that next year it can begin as a full committee |
| Long-term implications | * Long-term sustained strategy for identifying gaps in support and resources for international students |
| How? | I have already been researching equivalent committees at Universities across North America. While there are not many, I have compiled their terms of reference for comparison and guidance as I begin to write one for McMaster. I have also begun discussions with the International Students Coordinator at the Student Success Centre who I will be frequently consulting on this objective. I will work with this individual to identify and apply for funding options. (One option is Okanagan funding) I have also begun reaching out to international students for input and feedback throughout the progress of this objective. I will work with our Administrative Services Coordinator to identify the best way to formalize this committee for long-term sustainability. |
| Partners | International Students Coordinator, SSC |

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| Objective 15 | ***International Student Support During COVID-19*** |
| Description | International students are facing increased challenges during the pandemic. They are often not prioritized in benefits from the federal government and many may not be in Canada during the fall online term. We will need increased advocacy efforts towards the government to prioritize international students still living in Canada for federal benefits, and also to the University to ensure that unique challenges faced by international students outside Canada are being considered for the Fall term course delivery. Specific focuses will be advocating for an extension on the lift of 25/week max working hours for international students during the pandemic and working with University partners to ensure they are considering different time-zones for students in classes when courses are delivered online. This is especially important since the University has announced that quality of education will not decrease with the shift to online course delivery, and with the exception of the Faculty of Business, all international students are still paying increased tuition this year. |
| Benefits | * Extended lift on maximum working hours per week for international students still living in Canada * Fair access to high quality education, regardless of a student’s time zone |
| Difficulties | * The Government of Canada has already announced the extension of CERB and has not announced increases to CESB, making their commitment to supporting post-secondary students during the pandemic questionable. * Current estimates for residence max capacity makes it seem that not all international students will be able to live in residence, meaning there will be different time zones for students in the same class. The University will need to ensure that instructors are preparing for this in high quality online course delivery. |
| Long-term implications | * This objective is specific to support during the COVID-19 pandemic, and so it will be valuable for as long as student safety is threatened by the COVID-19 virus. |
| How? | I will primarily be working with the VP Education on this advocacy objective. We plan to gain data on international student gaps in resources through a climate survey that is being released during the summer to students. Our advocacy to the University regarding course delivery will be to the Vice-Provost (Faculty) as she is the one who communicates high-level course delivery planning to Faculty deans. We will also be working closely with the Undergraduates of Canadian Research-Intensive Universities (UCRU) to accomplish the federal advocacy aspect of this objective. I have already voiced the advocacy point on extension of the lift on max working hours to the UCRU Board, and it is being worked on by the Advocacy Committee. |
| Partners | VP Education, Vice-Provost (Faculty), UCRU |

#### Student Safety

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| Objective 16 | ***Student Safety during the Pandemic*** |
| Description | This is a very unprecedented year where the safety of our students and communities are threatened by the COVID-19 pandemic. The University has made decisions to close campus and plan a predominantly online Fall term in the interest of the safety of the community. As the University begins to slowly open up again in different capacities, there are complex coordinated efforts to ensure all decisions are keeping the safety of the community in mind. Return-To-Work meetings allow representatives from different pockets of campus to come together and discuss what they are working on and how they can assist each other in the planning of the Fall term. I attend these meetings to provide the student perspective on the University’s proposed plans and solutions, as well as give MSU updates. These meetings are critical as coordinated efforts will ensure we are all keeping safety of the community as our top priority. The MSU also needs to continue working with Hamilton Public Health to ensure we are promoting social distancing information to our students. There is strong fear of a second wave of cases in the Fall, and we must be continuing to promote the importance of social distancing and proper mask-wearing. While all of these efforts are quite coordinated currently, it will be imperative to continue this coordination as we begin planning the Winter 2021 term. It is quite unknown what that term will look like, and the MSU must work closely with the University to ensure we are matching our messaging and are complimenting each other’s efforts to ensure the safety of our students and the community. |
| Benefits | * Coordinated efforts reduce mixed messaging and ensure we are all complimenting each other’s efforts * Everyone working on one issue means that we have many specialized tools to use when planning solutions * This is an unprecedented year which allows for us to think creatively for unprecedented solutions that may sound impossible or would otherwise not happen in any other given year * Safety of the community |
| Difficulties | * A lot is still unknown for what the Fall will look like, and even more is unknown about the Winter * New problems arise each week, some of which are more complex than others * As Hamilton begins to enter new phases, some people are taking social distancing efforts less seriously which threatens the coordinated efforts of the community |
| Long-term implications | * Coordinated efforts mean less cases which slowly the spread of the virus. This is helpful for everyone in the long term as COVID-19 has drastically changed life as we know it, and introduced a new “normal” to our lives |
| How? | We will work closely with all of our campus partners through RTW meetings to ensure that as the McMaster community begins to re-open in different capacities, it is done through a coordinated effort with diverse perspectives on how solutions may impact different communities. We will also be working with Hamilton Public Health to coordinate our messaging for social-distancing campaigns and proper use of personal protective equipment. We have already partnered with Hamilton Public Health for their summer social distancing campaign, and this partnership will continue throughout the year. |
| Partners | Hamilton Public Health, Facility Services, Human Resources Services, Housing & Conference Services, Hospitality Services, University Librarians, EOHSS, Manager of MUSC, GM, Vice-Provost (Faculty), Athletics & Recreation, Student Affairs, Registrar’s Office, (others as necessary) |

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| Objective 17 | ***Re-imagined Campus Safety Plan*** |
| Description | For years students on our campus have felt unsafe with the current safety plan at McMaster. The University has a deep working relationship with Hamilton & Halton Police Services and the Special Constables Program has gained long-standing criticism, largely directed towards the current Director of Security & Parking Services, Glenn De Caire. During his time as the former chief of Hamilton Police Services, De Caire supported “carding”, and was criticized by the Ontario Human Rights Commission that his defense of carding was a “textbook description of racial profiling.” De Caire also created the HPS ACTION teams, the shock-troops of gentrification, pushing people of colour, Indigenous people and working-class people out of the Hamilton downtown core. Students have been protesting the University’s decision to hire De Caire since 2016, and with recent tragic events in North America related to police brutality, the calls for his removal from campus have increased. While Security Services does not request or track demographic data and does not have information regarding the race of individuals with whom they interact, numerous anecdotal stories from BIPoC students tell of racial profiling on campus. Little is known regarding hiring methods, nor internal practices for how Special Constables are vetted, trained and held accountable for their actions within their roles. At the same time, community safety resources that students rely on such as mental health and crisis support, harm reduction programs, food & housing security and survivor-centric resources remain underfunded. Students have been calling for the University and MSU to explore a new campus safety plan that does not include De Caire or the Special Constables Program, and that improves community resources that students and community members depend on. |
| Benefits | * A new plan that will ensure the safety of all of our students and community members, rather than only benefiting some * Improvements to community safety resources that students rely on, taking into consideration the different needs of our communities * Fewer students on campus provides an opportunity to begin conversations surrounding what a new campus safety plan could look like |
| Difficulties | * While these asks are not new, this would mean a massive change to the University’s vision of campus safety * This is not a fast or easy change, and there is not and fast or easy solution. This would require commitment from the University and MSU, with buy-in from top University administration. * The University has not commented on the hiring of Glenn De Caire since 2016, and has never shown any interest in his removal from campus, or in large-scale changes to the Special Constables Program |
| Long-term implications | * Creating a community where everyone feels safe * Working with community members who have already been doing this work to sustain themselves using community resources for a long time, and expanding that for a new campus safety plan |
| How? | I am working closely with the VP Education on this objective as it is a strong advocacy priority. To start, I moved a motion in the June 14th SRA meeting that passed with strong support by SRA members, that would allow the MSU to adopt a statement calling for these changes. While there has been no movement or indication from the University that they would be willing to make these large-scale changes, I have opened the conversation with President Farrar that this is what students are calling for, and I will be continuing these conversations with President Farrar throughout the year. We need a working group with opportunity for community input from relevant community members with representation from the MSU to create a plan for the future of McMaster campus without the Special Constables Program. We are also advocating for these changes to include a redirect investment from funding for the Special Constables Program to go to racially and culturally diverse mental health support, harm reduction programs, food & housing security for students, survivor-centric resources and a re-imagined safety plan for students. We have also begun conversations with EIO surrounding concerns related to data not collected by Security Services and barriers to reporting experiences of discrimination and racism on campus and have asked for an anti-racism review of McMaster as a whole. This climate survey was originally planned for the final year of the EDI framework but is being expedited to launch in this upcoming academic year. We will be working closely with the EIO on the preparation of this climate survey. The MSU will also be researching and exploring alternative options for a security presence at MSU sanctioned events that have historically involved Security Services or Hamilton Police Services and will consult with relevant groups and stakeholders on the hiring of alternative security firms as replacements. |
| Partners | President Farrar, Dean of Students, EIO, VP Education, MSU Campus Events Director |

#### Trainings

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| Objective 18 | ***MSU Volunteer Training Support*** |
| Description | The VP Admin will be coordinating training for all of our MSU service volunteers in early September. The current VP Admin will also be leaving at the end of the Summer to enter Medical School at the University of Ottawa and we will have a new VP Admin that will be transitioning into the role over the last 6 weeks of the summer. The MSU volunteer training objective is a large project for the VP Admin and the individual who will is entering this role will likely need assistance during the transitioning process. I will be assisting in the planning of this objective and supporting the new VP Admin during their transition into the role. |
| Benefits | * Increased support for the new VP Admin who will be jumping into the role a few months into the traditional year role * Smooth planning of the MSU-wide volunteer training project |
| Difficulties | * We have never had a by-election for a VP Admin during this time of year, and the timing of the transition will be challenging for the individual entering the role * There may be unforeseen challenges with the planning of this event as September approaches |
| Long-term implications | * Ensuring all of our volunteers are trained in September for the upcoming year * Ensuring the incoming VP Admin feels supported in their new role |
| How? | I have already begun conversations with the current VP Admin as to what the transition process may look like, and what the initial plans are for the MSU-wide volunteer training. I am staying up to date with these plans as they adapt and change, and I will be freeing my schedule near the end of August and into early September, to ensure that I can be a strong source of support for the incoming VP Admin with this project and any other aspects of their transition. |
| Partners | VP Admin |

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| Objective 19 | ***SVPRO Module*** |
| Description | McMaster recently updated their Sexual Violence Policy, which can be found on the Sexual Violence Prevention & Response Office section of the Equity & Inclusion Office website. As can be seen from the Summary Report of the student Voices on Sexual Violence survey released in March of 2019, 60.9% of McMaster respondents had low knowledge and/or awareness of sexual violence supports, services and reporting procedures. This necessitates improvements to campus awareness of resources, supports and reporting procedures. The EIO is also undergoing changes to their office to expand the Sexual Violence Prevention & Response Office and introducing a new module that explains all of the current supports and services, as well as changes to the office and Sexual Violence Policy would increase awareness within our community. This is also a good time to create such a module because all trainings are being conducted online due to the pandemic. It is important to note that while there are benefits to creating this training, it is not a solution that will significantly address sexual violence on campus. This is a complex problem and our campus needs increased funding for and improved racially and culturally diverse survivor centric resources. |
| Benefits | * Increased awareness of recent changes to Sexual Violence Policy and changes to the Sexual Violence Prevention & Response Office * Increased awareness of current support and resource options available both on campus and within the Hamilton community * Online training is necessary during the pandemic when all trainings are being delivered online * Folks are able to pause the module and take their own breaks if the content is triggering and students need breaks. Using an online module for this removes any barriers to uncomfortably leaving a room of people during an in-person training |
| Difficulties | * With the current pandemic, there is not much time to produce a clean-looking and easy to understand module that is specific to the needs of community members on our campus * Potential expenses associated with the creation of a new module. We can combat this by applying for funding from the $6M provincial Campus Safety Fund. |
| Long-term implications | * Ensuring all of our volunteers and other community groups receiving training are receiving high-quality training on current resources, services and reporting procedures Increased campus awareness in the long-term for current resources and reporting procedures, as well as recent relevant changes to resources or reporting procedures. * A module can ideally be edited to reflect future relevant changes if there are changes in the future |
| How? | The University of Waterloo currently promotes two online modules to their students and community members. The Responding to Disclosures of Sexual Violence public online module created by the Centre for Research & Education on Violence Against Women & Children is available for anyone wishing to take the training. While it is public, I have confirmed with the creators at the University of Western that we can cross-reference emails with “@mcmaster.ca” to confirm that members of welcome week teams or student groups who we are making it mandatory to complete are actually completing the training. The training also only takes on average 45 minutes to complete, but allows for flexibility of individuals to stop, pause and take breaks whenever they need them from the sensitive or triggering content. This module is comprehensive and not specific to any campuses, though it contains relevant support information on the website for all Ontario post-secondary institutions including McMaster. I have already spoken with the Sexual Violence Prevention & Education Programming Coordinator at the Equity & Inclusion Office, and this module will be promoted on the EIO website. The VP Admin and I have also opened conversations with the SVPEP Coordinator about an equivalent module to the campus-specific module promoted by the University of Waterloo. The idea was met with positive feedback and we are continuing conversations on the progress of this project. |
| Partners | VP Admin, EIO Sexual Violence Prevention & Education Programming Coordinator |

#### Environmental Sustainability

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| Objective 20 | ***Water Access & Plastic Reduction*** |
| Description | According to the most recent Times Higher Education Impact Ratings, McMaster has ranked 17th in the world and #1 in Canada for Good Health and Well Being and Decent Work & Economic Growth. As a globally recognized research-leading institution, we have a responsibility to do our part when it comes to climate action. One step that we are behind the ball with is water access and plastic reduction on campus. There are currently plans for a Canada-wide ban on harmful single-use plastics to be legislated as early as 2021, and so if we do not get on board with large-scale single-use plastic reduction, current federal plans may make that decision for us. If this happens, we must be ready to adapt our campus. Beyond the need to prepare for federal legislation that bans single-use plastics, we must improve our waste diversion rate. The waste diversion rate through existing programs at McMaster University was determined to be approximately 52% last year, which is lower than the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation & Parks (MECP) 60% provincial objective. According to the McMaster University 2019 Solid Non-Hazardous Waste Audit, mixed containers, which include plastic bottles, are the second most diverted material behind cardboard from landfills. However, out of all of the divertible waste materials, mixed containers had the second lowest capture rate on our campus last year: 39.7%. This means that only 39.7% of mixed containers generated were successfully diverted from disposal last year. While there is a clear need to improve our waste diversion programs on campus, it is also common sense that by reducing the amount of divertible waste that our campus generates, we are ultimately reducing the amount of waste that goes through our diversion programs. Plastic water bottle sales are banned at 14 other Canadian Universities, including Queen’s, Ryerson, UoT and McGill. Currently, plastic bottled drinks are sold in many locations on our campus including various Hospitality Services locations, Union Market and other 3rd party locations such as Starbucks in the MUSC. The high majority of plastic bottle sales are from Hospitality Services on campus, of which only 37% are water bottles. We must move towards eliminating the sales of plastic bottles on our campus, but we must also recognize that this environmental sustainability issue is also a water access issue. Bottle-filling stations are not available in all of our residences, nor are they on all floors of all of our buildings. Any campus solution that involves the reduction of plastic bottles on our campus must include addressing our water access issue. |
| Benefits | * Reduced generation of plastic bottles means reduced waste production by our campus * Moving towards a more sustainable campus * Improving water access on our campus |
| Difficulties | * Financial burden on the University losing sales means they need a strong business plan to present to Board of Governors if we are to see large-scale movement * During the era of COVID-19, there is a push towards single-use products which is counter to our sustainability efforts. We must utilize the current opportunity of less students in residence and on campus to insert bottle-filling stations in all residences and increase filling stations and water fountains across campus. * The University fears that in the absence of water bottle sales, there will be an increase of sugary drink sales, which may have negative health impacts and would be against the Brighter World objectives. There is very little collected research to either support or not support this, and upper administration will be hesitant to make large-scale decisions that are not clearly evidence-based, and data driven. We must collect research and data on this to present to upper administration with a strong business model. |
| Long-term implications | * More sustainable campus * Increased water access for everyone on our campus * Reduction in generated waste |
| How? | This is a project that I plan to be heavily involved with, and I will be working closely with the VP Education and VP Finance to accomplish it. I have already begun conversations with all relevant campus partners, including the Director of Hospitality Services. I am currently working with the plastic waste reduction subcommittee of McMaster’s Sustainability Council to collect research related to any increases in sugary drink sales after campus reductions in plastic water bottle sales. I also plan to work on this project with the MSU Sustainability Education Committee and the Academic Sustainability Programs Office. I have also already opened conversations with leaders from other Universities in Ontario that have banned plastic bottle sales, including Queens and Trent. I will be continuing my conversations with these leaders throughout this project. Aside from work with these groups, I have already pushed forward these conversations with McMaster’s VP Administration and President and will continue pushing for these changes to be incorporated into President Farrar’s sustainability plans for the University. He sees this as part of a larger campus plan for environmental sustainability that touches on other aspects including academics, research and energy. I will also be communicating with the AVP Facilities for McMaster to push for increases in bottle filling stations and water fountains across campus. Construction projects are well underway on campus and this is a year when there will be less disruption to students from construction projects as there will be significantly less students on our campus. Looking internally, I will be working with our VP Finance to create a business plan for removal of plastic bottle sales from Union Market. I am hoping that with all of this work over the next year, we can push to implement a campus ban on plastic bottles for September 2021. That is, unless federal legislation arrives sooner. |
| Partners | Hospitality Services, Facility Services, President Farrar, VP Administration for McMaster, Academic Sustainability Programs Office, MSU Sustainability Education Committee, Sustainability Council, VP Finance, VP Education, Other Students Unions |

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| Objective 21 | ***Campus Waste Management During COVID-19*** |
| Description | In addition to reductions in generated waste by our campus, we need to improve our waste diversion programs so that we are above the provincial objective of 60% outlined by the MECP. As we are in an unprecedented year, there are changes to waste management strategies on our campus. This includes the temporary removal of satellite composting bins, leaving only bins in the MUSC. There will need to be a plan to not only re-open waste bins across campus but to improve our waste management strategy afterwards. Students have been asking for improved composting efforts for a long time, and the McMaster’s 2019 Solid Non-Hazardous Waste Audit shows that organics were 51.9% of all campus waste diversion, yet the capture rate for organics was only 72.3%. Cross-contamination is a large issue that needs creative solutions and commitment from upper administration for the implementation of large-scale change. |
| Benefits | * Improved waste diversion programs on campus * Prioritizing waste management in the phased re-opening of campus * Utilizing time during the pandemic to plan for how we can improve waste management when there are more students back on campus |
| Difficulties | * Unknown future of COVID-19 and its effects on campus waste management * Coordinated efforts across campus |
| Long-term implications | * Long-term improved waste diversion programs for our campus |
| How? | The VP Education is also passionate about waste management improvements on our campus, and so we will be working closely on this objective. We will be working with the AVP Facilities and Director of Custodial, Grounds, Logistics and Mail Services to discuss plans for waste management improvement as our campus slowly re-opens. I will also be working closely with the Sustainability Council as there are representatives from other relevant offices on campus that will be involved in these plans, including Hospitality Services and Libraries. Some of the strategies we have so far been looking at include modelling our strategies after other campuses that have strong waste diversion rates, and potentially bringing in third party groups to assist in the redevelopment of our waste diversion programs. |
| Partners | Sustainability Council, Facility Services, Director of Custodial, Grounds, Logistics and Mail Services, VP Education |

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| Objective 22 | ***Sustainability Network for Students*** |
| Description | The McMaster community is home to many students passionate about climate action and sustainable development goals, though there does not currently exist an infrastructure for students to get involved and grow their passions. This can make it difficult for students to understand what projects have already been done, the progress of current sustainability projects on campus, barriers to advancement of climate action work on campus and lack of experience regarding how students can push forward their own climate action projects on campus. We need to develop a network for students passionate about climate action to get involved on our campus. This includes open events that cater to all students who are looking to learn more about anything related to climate action on our campus, as well as opportunities for students to get involved and see their projects pushed forward to upper administration and councils with representatives who are relevant to the progress of those initiatives. |
| Benefits | * Connecting smaller disjointed communities on our campus that do climate action work * Connecting students who do not otherwise know where to learn more about climate action on campus * Building leadership skills for students to navigate University administration channels and approach upper administration with climate action projects |
| Difficulties | * Need buy-in from campus leaders with positions relevant to climate action projects on campus * Starting from scratch to build this network * Most if not all progress on this over the upcoming year will be digital and only allow for students to connect through an online medium |
| Long-term implications | * Network for future students to become involved with climate action work, learning and skill-building * Opportunities for students to progress climate action work on campus |
| How? | I am working closely with the Academic Sustainability Programs (ASP) office to plan how the MSU and ASP can coordinate our efforts to build sustained student-led opportunities for student involvement and community-building around climate action. Current plans include utilizing a new program called the Student Sustainability Ambassador Program (SSAP) as an instrumental part of this network. SSAP would form the foundation for students to become involved in climate action work and learn more about initiatives on campus, as well as build upon leadership skills that will assist in pushing forward ideas for implementation on a campus-scale. I plan for the MSU Sustainability Education Committee to work closely with SSAP, with crossover representation on both teams. I have already made significant changes to the Operating Policy – MSU Sustainability Education Committee, and plan for this committee to be much more productive in their research and project work. Meetings are already underway, and I will be working with this committee to plan how we can work with SSAP over the coming year. SSAP is currently in planning stages and is looking for upper administration support and increased funding, and I will be working with ASP to access buy-in for the network we are building from representatives on the Sustainability Council. I also plan to work closely with Faculty Societies and SRA to communicate relevant information regarding SSAP and the network we are building to students in their respective faculties. Additionally, I have already opened conversations with other student leaders at Universities across Canada who have different variations of sustainability networks for their students, and I am excited to see how we can use these models to form something that works for our campus community. |
| Partners | Academic Sustainability Programs Office, Student Sustainability Ambassador Program, MSU Sustainability Education Committee, Sustainability Council, SRA, Faculty Societies, Other Students Unions in Canada |

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| Objective 23 | ***McMaster Sustainability Office*** |
| Description | Just over 10 years ago, McMaster formed a Sustainability Office after seeing that an equivalent office existed at many other higher education institutions in Canada. A few years later, the Sustainability Office transformed into the Academic Sustainability Programs Office that we see today. In the absence of a project-focused office, the University has since funneled most environmental sustainability project efforts through Facility Services. While having our AVP Facility Services as the Chair of the Sustainability Council assists greatly in pushing forward climate action projects on our campus, climate action is just one of the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and is not limited to the work of the already quite wide Facility Services portfolio. McMaster needs to form a Sustainability Office that is separate from any other department or office on campus, that can coordinate SDG work at McMaster with all of the relevant campus partners. This would also be completely different than the Okanogan Committee, which does not focus on action or collaboration across departments. We cannot expand the mandate of the Okanogan Committee as we did not write it ourselves; we signed on. It will be incredibly important and valuable to have an office like this that can focuses on action and inspires collaboration across different departments. |
| Benefits | * Having a Sustainability Office separate from Facility Services will allow for McMaster to advance SDG work in a number of different aspects that may not directly relate to the Facility Services portfolio * Centralized support and accountability * Collaboration and action across campus * Moving towards a more sustainable campus |
| Difficulties | * Forming a new office will have expenses * The new office will need its own space * A new office means starting the office from scratch * There are 17 SDGs and this would be a wide portfolio for an office |
| Long-term implications | * Rather than being a part of the wide portfolio that is Facility Services, a Sustainability Office will be able to focus solely on project-based climate action work * Centralizing all campus climate action work through an office than is not limited to work that relates to Facility Services * Future student volunteer and paid opportunities, more jobs for staff * More sustainable campus |
| How? | President Farrar is in the process of creating a 2-year strategy that includes work related to climate action. I will be discussing with President Farrar the prospect of including a Sustainability Office as part of his 2-year strategy. This is not a perfect plan because expanding the mandate of an office to SDGs means it will be incredibly broad. That said, sustainability work cannot all fall under one (1) VP. I will also be working to write edits to the Sustainability Council’s terms of reference to ground our mandate in the Sustainable Development Goals of the UN. |
| Partners | President Farrar |

#### Ombuds

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| Objective 24 | ***Advisory Committee*** |
| Description | McMaster Ombuds has traditionally had a management committee consisting of the VP Education and Dean of Students, with ultimate oversight by the MSU President and President of the University. The structure of the management team has not been productive or helpful for the office and is in need of changing. It is common for Ombuds offices across Canada to have advisory committees consisting of both student and University representation, and the past MSU President started much of the groundwork for a shift in this direction. I have continued this work and plan to formalize the advisory committee this year. This advisory committee will provide advice and guidance to Ombuds, act as a sounding board, make recommendations to the MSU President and President of the University related to finance and resource requirements and assist the Ombudsperson in accessing relevant individuals and information as necessary to fulfill the mandate of the Ombuds Office. They will also organize and oversee regular reviews of the office, investigate complaints, assist with promoting and enhancing visibility of the office and provide feedback on annual reports from the office. |
| Benefits | * Having a more robust advisory team for the Ombuds office * Increased support for the Ombuds office * Matching a widely accepted advisory structure from other Canadian Ombuds offices |
| Difficulties | * There is a great deal of thoughtful reflection being done which has resulted in a large number of drafts and edits to the terms of reference which is taking time * Time delays from approval process at both SRA and Senate * Creating a structure that everyone agrees with, and prioritizing the impartiality and independence of the office |
| Long-term implications | * Long-term enhanced structure of the advisory team for the office * Improved relations across campus for the Ombuds office * Making thoughtful changes now means there will not have to be as many changes made in the near future |
| How? | I have been working closely with the McMaster Ombudsperson and University Secretariat to continue drafts and changes to the Terms of Reference (ToR) for the Office. I have also so far consulted with 7 different Ombudspersons across Canada to gain a stronger understanding for how their Advisory Committees are structured, and any challenges they have with current structures. This has been incredibly helpful in my own drafts and edits to our Advisory Committee ToR. I am hoping to have a final draft for the ToR for the Ombuds Office by late Summer, allowing for SRA and Senate approval of the changes in the Fall 2020 term. The first year of implementation for the committee will likely begin in the Spring of 2021. I have also been working closely with our VP Education to ensure that changes being made are taking into consideration previously identified issues and challenges by the Education Team for the office. |
| Partners | University Secretariat, Ombudsperson, VP Education, Ombudspersons Across Canada, SRA, Senate |

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| Objective 25 | ***Additional Support*** |
| Description | The Ombudsperson needs more support. Without additional personnel in the office, there is no time to write annual reports, update the website and improve promotions and visibility of the office while also handling all cases submitted to the office. Annual reports from the Ombuds office are common across Canada, though they have never been produced from our office at McMaster. These annual reports are vital in summarizing the work of the office over the year and providing recommendations to other offices and departments at the University, as well as direction with policies. There are also challenges with the current visibility of the Ombuds office at McMaster, and many students either do not know what kinds of support can be provided by the Ombuds office or they do not know the office exists as all. Many other Ombuds offices across Canada also have an online intake form for students to fill out, though this is not something we currently offer. We need to hire an additional staff member to assist the Ombudsperson with these valuable tasks and improvements to the office. |
| Benefits | * Additional support for the Ombudsperson with tasks including annual reports, office visibility and promotion and website improvements |
| Difficulties | * Expenses of hiring an additional staff person * Will require additional room in the office for a second staff member (see next objective for solution) |
| Long-term implications | * The Ombuds office will be able to produce expected annual reports * An online intake system will make the Ombuds office more accessible for students * Long-term improvements to visibility of the office |
| How? | I will work with the Ombudsperson and University Secretariat to determine responsibilities that would fall under this additional support staff. I will also be working with them to determine what the hiring committee for the staff member will look like, and I will be assisting in writing the job description. We are aiming to hire this additional staff member in January 2021 as that will be the earliest that students will be back on campus. |
| Partners | University Secretariat, Ombudsperson |

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| Objective 26 | ***Change of Location*** |
| Description | With the current plans to hire an additional staff member at the Ombuds office, we will need additional space for this staff member. The current Ombuds office does not have room for the Ombudsperson and an additional staff member, and there is no separation of spaces for confidential conversations. The Ombuds office needs to be moved to a location that better fits the needs of the Ombuds office. |
| Benefits | * Moving the Ombuds office to a space that better suits the needs of the office with plans to increase the amount of staff * Potential to move the Ombuds office to a more visible location so students can easily find it |
| Difficulties | * Expenses for necessary renovations to ensure the new location has both an intake room or area for the support staff to work and a separated room for the Ombudsperson to have confidential conversations. * Time for completion of necessary renovations * We will need to promote the change in office location to students and staff * Potential reduction in number of bookable rooms in MUSC if the new office is a current bookable space. We will address this by turning the current Ombuds office into a bookable space for student groups and services. |
| Long-term implications | * More visible location means easier to find by students * Space that meets the future needs of the office |
| How? | I have continued work from the past MSU President to push forward these plans for a change in the location of the Ombuds office. There are currently a number of identified options for the new location for Ombuds. That said, to ensure that we are leaving current MSU service space intact, I have brought forward the idea of turning an existing bookable room on the 2nd floor of MUSC into the new Ombuds office. The space that I believe will fit the needs of the office best is MUSC 206/207. This room is in a great location where students can find it and MSU peer support services on the 2nd floor can easily direct or show students to the Ombuds office if appropriate. The room also currently has a temporary wall in the middle, which we can easily renovate to be permanent with a door between the two offices. This will allow for doors into both office spaces as well as between office spaces. I will be moving a motion to explore this option at the July MUSC Board of Management meeting, and if approved, we will get drawings, construction quotes and timelines. When those are approved, we can move forward with renovations so that the new office is ideally ready for the Winter 2021 term. This would perfectly align with the time that we are hoping to hire the additional staff member and move the contents of the current Ombuds office to the new Ombuds office, allowing the current Ombuds office to be transformed into a bookable space by student groups and services. |
| Partners | MUSC BoM, MUSC Manager, University Secretariat, Ombudsperson |

#### Front-Facing Communication

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| Objective 27 | ***MSU Information Campaign*** |
| Description | Due to the nature of 1-year MSU positions, our organization relies heavily on an efficient and sustainable transition strategy. A significant number of students at McMaster do not know what the MSU is, what resources, services and benefits we provide, how we operate or how they can get involved. To ensure that students are aware of MSU operations and can gain a baseline understanding of what the MSU is, we will launch a campaign at the beginning of the academic year with a video that explains how what the MSU is and how it operates. The video can then be mass-shared across different platforms and accounts to students in all levels. |
| Benefits | * Student awareness of MSU operations, services, resources and benefits offered, and ways to get involved * Timing the launch of the campaign to the time of year when we see the largest increase in followers on our accounts * The video can be used again in the future (it can be slightly adapted if necessary) |
| Difficulties | * The creation process of such a campaign takes time * The MSU is complex and we need to figure out what will be included in the video * We do not want to confuse students by promoting services or benefits that are traditionally offered which may be adapted this year |
| Long-term implications | * Mainly targeting a new cohort of students for understanding of the MSU means they will know about the MSU for every year until they graduate * Upper year students gain a stronger understanding of how the MSU works |
| How? | The VP Finance and I have been working closely with the MSU Communications team to plan this project. We have identified the different aspects of the MSU that we want to include in the video, and next steps will be storyboarding the project and preparing for launch at the beginning of the academic term. The video will then be shared across our platforms and accounts to maximize number of views and ensure as many students are seeing the video as possible. |
| Partners | VP Finance, Communications Team |

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| Objective 28 | ***Online Board of Directors Presence & Communication*** |
| Description | The MSU is a complex organization that can often be related back to a logo or corporation, rather than a group of people. This can make the MSU intimidating to be more involved with, which negatively affects both students and the organization. It has been a goal for the Board of Directors since we were voted into our positions to have a strong online presence throughout the year. By slowly shifting the MSU away from a corporation and logo to a group of people, students may feel more comfortable getting involved in the organization, or at least asking questions and approaching student leaders. |
| Benefits | * Humanizing the MSU can make it less intimidating to ask questions or want to learn more * Students have a better understanding of who represents them * Students know who they can reach out to for different questions or concerns |
| Difficulties | * It can be difficult to sustain these efforts throughout the year when other priorities arise |
| Long-term implications | * Humanizing the MSU can make student leaders in the MSU more approachable * Increasing the chances that students may want to get involved with the MSU is good in the long-term for an organization that relies on yearly transition |
| How? | The Board of Directors has been working closely with the Communications team to create a strategy for the year that includes a stronger Board of Directors online presence. The Summer has been quite busy and so we have been focusing heavily on communication efforts of larger organization updates and will be increasing online presence of the Board of Directors as we approach the academic year. The Communications team has been very helpful in creating schedules for Board of Directors updates that align with work from our portfolios. |
| Partners | Board of Directors, Communications Team |

#### Internal MSU

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| Objective 29 | ***Clubs Department Support*** |
| Description | We are currently seeing a number of large changes to our Clubs Department. This includes the start of our full-time Clubs Administrator role, the replacement of the Clubs Executive Council by the Clubs Advisory Council, the hiring of a part-time Assistant Clubs Administrator and the transition of all Clubs bank accounts to be internal through our Accounting Department. It will be important to ensure our Clubs Department has enough support to see the all of these changes happen as smoothly as possible. |
| Benefits | * Increased support for Clubs Department during time of period of large changes |
| Difficulties | * Unknown impacts of COVID-19 on these changes |
| Long-term implications | * More robust Clubs Department |
| How? | The VP Finance and I have been lending ourselves as a source of support to the Clubs Administrator and Human Resources Generalist & Clubs Support. We are assisting with the new Clubs manual that the Clubs Administrator is writing and are assisting with problems in the interim before the Assistant Clubs Administrator is hired. We are also assisting with edits to the job description for the new Assistant Clubs Administrator. Once they are hired and the CAC is running smoothly, the Clubs department will have a more robust structure to address concerns continue operations. |
| Partners | Clubs Administrator, Assistant Clubs Administrator, Human Resources Generalist & Clubs Support, VP Finance |

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| Objective 30 | ***Equitable Hiring Practices Support*** |
| Description | The outgoing VP Admin established a priority surrounding equitable hiring best practices and guidelines, which would involve multiple changes across MSU volunteer and staff hiring promotions, hiring boards and application processes. This was set to begin in the early Fall along with the Admin Team Research Assistant and Human Resources Generalist. Since then, it has now become a board-wide priority to ensure, as an organization, we are actively engaging with and representing our BIPoC communities across McMaster. |
| Benefits | * Increased engagement with our BIPoC communities across campus * Moving towards an organization that truly aims to represent all McMaster undergrad students |
| Difficulties | * There is a lot of work to do and the follow-up work will require commitment from Boards after us * Transition of the VP Admin will be challenging as it has never happened at this time of year before |
| Long-term implications | * Foundational changes to improve long-term increased representation of BIPoC student leaders in MSU positions * Long-term improved engagement from the MSU with BIPoC communities on campus |
| How? | I will ensure the follow-through of this platform point with the incoming VP Admin as necessary. This may include assisting in transition meetings with the old and new VP Admin, Admin Team Research Assistant and HR Generalist. Depending on how my support is needed, I am also able to shift some priorities to take some of the workload with this objective while the new VP Admin is getting settled. I will be available to assist throughout the year to see through the progression and completion of this objective. |
| Partners | VP Admin, Admin Team Research Assistant, HR Generalist |

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| Objective 31 | ***Organizational Review Implementation of Recommendations*** |
| Description | We have been so fortunate to have had the MSU grow into the large organization it has become. With a large number of full-time staff and over 30 services and business units, we owe it to our staff to ensure our organizational structure best supports each department. Last year’s Board of Directors noticed that as the MSU grew and positions were added on, there had never been a review of how positions can best be served within our organizational structure. This has caused challenges on staff who have large numbers of others reporting to them, staff who may not have as much hands-on support that they need, and overall has not situated our organization in a way that fosters success. Last year’s Board decided to have a comprehensive review done of the organization with specific objective to identify structural inefficiencies and areas of resource duplication, highlight savings and revenue generating opportunities, streamline roles and responsibilities and identify staffing gaps and/or leading practices in operating policies and job descriptions. A summary of the priority recommendations is available on the MSU website, and our Board of Directors will be generating a plan to both see the implementation of some of the recommendations this year and set up the next year’s Board of Directors to continue implementing recommendations. |
| Benefits | * Optimizing our current reporting and organizational structures * Allows our staff to be utilized to the best of their ability * Ensures the sustainability of our organization and the individuals within it * Prepares for succession within roles instead of having roles deeply specific to individuals |
| Difficulties | * With the Board of Directors only being here one year, it is important to learn and understand what is currently happening, any issues within the current structures, and evaluate how to best address them * Figuring out which recommendations to implement first * Hiring new senior leadership positions can be expensive and would result in changes to reporting structures, during a year that has already required lots of changes |
| Long-term implications | * Less of a horizontal structure and more intentional supports in place for our departments * Better placed for succession of staff and for the sustainability of the organization |
| How? | While I anticipate working most closely with the VP Finance on this objective, the entire Board of Directors will be involved in this process. We will also be working closely with the General Manager on this objective as his role extends far beyond the 1-year terms of Board members. One large issue is the our overly horizontal organization chart, and so I am working with our VP Finance to create a vision for a new structure that is less horizontal. By releasing activity surveys to staff in the summer, we will have a better idea of the responsibilities and tasks of current staff by the end of the Summer. This will be helpful in prioritizing what needs to be done first, and then ensuring we have a plan for any initial major changes by end of the Fall 2020 term. We will then start to implement initial changes during the Winter 2021 term and create a plan for review by the incoming Board of Directors for what we believe to be the next set of priority recommendations. This is a large project that will span many years and considering this is already a year with many changes, we will not be able to implement as many of the recommendations as we would like to. That said, this is quite the exciting project because it will allow our organization to ultimately better serve students and be more sustainable in the future. |
| Partners | Board of Directors, General Manager, Full-time staff, SOPs |

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| Objective 32 | ***Supporting Our Corporations Through COVID-19*** |
| Description | Our organization is currently going through a very unique time in history. The COVID-19 pandemic has affected all parts of our organization and forced us to adapt in ways we never would have imagined. The entire organization has been shifted into a digital space, and we have had to re-think how everything works, including staff and volunteer support, service delivery and business unit revenue. The operations of CFMU Inc. and MSU Inc. have been heavily affected by the pandemic, and we will need to constantly adapt as things change every day. We have no idea how long our operations will have to be adjusted in order to accommodate for the shift into a digital space and significantly fewer students on campus. Our staff have been absolutely phenomenal in rolling with the constant changes to our operations as we work through the Summer and prepare for the Fall. We are learning more every day and keeping updated on all parts of the organization and will continue checking in with different departments to ensure they have the support they need to get through the pandemic. |
| Benefits | * Our staff are superstars * While our revenue will no doubt be much lower this year, so will our costs |
| Difficulties | * We are in uncharted territory, and there is no book on how to lead an organization through a pandemic * Each department has its own set of unique challenges through the pandemic * The University and government are constantly releasing new information and changes to what is allowed to open |
| Long-term implications | * Ensuring each department within our organization has the support they need to smoothly adapt and evolve through the pandemic * Future Boards will have a model to use if something like this ever happens again |
| How? | I will be working with the Board of Directors and General Manager to ensure we are aware of any ongoing concerns or problems that our staff are experiencing and adapting as necessary. We have had to adapt support structures since all of our communication is online, and so we have been working to create a positive working culture online. As we navigate the upcoming year, our team will be stronger than ever once we are all able to work in the same space again in person. |
| Partners | Board of Directors, General Manager, Business Units, Services, Various Departments, AVPs, SOPs |

#### Master Summary

**(calendar and checklist)**

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| May | * Get understanding of projects carried over * Get understanding of organizational review recommendations * Initial meetings with university stakeholders * Goal planning with Board for the year * Reach out to Ombudspersons across Canada * Start planning for MSU Info Campaign * Start conversations regarding strategy for MSU provincial and federal advocacy * Gain feedback from members on SSAC subcommittees last year * Strategize for Teaching & Learning Strategy |
| June | * Create a strategy to support Clubs Department through transitions * Run in election for UCRU Vice-Chair * Start conversations internally and with stakeholders around fee reductions for students * Move motion for Security Services Stance * Research and consultations regarding Compulsory Ancillary Fee agreement * Begin planning Sustainability Network with ASP * Present MSU priorities to University Advancement team * Teaching & Learning Strategy focus group with student leaders * Continue conversations with City Transit regarding bus pass * Set up communication channels with other Students Union Presidents * Start planning organizational review recommendation strategy * Finalize drafts for Ombuds terms of reference changes * Communicate location change strategy with relevant stakeholders * Operating Policy changes to MSU Sustainability Education Committee * First President’s Council Meeting * Research other International Student Advisory Committee equivalent groups |
| July | * Finalize lobbying group priorities * Begin municipal priority conversation * Check in with AVP Facilities on plans to renovate residences for bottle filling stations * Start drafting terms of reference for International Student Advisory Committee * Present plans for feasibility study and Ombuds location changes at MUSC BoM * Start conversations with new VP Admin * Continue conversations related to campus Accessibility Plan * Discuss future Sustainability Office with President Farrar * Create plan for plastic bottle research * Advocate for extension of CESB and lift on maximum working hours for international students * Confirm and communicate with students reduced fees * Confirm and communicate with students any changes to bus pass * Start communication with SRA regarding international student tuition advocacy * Communicate financial aid options with students * Work with VP Finance on improvements to SAP * Execute “The Time is Now “panel discussion with VP Education * Check in with EIO partners no SVPRO module plan * Updated draft of terms of reference for Sustainability Council |
| August | * Second President’s Council Meeting * Plan President’s Council Meetings for first term * Communicatee with Faculty Societies international student tuition advocacy * Support VP Admin through transition * Begin research on plastic bottle sales with plastic waste reduction subcommittee of Sustainability Council * Support Clubs Department through changes |
| September | * Support VP Admin with volunteer training * Get Ombuds terms of reference changes approved at Senate and SRA * MSU Info Campaign launch * SAP promotions launch * Begin conversations with University stakeholders for January campus ree-opening plans |
| October | * Consult university partners on exam priorities and determine appropriate timelines * Renovations for Ombuds location change * Communicate with Facility Services about plans for waste management in January * Follow up on HSR plans for January * Begin planning second term operational changes with Board & GM |
| November | * Begin conversation about Tuition Late Fees * SAP promotions for extended exam hours * Review adapted 1280 and Underground operations * Communicate second term changes with departments |
| December | * Plan President’s Council Meetings for second term * Hamilton Budget completed by city council |
| January | * Hire Ombuds additional staff member * Ombuds location change * Follow up organizational review recommendations planning * Apply for funding for International Student Advisory Committee honorariums |
| February | * Follow up with Exam priorities * Follow up on University advocacy priorities |
| March | * Follow up with continuing projects * SAP promo for extended exam hours |
| April | * Transition for 2021-2022 Executive team * Follow up with long term planning * Transition on-going projects with university stakeholders and incoming president |

### Conclusion

Well, that’s pretty much it! Honestly, I know it can look like a lot but you really get the hang of things quite quickly. My biggest piece of advice is start practicing which meetings are a priority for you since you will get invited to a lot. I think this upcoming year will be a turning point for engagement—returning to in-person and opening of the Hub next spring. Try to think of different ways to reduce barriers to elections and get more people to know what we do. Keep the faculty society presidents in the loop on as much as you can and ask your vps and ft staff often how you can support them. Use EB meetings to shoutout pt staff who are doing great at their jobs, and just generally be yourself and everything will follow. It will take a bit of time to get used to all the dynamics with different folks at the university but that’s natural and you’ve already met most of them!

I know you’ll be amazing, and I’ll be just a phone call away if you need anything. You’re the newest link in a long chain of MSU leadership, so when things feel low, just remember every link in the chain has strained at some point, but the chain still stands strong. Progress is slow, but that’s why we measure it over longer periods of time! As long as we are generally moving in the right direction, that’s all that matters. This will be one of the hardest and also greatest experiences of your life, so take the time to soak it in once in a while. I really hope you get to experience some of the fun parts of the job in person that I didn’t get to. The ft staff really put their all into making the undergraduate experience the best it can, so show them love every chance you get.

I don’t really have a lot else to say, other than thanks for going along with all the meetings and projects we discussed in transition. The organization is in your hands now, and I have full faith in you. All the best for the next 365!

Cheers,

Giancarlo

MSU President 20/21