**Vice-President Finance: Transition Report**

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This transition report is intended to be a comprehensive review of job requirements of the Vice-President (Finance) of the McMaster Students Union, drawn from bylaws and operating policies as well as past practices. While best efforts have been made to be thorough and comprehensive, this document will not encompass the entirety of the position within the 2020-2021 year. Topics covered include duties of the role, reporting, committee responsibilities, the SRA, human resources, and ongoing projects.

Dear Jeganiyah,

I think anyone who has previously held the role of Vice-President Finance will tell you that this role is very important, challenging, and unique in its nature. I hope that through the 2021-2022 year, you are able to continue to learn and be challenged in ways you may not have expected but will end up teaching you so much that will aid you in your future endeavours. From my own experience, I can honestly say this role and the unique circumstances presented in the 2020-2021 year challenged me and pushed me mentally, emotionally and physically, but also further developed my project management, leadership and communication skills far beyond where they were when I started. As we all know this year was very challenging with shifting to completely virtual/online model while simultaneously dealing with a global pandemic that has lasted longer than anyone initially thought. Having said that, I am so grateful for the amazing experiences I have had throughout the year, along with the incredible team I had the opportunity of working alongside. I am going to steal the line from my predecessor Alex “I think these roles are best described as the best job you’ll never want to do again”!

Taking on the role of a Vice-President Finance & CFO of a multi-million-dollar corporation in your 20’s as a daunting task. For this reason, never be afraid to lean on full-time staff members or previous Board members for support. Full-time staff members are the backbone of the organization, there is so much that is done behind the scenes that 99% of students don’t see and don’t realize exist because of full-time staff. Full-time staff like John, Pauline, Victoria, and Wooder, are amazing resources for historical context, bylaw/policy knowledge, or just to bounce ideas off of.

The role of the Vice-President Finance is definitely very technical. You need to know everything about the MSU’s finances, how student fees are used (both ancillary and tuition), historical and current contracts, and just know for the most part about all the spending that is going on in the organization. It’s definitely an odd role, you are responsible from signing off on purchases as small as $5 for a PTM and cheques for as large as 1.5 million for health and dental insurance premiums. I always found it odd the wide range of tasks and issues I was asked to deal with. I found it helpful putting things into perspective, although for me after a while the small purchases, issues, or challenges I ran into seemed mundane or monotonous, regardless of how they impacted me, they were important to the other person involved. A $5 purchase for a PTM is still as important as a large issue or large purchase as it helps them run an event, support a volunteer, or helps provide that service to students. My advice would be to never lose that perspective and always treat everything that comes up with the same level of grit and attention.

You and your board definitely have an interesting year ahead of you. Given the continued conversations around a safe return to work and return to campus, as well as just the uncertainty of what the status of this pandemic may be in the next day, week, month and year. I hope our board will have helped carve some of the way of working within this only environment as long as you still need to, and hopefully you will get to do a portion of your role in the office as well!

I wish you all the best in this roll and really hope you take the time to learn new things and really embrace everything the MSU has to offer! If you ever need any help, advice, or someone to vent to, please feel free to reach out.

All the best,

Jessica (Jess) Anderson

Vice-President (Finance): 2020-2021

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**The Role of VP Finance**

As the VP (Finance) & CFO for McMaster Students Union Inc. you are responsible for the financial viability of the organization. This ranges from multi- million-dollar projects to PTM’s spending money on bubble wrap for an event. It’s a strange mix of responsibilities but at the end of the day, your job is to ensure student money is being spent responsibly. This goes for services and investments (including the business units). Additionally, the VP Finance traditionally is the lead on large capital projects given their intensive budgetary nature. Examples of this in the past have been the creation of the Peter George Center of which Dan D’Angela was the MSU lead on, the HSR bus pass integration which Ryan MacDonald and Tuba worked on, and now the Student Activity Building (or should I say Hub!) which Tuba, Scott, Alex and myself worked on throughout the years.

The VP Finance has the most technical role on the Board of Directors. You need to know everything about the organization's finances, where and how student fees are used (tuition and ancillary), and past contracts that we have with the university in regard to business units that sell goods. Don’t be afraid to say that you don’t know something, but also don’t be afraid to pretend that you do.

In addition to all of the above, you are (very importantly) a board member. There are four other people that are tasked with looking over the organization as a whole and making decisions that ensure its long-term viability and stability - those people are the President, VP Admin, VP Education, VP Finance and General Manager. The board oversees things such as the full-time staff policy, IT investments, succession planning, department restructuring, the hiring/firing of staff, and structure of administration. Although your day to day may seem busy with your platform projects and daily tasks – the aforementioned responsibilities are critical to the organization and put the organization at risk if not given priority. I spent a lot of my time this year focusing on the various responsibilities that came up for my as Board member. At times, I definitely found this frustrating as I would have preferred to spend my time not dealing with another full-time staff issue- I still did my best to be present and work at really addressing the root of the issue. In my opinion, the better our organization runs internally, the more effectively we will externally be able to serve students!

Vice-President (Finance)

That’s your job title: you are the MSU VP Finance and the Chief Financial Officer of MSU Inc. You have many specific duties, and I will get to those, but

first I want to start with a general description of the professional role you will be assuming.
Vice-President Finance

5.1 The Vice-President (Finance) shall:

5.1.1 Be elected by the SRA from the membership of the MSU;

5.1.3 Hold office from May 1 to April 30;

5.1.7 Be a voting member of the SRA and the Executive Board, and an official observer of all other MSU committees;

• I was an active and vocal member on both EB and SRA, I would recommend you do the same. ALWAYS try to read the documents ahead of time, I would read the EB documents on the bus to work in the morning, made a BIG difference and allowed me to understand and ask better questions to PTMs.

1. 5.1.8  Chair the Silhouette Board of Publication;
2. 5.1.9  Under the direction of the SRA, maintain the books of account

of the MSU;

5.1.16 Establish, with the aid of the Clubs Administrator, criteria for clubs grants based on the constitutional goals of the clubs and the MSU;

AND SO MUCH MORE!

You are the voice of the organization from a financial standpoint. This includes anything that is related to money - which unsurprisingly includes just about everything. At the SRA you will be expected to respond to the financial performance of all of our services, as well as spending that is very far from your control. This is why it is important to be engaged with all of our services and businesses, as it will reflect extremely poorly if you are not aware of why a certain service spent money the way that they did. Not only will SRA members ask questions, but you’ll get random emails from students so be prepared to answer. SRA and EB would throw out some random questions so I did my best to prep for any possible questions ahead of time! Students often also think the MSU is responsible for much for than it is, so it is helpful to know about University activities as well, as most students do not know the difference.

As VP Finance, I considered myself to be the financial strategist of the organization. The role is unique, because you are not necessarily involved in the day-to-day operations of each business or department, but you do lead projects which drive the units direction. Operating as a strategist and consultant allowed me to have my mark on almost every department within the organization without focusing too heavily on the operations and management of each department.

Chief Financial Officer

As a board member for the organization, you also act as the CFO. This is a corporate duty which includes the following:

5.1 The Vice-President (Finance) shall:

5.1.10 Present financial statements for all MSU organizations as requested by the Executive Board and supply actual account balances or budget balances to the SRA, given five (5) business days’ notice and the availability of the information;

5.1.11 Prepare for approval and administer the preliminary and annual budgets and the budget review of the MSU;
5.1.12 Have the financial records of the clubs audited;

5.1.13 Be responsible for reviewing the work of the Accounting Department;

5.1.14 Update the Accounting Procedures Manual and ensure that it is being followed;
5.1.15 Act as the custodian of MSU funds, have the right to suspend budgets (except those of the President and Vice- Presidents) until the next SRA meeting, have the right to suspend signing authority (except those of the President and Vice Presidents) until the next Executive Board meeting for Part-Time Staff or the next Board of Directors meeting for Full-Time staff; such meetings are to be held within three (3) business days of suspension;

This is the real financial side of the role. As a corporate officer you are duty- bound (and legally bound) to act in the best interest of the corporation.
A lot of the tasks outlined in bylaw 9 are done for you through the accounting office. If you want, you could cruise, and let the accounting department look after anything, but ultimately, it is you that is responsible for their work. Any spending that is made by any part of this organization will be reflective of you in your role, no matter how involved you were in the process. My advice to you is to be as diligent as possible and try to thoroughly look over all documents that are going across your desk.

Corporate Treasurer

This terminology has largely fallen out of use, but it still appears on some legal documents and needs to be mentioned. Most corporations will have a structure that consists of a president, a vice-president or secretary, and a treasurer. The MSU is a bit of an exception, but you will still be considered the corporate treasurer for the MSU (and, incidentally, for CFMU). You are a paid employee in your capacity as MSU VP Finance; your role as corporate treasurer is pro bono but your tasks therein are a part of your job as VP Finance. This is mostly a technical distinction, but it’s kind of a nice idea.

Board Member

1.4 The President, Vice-President (Administration), Vice-President (Education), and Vice President (Finance), as the Board of Directors of the Corporation, shall:

1.4.1 Hold or delegate signing authority for the Corporation; 1.4.2 Negotiate and renew contracts of the Corporation; 1.4.3 Re-evaluate the auditing firm every three (3) years;

1.4.4 Share the responsibilities for all matters relating to Full-Time Personnel in accordance with the MSU’s Regular Staff Member’s Employment Policy and job descriptions;
1.4.5 Report at least twice annually to the full members of the Corporation with respect to business according to the following parameters:

1.4.5.1 The Chief Executive Officer shall deliver a written report outlining Executive and Board decisions and activities including, but not limited to, signed contracts, new employees hired, and negotiations concluded and in progress;

1.4.5.2 The Chief Financial Officer shall deliver a written report outlining the financial position of the Corporation including, but not limited to, the Operating Fund, the Capital Growth Fund, and the Health Plan Fund. Bylaw 4 – Board of Directors & Speaker – Page 2

1.4.6 Not enter into exclusivity contracts of a value greater than $25,000.00, or a duration exceeding two (2) years without the approval of the full members of the Corporation;
1.4.7 Consult the Corporate lawyers and authorize them to be consulted;
1.4.8 Hold office from May 1 to April 30;

Committees You Sit On

Board of Directors

Each week, you will have a meeting with your team to review the week, plan ahead and conduct any official corporate business. Likely, these meetings will be on Mondays or Tuesdays from 2-4pm and are followed by a 1-hour meeting with the Communications team. However, you can of course change the schedule to suit your needs. We moved them to Tuesdays in the Winter semester to allow folks a chance to take Mondays off as vacation days should they choose, without having to miss Board Meeting.

Board meetings act as an interesting mix of official corporate activity and informal discussion meetings. I found that these meetings were oftentimes the best part of my week for numerous reasons. It was incredibly important this year that all of us were in the know about each other’s projects and activities. This was also a great space to get advice on a project or problem, and air grievances with specific situations. I felt it was important to ensure issues were better documented for the future. Ikram & Josh were great at starting this and our Board continued this further. It’s important that situations are well documented, so it helps future Boards understand what and why certain decisions were made. Important to keep in mind however that they are a record of corporate activity and they could be viewed upon request of a claimants legal team! Document situations well in minutes, it really will help if there are issues that carry over. We struggled to understand the rationale behind some decisions of our previous Board due to lack of documentation, in addition to the transition of the previous Executive Assistant leaving and the hiring of a new staff member. So, document! Even if it’s just an update, we would do updates on situations for the minutes. You’ll see updates about 1280, Security services, COVID, HSR and all the other plethora of issues that came up throughout the year!

It’s important that you and your team make attending board meetings a priority every week. Not only can important items be passed with merely two people in attendance (full time staff compensation and benefits for example), but it is important to keep each other in the loop. Within this job, you are expected to know what everyone is up to, and be able to speak on any topic, regardless of the portfolio. I found these meetings were a great way to learn about advocacy struggles, or interpersonal conflict between PTMs.

Student Representative Assembly

Some VP Finances love the SRA, others hate it. For myself it was a love-hate relationship! I love to see students volunteering their time to advocate on behalf of their constituents, however often times folks would not take the time to submit reports on time, read documents in advance and just generally not understand how important their roles truly are. You may also face situations when yourself or the board are privy to more information, background context etc, that the SRA are not which can make stating a point very challenging. It’s also an odd situation because they are technically your bosses, but at the same time, they still have to abide within the law so cannot just fire you for no reason. For this reason, I was never too worried because I knew I was doing my job and doing it well, I could not see how they would have ever had a legal ground to fire me, so I was comfortable standing up to them and saying no when appropriate!

Overall, I’d say our SRA was a pretty frustrating group, but don’t get me wrong, there were still some super awesome people that understood their job and did their job well! We had an interesting SRA mixed with new members and some returners, but definitely quite some opinionated people. As a Board member, never be afraid to speak up during meetings. The SRA is a totally flawed set up because it leads to MASSIVE group think. It super easy for a couple of vocal SRA members to try to push their own agenda and win, but if you do not agree... SPEAK UP! Use your position to remind the Assembly what the implications are about some of the decisions they try to make, add a new perspective or just say you’re opposed. Your position holds weight and I guarantee you there will be other SRA members who vote with you. I definitely didn’t agree with some decisions the SRA was making and spoke up when I felt passionate enough about an issue to. If you neglect speaking up, sometimes the assembly will just vote favour if they see everyone else doing so (ESPECIALLY WITH THE ONLINE CHAT SET UP)! If folks are not paying attention (Which believe me it DOES happen), they will often vote with what appears to be the majority without truly thinking about the potential implications, or really understanding what it is they are voting on. Perfect example is when I wanted to strike down the Sil/CFMU motion item I had on the agenda because we wanted to conduct more consultations and we spoke against it BUT IT ALMOST PASSED BECAUSE FOLKS WERE NOT LISTENING!

Your SRA seem like a very eager bunch. In training they seemed quite engaged, and during the VP Elections they definitely asked some good questions. You do not have many returning SRA members from last year, but you do have quite a few individuals who were previously on the First Year Council.

I followed in Scott & Alex’s paths and treated my SRA reports as a detailed legacy document. So, if you ever have questions about things any of us did in the role, I would turn to our reports first! This said, many Board members of the past have not written detailed reports- if you look back, a lot of them are short! I did find having detailed and updated documents a good tool to send to the Sil, and I also felt detailed reports provided more transparency. It is totally up to you what you choose to do though!

Executive Board

EB is a subcommittee of the SRA, which focuses on the day-to-day operations of the organization. Each meeting, PTMs from different services report on their progress, and EB gives feedback and asks questions. This is a great way to learn about what each service is up to but can also feel like a waste of 2 hours every week if the topics for discussion are boring or pointless.

EB has the power to enact important change in regard to the creation or removal of staff roles, approving part-time staff financial compensation, approving capital expenditures and more. The EB operating policy is an important one to understand! I would also recommend you do your best to have a good relationship with EB. I genuinely enjoyed all of our EB members, but we had quite a bit of turn over throughout the year which made it more challenging to have an established working dynamic. However, even with the turn over, everyone that got involved with EB was lovely and it honestly helped that all the EB members seemed to trust us which helped in the decision making process.

CFMU Board of Directors

In the role as VP Finance & CFO of the McMaster Students Union, you are ALSO the VP Finance & CFO for CFMU Inc, our separately incorporated Radio Station. These meetings happen about once a month and are comprised of MSU President, VP Finance, VP Admin, General Manager, CFMU Administrative Director, CFMU Program Director, and 2 CFMU Community Volunteers. This committee is essentially an opportunity for CFMU folks to raise any concerns, updates, questions etc. that they may have. This year we really utilized this committee for the Campus Media project where we are trying to identify ways that the Sil & CFMU can work together more closely as they are both our media service offerings. The MSU President is the chair of these meetings, and generally we did our best to walk the line of not being to forward/pushy as we recognize they are our staff, but also noting that we are able to voice our perspectives/opinions and reminding folks that change can be a good thing!

Student Services Advisory Committee

This committee was struck as a result of the Compulsory Ancillary Fees Agreement, which was renegotiated in 2016. This committee is meant to oversee the operations of Student Affairs, in regard to spending, priorities and outcomes. There are 4 sub-committees of SSAC, each which focus on a department (Student Success Centre, Wellness Centre, Ath+Rec, Welcome Week), and then there are the main committee meetings. These meetings are chaired by Sean VK, and involve departmental updates, as well as major topics for discussion. As a part of the CAF agreement, this committee also oversees SLEF, which is an important step in getting any funding or changes approved.

You will be an active member of SSAC as you often have to provide updates on SLEF projects. Alex, my predecessor, cleaned up a lot of the SLEF mess that she walked into, so the main projects that are carrying over are the 3rd floor MUSC terrace review (likely will be in tangent with the President & Lori Diamond MUSC Manager), MUSC furniture outside club space (recommend looping in Jenna, Clubs Admin for insight), EFRT packs and radios (began conversations on which packs/radios to get this year with the EFRT Director & just need to order them), Thode bathroom upgrades (Anne Pottier & Karen McQuigge), and HSL power outlets (Jennifer McKinnell taking the lead with Karen McQuigge helping). Do all that you can to continue to have a University staff be a project lead (as I mentioned above), it’s pretty ridiculous that they try to offload the project management of these projects onto a Board members plate.

At SSAC, again, I would say do not be afraid to speak up. It is a very unique committee where you and the rest of the board are there to represent the interest of students. This year we used this committee to request the reduction and refund of the Ath & Rec fee, given that the facilities were closed because of COVID. The agreement for Fall 2020 was fairly unanimous and we agreed on the 75% fee reduction for Ath & Rec, however when it came to Winter 2021 the uni had plans to reopen. We continue to voice our opinion that if the gym was not able to open, or only opened to a limited capacity, the fee should still be greatly reduced as most students will not be accessing it. The University tried to reopen in March 2021, but I kid you not the day before their scheduled reopen, Ontario went back into full stay at home/lockdown, so they were no longer allowed to open (funny how that works out sometimes). We have now been told that by April 30th 2021, all students should have been credited back 75% of the Ath & Rec fee for the Winter 2021 semester! Wooo, always remember to celebrate your wins!

I would also suggest you continue our work to review the CAF agreement. The 2016 CAF agreement was pushed through really quickly at the last SRA meeting of the year and the SRA was told they couldn’t debate it as the meeting had run to long. If you do update it, look at the CAF agreement from 2011, it had some good wording about notice times for fee changes that I think should be brought back (i.e. if the University wants to bring forward any changes, they need to give 3 months’ notice before- this was removed in 2016 and I have no idea why!). GC and I began to review the CAF agreement this year but this will need to be continued for your year as well!

Overall, do not be afraid to speak up against the University. Our relationship with them is valuable but it is also important that you use your role well to represent students. We can maintain a good relationship without being their puppets, the more you let University Admin take advantage of the MSU and your time, they will! Remember you are working for students and their best interests, not the best interests of the Institution!

Welcome Week Advisory Committee

WWAC is the second highest governing body of Welcome Week, second only to the Student Services Advisory Committee which it reports to. WWAC was created in 2012 when the Welcome Week Levy was created. The original motion (which I included in this year’s Welcome Week MOU) states that the levy monies will be distributed as determined by an MOU signed by SSAC. As such, SSAC has total and final say over the governance and operation of Welcome Week. Each year, this MOU is renegotiated and resigned.

WWAC is a very unique committee that I find can be very insightful, or completely irrelevant to your portfolio! It tends to be circular, & unproductive, but this year I can honestly say I think we got a lot of work done through this committee compared to previous years. The Welcome Week NODA review has been super helpful in guiding Welcome Week for the future, with lots of recommendations that came out of it! Just remember you and Christina have important roles as the only student voices! Sean Beaudette is also a great ally for you on this committee, I would recommend you maintain a good relationship with him (however just be wary that he MAY try to push Levy funds to be used to cover costs associated with Archway again this year as he did last year and I personally DO NOT agree with this)! This year through WWAC we were also able to reduce the WW Fee from around $123 down to $100 permanently moving forward! This was a huge win as it is a mandatory fee for all first-year students and we genuinely do not need $750,000 for 5 days of events and fun.

Here are some important things to know about and for WWAC:

Documents: For some reason, it is commonplace on this committee to send out integral and important documentation for the upcoming meeting at the very last second. Many times, Michele or Jacquie would send an email at like 11pm the night before, or even 11am the day of, when the meeting was at 1pm. Then they would expect you to have read it, fully formed your opinion on it and be ready to vote in WWAC. This often resulted in us tabling discussions to the next meeting, as members were under prepared to have a robust discussion on the topic. This is a key factor to why little gets done around the WWAC table.

Autonomy of student groups & student planners: You and the VP Admin are THE voice for students around this table. Many people around the table have good intentions, but do believe that having students plan events, and the year-over- year turnover of planners provides more difficulty than it does benefit to WW. The MSU has made great moves towards protecting faculty societies and this year I pushed for a 2% increase in their fee allotment from the levy, I would recommend you fight to keep this in the MOU 2021 discussion! Being the voice for so many groups on this committee was tough, as every other member only has to advocate for their department. Not only do we have to fight for what the MSU wanted, we are also the voice of faculty societies around the table, as well as the voice for incoming first year students.

Stakeholders around the table: Each person around the table (except for you, the VP admin, Trish (this year Thalia) and \*sometimes \* Jacquie) are fighting to protect their own interest in every discussion. As such, it is difficult to pass anything, especially funding changes, that do not equally benefit all parties. In addition, each member of this committee, except for yourself, are also involved in the hands-on planning of WW. Sean and Jenn oversee the ROP and OCOP respectively, Trish/Thalia are planning events and fighting for funding of these events, and Michele lives and breathes WW. As such, it is difficult to have an unbiased conversation! Truly, Welcome Week is so unnecessarily dramatic, WWAC should have fewer people on the committee, and this is part of the restructuring that Graeme brough to SSAC towards the end of our terms and was passed.

Planner Equity: This is a beast of a topic. This year we had lots of discussions around how we could integrate planner equity as it was one of the recommendations that came out of the NODA review. Lots of ideas have been tossed around including utilizing a portion of the current WW Levy surplus to pay for planners for 1 year, then pass this onus onto the faculties to continue forward because there is so kind of thought that they will have no choice? PERSONALLY, this kind of concerns me as I think faculties could easily say no, then we are back at square one, but we spent a ton of funds 1 year on a project that didn’t take off. I agree with what my predecessor, Alex, said in that this will be a HARD FIGHT. It’ll be hard to convince a faculty society president that a Planner should be paid when they are not paid! If you want to do it, go right to the top to try and figure it out. It will also cost like $60,000 and it shouldn’t come from the Welcome Week Levy since ResLife does not pay their ROA’s through the Levy so I would avoid opening up that rabbit hole as the levy cannot support $100,000 in wages for planners. The money would have to come from the Faculties themselves which is a HARD fight to fight. I think it is important to get the faculty societies on board BEFORE doing this for a pilot year to ensure the longevity of it moving forward, WITHOUT having to redistribute the Levy allocations/put planner equity through the levy.

The HUB/Student Activity Building Working Group

Previously there was a committee called the “Student Activity and Fitness Expansion Committee” that helped oversee the Student Activity Building/HUB and Pulse expansion project. This previous committee was comprised of VP Finance, General Manager from MSU, Director and Facility Manager for Ath & Rec, the Facility Services Project Manager, and the University’s Dean of Students.

This past year with the Hub we had a changed in project managers around October 2020, so the new project manager is Laurie Nelson. Towards the end of my term we struck this sort of working group on the MSU side to ensure we are kept in the loop specifically pertaining to the HUB as this is an MSU building. This working group consists of John (General Manager), VP Finance, Debbie Good (Taking the lead on the MSU side of admin work relating to the Hub), and Laurie Nelson (Project Manager). Through this group you will loop in other stakeholders when necessary (i.e. Avtek when discussing the tech capabilities of the rooms, Campus Events when discussing how events could function in spaces, Comms team when trying to make promo work for the building etc.)

As this was noted for me in my transition, I will restate it here, just remember students were initially promised this building would open in 2019, and our earliest projected completion date as of now is March 2022…

Additionally, back when Alex was the AVP Finance, she ran a survey regarding what students wanted as the interior design standpoint for the building. Unfortunately, that was conducted now back in 2018-2019 and the majority of those 1000 respondents are likely to have graduated by the time this project is completed. Having said this, I do think you should utilize this survey data in choosing the interior décor as it reflects the wishes of students.

In Alex’s year as VP Finance they started conversations about the building signage. It was seen as very frustrating because she routinely said we wanted signage that would uniquely identify the project as an MSU building, etc. and we did not get much movement with this. This said, there was never a final decision made on signage. I would keep pushing for this as the project (hopefully) comes to a close in your year. It needs to be clear that the building was funding by students through the MSU. A good comparative would be to look at Brock, the BUSU signage for their new building was awesome. They have so many signs showing how BUSU was supporting and building a new building, this just again shows how our communications department needs to improve greatly.

I anticipate your role to be more focused on the interior design this year and also figuring out the internal management of the building. I would recommend you house it within Campus Events. Additionally, while the project is still on- going, I would suggest the MSU look at potentially hiring an independent project manager to work a few hours a month to consult on the project and advocate for our needs. Currently I believe this is kind of what is being expected of Debbie Good, but I am unsure if she has the background/knowledge in this area to think of the right questions to ask.

Managing the construction of a building like this is well over the capacity of a 22-year old’s head and Johns. John doesn’t have the time or knowledge to also be managing this project, out-source the management for now as it will definitely pay off in the long run when these meetings occur as they will know the right questions to ask!

The Silhouette Board of Publication

With the recent creation of the Campus Media Ad-Hoc Committee that encompasses MSU folks, Sil Folks, CFMU folks, and SRA members, The Sil BOP will be important to keep in the loop and provide updates to. The BOP’s official duties include reviewing the budget, approving the publication schedule, and administer the advertising policy within the paper. However, the scope of the group expands to basically “anything except for what stances the Silhouette can take on issues”. Staffing structure, printing costs, the number of pages in each issue, digital media strategies and more can all be set at this group. You’re the chair, so it is your responsibility to call meetings and organize discussion topics. The Operating Policy for the committee is online and is really helpful.

Admin-Student Consultation

This is primarily an updates committee, comprised of student leadership and senior leadership from the University. It is co-chaired by the MSU President and McMaster President, and has the flexibility to be led whichever way your board wants. This year, this committee met about 3-4 times and it honestly can vary on how helpful it is. We found it helpful to prep before these meetings to discuss what topics we would like to raise during the meetings. This helped us steer the conversation in the direction we wanted it to go, however you will need to be mindful that all of the upper admin at this meeting are VERY careful with their wording which often times leads to vague answers that aren’t always the most helpful. This is another situation where I would say don’t be afraid to voice your opinion/stances. It is a group that we are gain lots of insightful updates from upper admin as well as continue to voice the main concerns/problems we are hearing from students.

Sponsorship and Donations
The Sponsorships and Donations committee is chaired by the AVP Finance, and also consists of the VP Finance, one MSU Member, one SRA member & one Executive Board member. These are the 5 voting members on the committee, however there are also 2 non-voting advisors – Michael Wooder, Director of Marketing & Communications, & Victoria Scott, Administrative Services Assistant. This committee has been one of my personal favourites since being in the role of AVP Finance in the 2019-2020 year and now VP Finance in 2020-2021! The AVP Finance will receive all of the requests for sponsorship/donation/community youth bursary and circulate them to the committee in advance of the meetings to allow everyone a chance to review them.

There is a sponsorship and donations policy on our website that will outline in more details what is accepted for sponsorship vs. donation vs. youth bursary! The only other note I will say is make sure that your AVP Finance knows they are chairing the meetings and that when it comes down to a vote of whether or not to allocate the funds/how much to allocate, it is only the voting members that get the final say! Just letting your AVP Finance know this in advance will make things a lot easier when having these meetings. Additionally, you will likely work with the AVP Finance and Communications team to direct them to create promotional graphics and share these graphics to encourage folks to apply to use these funds! Feel free to set up an individual meeting just for this or raise it during your Board/Comms meeting if you think the graphics should be shared!

Document Retention Working Group

This was a working group that VP Admin - Graeme and I formed this past year to work towards addressing our terrible organizational file/document management set up. In the MSU we have servers where everyone goes to upload documents and the server is FILLED to the brim with historical, outdated documents that are poorly labelled, and you wouldn’t be able to find even if you wanted to. This year, we started a working group with VP Admin, VP Finance, Director of IT (Pauline), Administrative Services Assistant (Victoria), Executive Assistant (Daniela), HR Generalist (Maddison), and we occasionally looped in Accounts Receivable Supervisor (Jason). This group started to reimagine how we can more effectively organize our files to make transitioning new staff members easier. We recognized that there may be some variance across departments, thus why we started smaller with Admin & Pauline to help with the technical side of things, then slowly brought in Jason to better understand the current management of Financial documents and where we could go with that.

Honestly, we usually used the meetings as an opportunity to work on the rearrangement, raise any concerns, questions etc. as sometimes It can be challenging to carve out a specific amount of time to work on something so tedious, BUT also something very important that will help use operate more effectively internally. You and Christina will need to decide how you would like to continue these forward next year, and the others on the working group can help provide more background context on where we left off as well. It is a time consuming task that no one wants to do, but needs to be done, and will be easiest to get done if we keep chipping away at it!

Full Time Employment Issues Committee

This is not a mandatory committee for you to be on as it can be a representative from anyone on the board. However, this past year I had a large interest on the management of staff and I also am very interested in HR (Human Resources) as I have previously worked with the University as an HR Assistant. This committee is where representatives from each of our levels of employees (Supervisory, non-supervisory, SOP etc). come together to voice any concerns, ask questions or advocate on behalf of their respective employees they are representing. These are usually once a month meeting and generally planned for the day after our month Full-Time Staff meetings. Full time staff meetings are 1 hour long, but the board usually hops off after 20-30minutes so that the rest of the staff can voice any concerns to their reps to bring to the FTEIC the following day! If this does not interest you, another board member can be on this committee instead, I just found it very insightful to hear any concerns and work towards addressing them (Especially because concerns can relate to benefits which can tie in with the financial portfolio).

Relationships with the University

The MSU and especially the Board of Directors and John have a really good relationship with the University. Scott (VP Finance of 2018-2019) wrote in his transition report: “To put it simply to start, the MSU is the envy of student unions and administrators across the country as we focus on evidence-based recommendations and embracing the concept that we would rather be at the table helping to shape the decisions rather than being outside of the building watching people make decisions without a student voice at the table.” I definitely agree that it is awesome we have such a good relationship and has proven to be beneficial when it came to renegotiating the HSR Bus Pass, COVID Response and advocating to the university to lower ancillary fees. This said also, I am certain the University recognizes the value in a lot of the MSU services, if we did not operate the FCC, EFRT, SWHAT – the University would be on the hook for that so from a cost perspective, it’s better for them to help us keep our services operational than have to pay to support and run them themselves.

The relationship we have is an interesting one. I absolutely think our strong relationship is beneficial. However, from my perspective, I never shied away from challenging senior administration when I felt it was appropriate to do so. The main examples of this where around WWAC and SSAC tables, particularly when we started talking about fees and how they were used. In my opinion, the strong advocacy relationships are more beneficial for the VP Ed and President, so I was comfortable speaking up. Additionally, from my perspective, on certain issues, I think it is okay for the Board to be more of a bad guy but have John be the continuity of a good relationship since he is around for longer than one year.

Overall, we do A LOT for the University and if we didn’t do it, they’d have to find the resources to. FCC, EFRT, SWHAT, peer support, events, welcome week, SLEF, etc.! At the end of the day, we have less than 1% of the resources the University has from a funding, staffing, and space perspective, we do not need to take on more for them than we currently do. In fact, I think we could pull back on our SLEF and Welcome Week support. Or for Welcome Week we could take over more, but we would need way more of the Levy to make it worth it. They will definitely push you to take on more (especially at WWAC), but always stand up for yourself and say no. At the end of the day, we are here to serve students, not help pick up the slack for the University. I was always comfortable saying no and I still had a good relationship with folks from the University.

Relationships with MSU Staff

The MSU is an incredibly unique work environment for our almost 40 full-time staff. Each year, the leadership of the organization changes to be a new group of 22-year-old students. This is an odd organization to work in no doubt. Use the beginning of your term to set the tone of the VP Finance and Board member you want to be. The full-time staff are the backbone of our organization, they are what keep the organization working smoothly and provide our most important services to students (events, clubs, etc.). This said, last year the Board of Directors conducted the external review with KPMG in hopes of addressing, bringing to light internal gaps that currently exist.

The odd thing about the MSU is that it is led by 22-year-olds, however, I found quickly that staff do not always respect the direction you want to take. This is realty attribute to a lack of respect given we are only 22 and inexperienced at running an organization this large. Going into this role, I had pretty extensive work experience that I think prepared me well for understanding quickly where gaps needed to be filled. This said, when myself or other members of the board wanted to push forward certain changes, we were often met with resistance which made instituting long-lasting internal changes difficult. As a general observation, folks do not seem to like change. As people often get kind of “Set in there ways”, I think you will also find that not everyone is open to change, even though change can be positive. You will need to approach these conversations in a way that recognizes folks potential concerns or worries associated with change, but also note that the student population is constantly changing and in order to stay relevant we need to adapt and shift with them to serve their needs. The KPMG review will be a VERY helpful document moving forward and I really hope you and your team continue to utilize it as a resource and work towards addressing the recommendations within it!

Overall, you will set the tone for how you want to be! I was okay with being the bad guy when needed, but I also think I was seen as quite an approachable, positive person that worked to lift staff morale in such a challenging year. At the end of the day I got a lot done and I knew that a lot of staff still liked me! I personally just was who I was and did what needed to be done, the sooner you accept that you won’t be able to please everyone, honestly the better because it keeps projects moving!

Businesses and Important Department Trends

COVID-19

I had to include a section on this. We all know this year with COVID has continued to present MANY challenges, and lots of uncertainty in general. Currently all of our Food & Bev operations have been closed since just before the Winter break 2020. As a board we made the decision to continue to closures throughout the summer due not only to the COVID restrictions/stay at home orders, but also because generally in the Summer we already see a reduced student presence on campus.

The Underground has been closed for in person service/pick up since the Winter break 2020 as well but have continued to operate online/remotely to serve and fulfill our services needs. I suspect in person operations for the Underground will also be paused until at least Fall 2021 (Dependent on the format of fall). Over the past several months, the Return-to-Work committee has been working to create recommendations for what the upcoming academic year should look like, and how we can make a safe return to campus and return to work when the opportunity presents itself. I believe these recommendations are meant to be finalized in May 2021, so this is something your board should ensure you are looped in on! I personally would recommend planning for various potential scenarios including Fall 2021 being fully online (Worst case scenario) & a hybrid format (best case). I personally do not believe Fall 2021 will be fully in-person, nor should it be with the uncertainty of vaccine rollout, peoples comfort levels etc. Winter 2022 on the other hand I would plan for hybrid model and potentially more students back on campus (still with precautions including masks, distancing, smaller class sizes etc.).

If Fall 2021 remains mostly online, it will be up to you and your board to determine if the MSU operating fee should be charged in full or reduced. This past year we reduced our MSU Operating Fee & CFMU Operating Fee by a total of 25%. Having said this, we continued to offer almost all of our regular services to students, and everyone managed to pivot to the online format, it was just a perception that online does not equate to in-person. On this note, another piece you will need to consider and begin discussions surrounding will be HSR Bus Pass. This past year, we were able to suspend our fee & agreement for Fall 2020 on the basis that the vast majority of students were not traveling/were not located in the Hamilton area (we did a small survey on this and took a straw poll/informal vote at SRA). Then for Winter 2021, we were able to negotiate a further 50% reduction to the HSR Bus Pass fee, while still offering the service to folks residing in the Hamilton area, as we felt that Winter possesses additional mobility challenges.

Student Choice Initiative

In the 2019-2020 year our fee was greatly affected by The Student Choice Initiative, but later in the year it was also deemed unlawful by the Ontario Divisional Courts. This decision is now being appealed by the Ontario Government and is currently in courts. I have hope that it will continue to be deemed unlawful as it greatly infringes on Students Unions ability to operate. If the appeal does not go through and SCI is not reinstated, WOOOO! Happy dance! If by the off chance, they make a convincing argument and it does become reinstated, I would highly recommending reviewing all of the campaign materials from the 2019-2020 year to see what approach you and your board want to take. From my consultations with other Students Unions, the MSU was generally hit the hardest and had one of (if not the) highest opt out rates in Ontario. Recognizing I think this is in part to the fact that we have a VERY engaged student body, but I also believe we need to continue to show students the value of the services we provide.

This year is very unique. You have potentially 2 cohorts of students returning to Mac for the FIRST TIME and may not be fully aware of what the MSU is or what we provide. I would capitalize on this to SHOW them the value!! Additionally, I would suggest you and your Board take some time to critical reflect and evaluate on the opt-out numbers of last year and what that could mean going forward. We started some of this work this year in rescinding certain service operations that had high opt-out and low student engagement based off of the survey and applications/usage/etc. I encourage your Board to do the same, I personally think we cannot keep operations the same when we know in some cases upwards of 40% of the undergraduate population does not want that service to continue its’ current operations.

TwelvEighty & The Grind

I have mentioned to both yourself and your board that this year we submitted an RFP (request for proposal) to explore the possibility of having an external group potentially take over the management of our Food & Beverage operations in hopes of reducing our overall expenses, while continuing to provide student employment opportunities, and reasonably priced food options. This year, despite being closed for the majority of the year due to COVID restrictions, we were able to mitigate a lot of our losses through applying for various government wage subsidies and grants that were available. I would encourage you to continue these conversations moving forward with John & Sean and apply to anything the MSU may to eligible for. These subsidies REALLY helped offset a lot of expenses this year, especially given we were bringing in significantly less revenue as well with the business units not being operational.

Once the RFP’s come in later in the summer, I recommend you, your board and John, thoroughly review them to determine what the best direction moving forward will be for TwelvEighty & The Grind both in the short term and the long term. It has been said by many past VP Finances, it is quite unfortunate that while 1280 has been such a large focus for VP Finance’s the past several years, and it is still losing money.

Last year when Alex and her board worked on the expansion of The Grind, it did a great job at providing an additional study space for students on campus, however we did not really see any increase in sales unfortunately. There is definitely a need for study space on campus so this makes sense but I’m not sure what the cost of this should be for the MSU.

Underground

Ah the Underground! One of the areas I was really planning and hoping to sit down and work through this year as I personally see SO MUCH potential in this business unit! Unfortunately, COVID had other plans. This year we had between 2-3 staff members working at the Underground at different parts of the year. We started the year with Paul (Underground Manager & Creative Director), Steph (Sr. Designer) and Gustavo (Designer). All three were working full time, but around November-ish 2020, Gustavo left the MSU to pursue another opportunity. From there we operated the Underground remotely with just Paula and Steph on staff. While they both are incredible designers and generally amazing at what they do, having only 2 FT staff operate the entire service is not sustainable. We tried hiring for the designer role throughout Winter 2021 but did not find a successful candidate. As an interim solution, we reached out to Connor Maclean, our Communications Officer from 2019-2020 to ask if he would be available to help the Underground on a contract, part time basis until we are able to hire a permanent designer. Thankfully he was available and is on a part time contract as a designer with the Underground until the end of May 2021.

I highly recommend continuing these conversations with Paula and John when you get into your role as we still need to look to hire a FT designer by latest Fall 2021 to ensure the service is able to meet the demands it faces during the academic year. Additionally, one other commissioned based staff member that works out of The Underground and helps The Sil as well with finding advertising opportunities is Vlad. Vlad’s role as the Campus and Community Partnerships Coordinator is completely commissioned based. This means that when he helps find businesses/individuals to pay for advertisement in the Sil etc. he gets a commissioned off of each sale.

Overall, it was a really hard year for the Underground. Paula was an absolute star at taking the mess and working to make it better. She will be a great resource for you moving forward and I would empower her as much as possible. Again, I would also take some time to think about how the Underground can be more integrated within our Comms team and just the MSU as a whole, the MSU is the Undergrounds biggest client BY FAR so I think we can streamline resources better. I would empower Paula to look into this, she has a new perspective and isn’t stuck in old habits like some of our other staff who have been here for longer. Additionally, I would personally look at the cost of operating the front of house printing service compared to the revenue we make from it and potentially end it if it proves to not be profitable, it is at libraries already and we are in such a paperless environment that it would save the MSU funds from operating this service and leasing the printers.

Union Market

Union Market continues to be the MSU’s most successful retail operation. While we were not able to operate for the majority of this year, for the time we were open, UM was performing the best out of our food & beverage operations. UM does generally have a very low profit margin though, for example, in the 2018-2019 year, UM did over $700k in sales but only netted $11k which is a super low margin. Alex did a lot of work last year in re-evaluating the prices of bagels, and coffee which did help drive the numbers back, however we were not able to see if the upwards trend would continue due to the limited operations this year. I would continue to evaluate prices as we are still considerably cheaper than the rest of campus so there is room to look into this. Gabby will also bring a fresh perspective in her management of the space over the summer (even though it will be closed!). One thing to keep on your radar is looking into the options for the store management when the school opens up again. Shying away from someone who can be dedicated to this space 100% of the time has led to a decline in sales so that is something to keep in mind!

Student Opportunity Positions

For a few years now, we have found it difficult to fill some of the Student Opportunity Position roles. However this past year we actually seemed to have an increase in applicants! For context, these are full-time one-year contract jobs for a student who graduated the previous years. These positions currently include: The Communications Officer, CFMU Community Outreach Coordinator, Silhouette Editor-In-Chief, AvTek Office Coordinator, the Campus Events Programming Coordinator and newly introduced Junior IT Technician. As well, the Board of Directors acts in a similar one-year contract fashion. This year we had a few SOPs actually decide to reapply for the roles for a second year (Elizabetta, Comms Officer & Emma, CFMU COC)! Engagement in these roles may just be something you need to keep in mind for next year. We have found great success in also advertising all of our roles via our recently re-discovered LinkedIn page!

Scott also changed the Accounting Clerk role and made it a co-op/internship through the Faculty of Commerce, where possible I would recommend you do the same for some of the other jobs. Particularly AvTek, Sil, and CFMU could be internships also, we will have way more interest and it is cheaper as we get a subsidy from the government. With the creation of the Junior IT Technician role for this coming year, we are also looking at having it as an internship through comp sci! The other thing I would further look into is the potential of transitioning the Comms Officer role away from an SOP and into a full time job and the qualifications and work required of the role is extremely difficult to find in a recent grad.

The Silhouette

The Silhouette is an interesting service and the VP Finance has to deal with it the most being the chair of the Sil Board of Publication. I highly recommend you continue the work we started this year in reviewing The Silhouette and continue to explore ways to share resources with CFMU! From initial discussions with Andrew, the incoming Editor-in-Chief (and previous managing editor at The Sil), it seems he is on board to continue to explore how resources can be shared between the two. The Sil Board of Publication is where any major decisions will go through anyway so it will be very helpful to have them on your side!

CFMU

This is an area and department that I wish I could have put more time and energy towards. The team at CFMU have done a great job in the past few years of modernizing their operations to meet the needs of our current students and community. Their digital media output of video, blog posts, and podcast content have allowed the department’s outreach to increase by more than 40% over the past 2 years. This is most definitely a success to celebrate. However, the opt-out numbers and feedback survey from the 2019-2020 SCI year, really show the flaws of CFMU. As I mentioned above, sharing resources between the Sil and CFMU is a great way to modernize and centralize MSU/student media. Utilizing CFMU’s written content on sports and arts & culture sections and sharing those with the Silhouette I think would be a great way to share content, cross promote and reduce costs!

Clubs

It’s an incredible juxtaposition that our Clubs department is by far the most important and engaging project of the MSU, in which by far the majority of students are involved and passionate, yet it is resourced so little and thought about even less. We spend hours every week (if not entire days) worrying about the smallest changes within our services, while groups like the Muslim Students Association, McMaster Consulting Club, or Relay for Life are completely volunteer run, and engage thousands of students.

Last years board put in work to overhaul the Clubs department and make fundamental changes that I think will prove to be SUPER beneficial in future years. This year we move all roughly 320 club bank accounts internal to the MSU. This was a MASSIVE change and definitely took some getting use to, but this is also why we introduced the new (as of 2020-2021) Clubs Accounting Clerk intern position. This past year Noel (clubs accounting clerk) & Jason (Accounts Receivables Supervisor) and I worked very closely to ensure all clubs Purchase Orders, Cheque Requests, & Expenses were properly accounted for and processed. Noel and I were also in charge of reviewing all of the club budget submissions in and around September and deciding on how we were going to allocate the funds accordingly. For this year, I HIGHLY recommend looping in Jenna (Clubs Admin), into these discussions and decisions and she is now a full time, permanent role and will help to bring continuity and insight into the process if she is included annually. This year, we did our best to base it off of what they were asking for, what we could cover, and staying within the max and min outlined in the policy, but it did still feel quite subjective and arbitrary in some cases. Clubs are definitely our most important service so it’s important these changes are as smooth as possible!

Child Care Centre

The MSU Child Care Centre remains under strong and confident leadership with Debbie Thompson. Debbie is awesome and always fun to talk to too. The childcare Centre runs well; however, it still runs at too large of a loss for the MSU. It is far off from being a zero-cost center. Additionally, it has the lowest engagement out of any of our services. I would either focus on making it truly zero cost or look at transitioning this service away from the MSU. Debbie is also planning to retire within the next couple of years so I would work with her as much as you can to establish a plan, she has been the director for 38 years and is an incredible source of knowledge! This year we were fortunate that the government had several different subsidies and bursaries available for Child Care Centres to apply for as they were deemed an essential service. Debbie is an absolute CHAMP at finding and applying for all of these with the help & assistance of Sean, John and Yourself when required!

Information Technology & Network

There have been some BIG MOVES happening with IT this year. With Graeme and Pauline, we were able to create/restructure the IT Department to be an actual department with more than one staff member! The three positions that now exist are the Director of IT (Pauline), the Senior IT Technician (FT Permanent) & the Junior IT Technician (SOP/Internship). This is a HUGE step in the right direction and will help to eliminate some of the pressure/weight that is currently placed on Pauline’s Network Administrator role. The addition of the new roles will also allow us to re-evaluate a lot of our WW Works contracts that cost a lot of money and allow us to evaluate if we have the capacity to perform a lot of those tasks internally.

Website

This past year, I was handed off the project of ensuring our New MSU website comes to fruition from the last VP Finance Alex. We were able to successful launch the new website that is designed to be MUCH smaller and more stagnant in its information, as the old website was so dynamic/constantly changing that there was always outdated information clogging it up. With this said, I would recommend this year evaluating where the Website management should fall moving forward.

As more of an interim solution it is currently jointly housed under Paula & Mike Wooder to do updates for everyone else, however I am not sure moving forward if this makes the most amount of sense/if these folks will have the capacity (or scope) for this. Once you determine who makes the most amount of sense to maintain the management of the website, it is always best to update/put it into a policy & Job description so it is clearly outlined somewhere!

Accounting

The accounting department is the best, truly the department that causes no trouble which is awesome! The staff we have are all very competent and very helpful. I sincerely loved working with Sean, Jason, Kevin, Minny & Noel. Make sure you check in to see how it is going with accounting because they are resilient folks who will keep on trucking even if it is not a good system.

Campus Events

Campus Events is also one of our most important services. I would continue to work with Trish (or Thalia/Kathleen until Trish returns from Mat leave) to find ways to innovate, especially now with the digital world! The Campus Events folks are rock stars and so is Tony- from AvTek!

Organizational Structure

Truthfully, I don’t even know where to start with this! It was so obvious to me when I first started just how much of a mess our internal structure was. It is so horizonal and John has WAY too much on his plate, so it is only natural that things fall through the cracks. The KPMG review provided a good place to start with addressing our internal issues. My advice is the following:

1. Read through the entire review to gain a better understanding of just what areas are needing to be analyzed (generally IT, HR, Comms)
2. Work to help reduce duplication across roles and hiring new employees (if needed) and ensure all Operating Policies are updated.
3. Update job descriptions and reporting structure accordingly through Board meetings and wage review.
4. This year we were able to tackle IT, so the next major pillar would be HR. Focus on solidifying the JDs for the HR Generalist and the HR Director and determine the division of work between the two. From here I would recommend hiring the director first, so that they can be on the hiring committee for the generalist.
5. After this, if you have time, review Comms. Comms is very integral to the operations and communications of the MSU to engaging students. However it would prove beneficial to better understand what roles are truly necessary and how can we make our comms more efficient (Refer to review)
6. The other three buckets (IT, HR & Comms) are pretty good with the Director of Campus Events, Director of Finance and ideally a Business manager. These 6 people would be the senior leadership team who reports to John, everyone else reports to one of these 6 people.
7. Really assess the feasibility of 1280 & UG for the long term financial stability of the Org and determine a direction/plan moving forward. Similarly for CFMU/The Sil in sharing more resources.
8. Hire a Business Manager to supervise those in step 7
9. Implement better reporting structures and performance reviews.
10. Iterate and reflect on how it is going, make changes as needed.

Overall, we have a lot of internal things we need to fix- please take this seriously and work on improving our internal operations. I know it’s not as fun and flashy as some other projects, but it is seriously so important and will be so beneficial in the long run. Staff are going to vehemently oppose these changes so you will need to be the one driving this forward.

Communications

I spoke with you a lot about this already. MSU perception is negative and student understanding of why we exist and what we do is low. Overall, we need to overhaul our Communications department and communications strategies. We should focus less internally and improve upon our external outreach to students. Khaleel (Our social Media coordinator from this year) put together a really solid comms strategy plan that I think should be incorporated moving forward. The MSU needs to become more appealing to students, increasing transparency by being on the ground talking to students and innovating more and providing more engaging content on our social media will help. We also need to encourage cross promotion across services. I would suggest reviewing my ideas about the Comms Officer role and also some of the suggestions in the KPMG review. We spent a lot of money on Comms as an organization and I think we can spend much more effectively and have a better output. There are a lot of great ideas in the MSU Feedback Survey raw data about our communications, this is a good start! Continuing to gather student feedback and engagement data will also help. Overall, the MSU has become really out of touch with students needs! I would also suggest you as a Board explore taking a more active role with Spotted at Mac, commenting on posts, etc. could be a helpful way to stop the misinformation out there. Same goes for the Sil- a lot of their articles have so many inaccuracies, we could comment on those to address what is written!

Monthly Break Down of Work

Below I do my best to break down what work I did when. This is NOT even close to all-encompassing, but I hope it gives you somewhat of an idea about what I did when. You can also refer to my SRA reports for a better timeline re my year- objectives.

May

* Intro meetings with full-time staff, part-time staff, University partners
* Made and sent out PTMS their budget trackers
* Group Board transition with John
* Check in’s with John
* May at Mac 🡪 would happen in a normal year so just putting this in!
* Goal planning sessions for the year (year plan prep!)
* PTM budget/finance training
* Started working on a lot of projects:
* First Sil BoP meeting
* WW support that came up with the WWFC
* Started HSR working group meetings to discuss Fall 2020 plans
* Began discussions surrounding potentially reducing MSU Operating Fee for Fall 2020
* Contracted out the Community and Campus partnerships Coordinator Role

June

* EB training (I think this is supposed to happen in May though!)
* PTM check ins
* Worked with Stu & Kornelia to Revamp 1280 Menu!
* Year planning
* SRA training
* Began discussions on how to reopen 1280 for takeout only & implement social distancing signage
* Began the Audit that lasted LITERALLY forever
* Began planning of General MSU Campaign with GC, Adit, Mike & rest of comms!
* Began discussions surround Compass and what its operations would look like for Fall 2020/reimagining the use of the space
* Assisted Accounting through moving Clubs accounts internally
* More HSR Meetings

July

* Worked with Stu/Gabby to increase sustainability initiatives at 1280/The Grind for Fall 2020
* PTMS submitted budget proposals, followed up where necessary
* Welcome Week support mainly discussions surrounding ordering bandanas, design and how we were going to ship them out

* More HSR Discussions
* Began discussions on New MSU website/timeline
* Helped Jenna with ensuring everything for clubs ratification was good to come to SRA

August

* More Website meetings
* Finalized plans for Fall 2020 operations for Business Units (initial plans based on state of COVID)
* Released MSU General Campaign
* Continued Board of Director Monthly Update Videos
* Elected in new VP Admin
* Had initial conversations surround The Hub
* Website e-commerce discussions with Jay
* Sil BoP meeting to discuss end of summer wrap up issue
* Promoted Financial Aid available to students
* Finalized HSR Bus Pass suspended for Fall 2020
* EFRT Advisory Committee voted to pause responding for Fall 2020
* Advocated to Uni to reduce Ath & Rec Fee

September

* Online Clubs fest
* Online Clubs Financial training modules
* Began discussions of online Financial Transparency week
* Began to consolidate WW expenses
* Elected new VP Education
* Worked to reduce MSU Operating Fee by 10% and CFMU by 15%
* Began long term planning/Board Priorities discussions

October

* Clubs budgets submitted and clubs funding allocated
* Continued supporting accounting on the Audit
* Sil BoP
* USIF term 1 funding meeting
* Conversations around repurposing SLEF Funding for the year
* HSR discussions for Winter 2021

November

* Began discussions surrounding reducing fee for 2021
* Released Virtual MSU Financial Transparency Week (takeovers, video, graphics etc)
* Continued Monthly Board update videos (highly recommend these)
* Board Priorities for the rest of Fall 2020
* Hired new DMS position
* Continued Website conversations, meant to have been completed already, hold up by MPS

December

* Finalized 50% reduction to HSR Fee for Winter 2021
* FT Staff Winter Appreciation
* Website soft launch
* Conducted review of new Clubs changes/sent out survey to club presidents with Jenna & GC

January

* REPORTED ON THE AUDIT THAT LASTED FOREVER WOOO
* Finalized reallocation of SLEF to 3 pillars 🡪 LUTN/Community Building, Financial Aid/MSU Emergency Bursary & Student Wellbeing/SWC
* Began LUTN planning meetings
* Proposed changes to Clubs Policy (January/Feb)
* Prepared fee submission (January/Feb)
* Confirmed, reduced MSU fee & CFMU by total 25%

February

* WW levy discussions, what to do with surplus, financial review etc
* USIF term 2 funding meeting
* WW levy reconciliation meeting with SA
* LUTN 2.0 meetings became bi-weekly
* PTM budget meetings and check in
* Budget planning for upcoming year
* Worked on event catering packages with Stu, Korn & Gabby for 1280/The Grind
* Helped review FT Employment Policy with Graeme, Maddison, John & Daniela

March

* Finalized the budget and set it to EB for approval
* VP consultations would normally begin
	+ Started offering shadowing/drop in online hours
* Lots of hiring for 2020-2021 year (SOPs, PTMs , etc.)
* Final year-end report for SRA and year objective wrap ups
* WW MOU meetings
* Working on Mailing out Volunteer appreciation for PTMs

April

* VP elections and VP Finance transition
* Hiring of AVP Finance
* Hiring of 3 Silhouette PTM positions
* Budget to SRA for approval
* Group Board transition
* Prepared Year-End Report doc
* End of year wrap up
* FT Staff Appreciation, SOP, Intern, AVP, SRA appreciation

Resources Available To You

Board Private Server

This is your shared folder on the MSU network, which only the Board has access to. It has a TON of useful files that can give you a sense of the history of the organization as well as providing templates for your reports and other documents. Because many of these files are confidential, you can only access these files from a computer on the MSU network. Each VP Finance has their own folder, so you can go back for almost 20 years and see what each person was up to. I did my best to save all important documents, pdfs and emails in these folders so that it can be easily accessible for you.

Microsoft 365

In Ryan Macdonald’s year, a major development in the organizations IT was the implementation of Microsoft 365 across all computers. We have barely begun to delve into the efficiencies that this software can bring, but it is important to note how impressive it is. The Microsoft suite has been a lifesaver during remote working & COVID times!! We use Outlook for emails, Teams for meetings, and sharepoint/onedrive any time we need to collaboratively work on a document, budget, etc to help avoid sending drafts back and forth via email! HIGHLY recommending downloaded the suite if you haven’t already as they are used daily.

Emails

You have the vpfinance@msu.mcmaster.ca account now. It comes complete with years of emails from previous VPs. You can check the email pretty easily from your office, or any computer setup on the MSU server. If you are ever looking for something, dig through your emails first!

Personal Expense Account

Some lines of the MSU budget are devoted to your use. In general, the Executive spreadsheet outlines what to spend money on, so I won’t go into too much detail. You have $600.00 to use at your professional discretion. The objective for these accounts is to take into account expenses that you will incur in the role including lunches, transit, professional development and otherwise. My rule of thumb with approving PO’s or expensing items in the job (personal expenses and PTM expenses) was to make sure I would feel comfortable publicly defending my choice with the SRA. There were times where I did not approve things and it was for that reason, some staff and PTMs try to slide things through but it is okay to say no, when you say no you’re just doing your job! With respect to Purchase Orders, we went over this in detail, but please don’t hesitate to reach out to Sean, Jason or Kevin to ask for help - they are great!

Great Plains

Great Plains is our accounting software. While you don’t need more than a cursory knowledge of how to operate this software the more you know about it the more you will be able to do with finances. You should know how to approve purchase orders and send them via email as well as track down documents that are archived in the system. I honestly got by with just a high- level understanding of how to use the software, if you do want to learn things in more detail, the Accounting Department will be your go-to!

Phone

Your extension is 24109. Spend a while learning how to transfer calls, access your voicemail, and change your voicemail message. You also have a long- distance access code which will come in handy. Knowing how to use your phone will make you look competent, whereas not knowing how to use it will make you look like a fool. Try to avoid that. This information is all available on the McMaster Website. Be sure to change your voicemail answer message ASAP.

**My Year Plan & Progress**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Objective 1 | Continue September and January Transparency Weeks |
| Description | While this year will look different than past, I believe it is still a priority to be as transparent with our finances as possible. I plan to work with the AVP Finance, Chen as well as the rest of the Finance Committee to brainstorm creative ways to outreach to students with our finances and depict how the money is allocated & spent. With the help of our communications department, I believe we can create visually appealing graphics (and update some used last year) that will accurately and effectively depict to students how their fees are spent. The other component that normally exists for transparency weeks is being in person to answer any questions students may have about their fees. To address this, I plan to look into the feasibility of either hosting a virtual, live event of sorts where students can pop in to ask questions or collect questions from students via our social media channels and answer them the following day in a video response. This would hopefully help clarify any questions or concerns students have, while also integrating a more personal ‘face-to-face’ component into the responses opposed to having a large body of text answering the questions.Additionally, while all of the MSU operating & capital budgets are publicly accessible online, I hope to work throughout the summer on creating more user-friendly versions of our budgets to ensure the information is more accessible and easier to understand without assuming a certain level of financial literacy. Along with the MSU operating & capitals budgets, I hope to work with our services to create smaller graphics outlining how they spend their allocation of the funding as well.  |
| Benefits | * Increasing the Financial transparency of the McMaster Students Union and all of our associated services.
* Increasing the accessibility of our finances to students.
* Answer student questions, comments or concerns.
* Through outlining how fees are allocated, students will become more aware of MSU services & hopefully want to utilize or get more involved
 |
| Difficulties | * Transparency and accessibility can always be worked on and increased, and I believe it will continue to be a difficulty. My goal is to ensure that every year we are able to improve our transparency & accessibility from the last.
* Outreach to students. It will be imperative that we plan and allow enough time to receive questions from students to ensure that anyone who wishes to participate and ask a question is able to voice that question.
 |
| Long-term implications  | * Continued improvement of our transparency and accessibility initiatives. As an organization, we hope to be transparent & accessible across all of our various facets and I hope that through our continued improvement we are able to gain more student trust. Students have a right to know how their fees are being spent.
 |
| How? | August* Create resources with Comms Officer to share with students on our socials that outline how our fee is created and allocated. Finalize the structure of the “virtual/online” transparency week.

September* Connect with Chen, AVP Finance & Finance Committee & Board of Directors to evaluate their level of comfortability of being on camera/helping to respond to questions (having multiple faces may be more engaging).
* Open submission of questions on our various social medias & allow a few days to collect submissions.
* Coordinate with AVP, Finance Committee & Board on who will record a response to which question.

December* Alter graphics to reflect 2021 year & reevaluate how the first virtual transparency event went.
* Make a call (based on if classes are virtual or in-person for the winter semester) to host another virtual event or in-person for January.

January* Depending on decision, either host another online/virtual transparency event or book tables and schedule days for in-person financial transparency.
 |
| Partners | AVP Finance, Chen LiuFinance CommitteeDirector Marketing & Communications, Michael WooderCommunications Officer, Elizabetta PaianoSocial Media Coordinator, Khaleel Gandhi |

Objective #1:
Original: Continue September and January Transparency Weeks
Revised: Effectively Execute our first Fully Online Financial Transparency Week Status: Complete

During the week of November 23-27th I worked with Michael Wooder, Director of Marketing and Communications, Negar Asli, Marketing and Communications Assistant, Khaleel Gandhi, Social Media Coordinator, Elisabetta Paiano, Communications Officer, and Adit Dixit, Media Production Coordinator, to orchestrate various take overs, videos and other ways to engage with student for a multi-day, financial transparency campaign on our social medias. We wanted to ensure students were aware of how the MSU decides on an operating budget annually, as well as how student fees have changed this year, given the online format. Here is a brief overview of a day-by-day breakdown of the campaign:

MONDAY: The week consisted of an Instagram takeover by myself on Monday to highlight my role, as well as answer any general questions students had surrounding their fees! Additionally, we shared graphics that showed the budgeting process within the MSU. I also made students aware that the MSU has committed to providing further reductions to our fees for Winter 2021, given its online nature.

TUESDAY: We did an Instagram takeover with Noel, our Clubs Accounting Clerk! He spoke about finances in regard to clubs, answered some FAQ’s about budgeting tracking & the process of applying for funding. We also posted our bubble graphics that outline the MSU Organization Fee, broken down to a per student cost.

WEDNESDAY: We did a takeover with Chen Liu our AVP Finance! He outlined what the Finance Committee does, interactions & oversight of the Non-MSU, Non-University groups on campus (voted into existence via student referendum), as well as highlighted the Sponsorship & Donation Fund and NEW this year, Our Youth Bursary!

THURSDAY: We released a video made by the one and only Adit Dixit, that had me speaking to what I do in my role, how do I interact with the MSU’s Finances, what is the budgeting process, Goals of the MSU, How our fees work to help us achieve our goals & overall better the student experience!

FRIDAY: Was our wrap up day! Once again, I returned to our Instagram to address any unanswered questions throughout the week, as well as provide any further clarity regarding points made within our Video.

CONCLUSION:

I think this week went INCREDIBLY well! This was the first weeklong, fully online campaign I have had the pleasure of leading and I couldn’t be happier with how it turned out. It is more important than ever, that we are able to continue to engage with students in this virtual environment and show the value, services & supports they are receiving through the fees that they pay. Our goal is always to enhance the student experience and we will continue to work to do so!

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| Objective 2 | Explore Ways to Reduce Student Costs |
| Description | As this year is filled with financial uncertainty for students and places many students in a very precarious situation, I believe it is vital that we advocate and explore ways to reduce student costs. Within the MSU, I plan to work with our Board of Directors, General Manager & Finance Department to reduce the MSU fee & keep the conversation open for a potential reimbursement for students at the end of the 2020-2021 year should there be further savings. Additionally, I will work with the President, General Manager, University Stakeholders & HSR to seek a reimbursement for students from the time COVID -19 impacted transit services through the summer. I will then work to evaluate our options with HSR for the Fall 2020 semester that is online as well as the Winter 2021 semester that is still TBD.I will additionally work with the university and the rest of the Board of Directors to advocate to the University to reduce fees of services & areas that are currently not accessible to students (such as athletics & recreation). I recognize there are still maintenance fees associated with the space even with its closure, but strongly believe there should be a large reduction in the fee students pay for such services until they are able to open and be accessible to students. |
| Benefits | * Reduced costs to students.
* Increased accountability for all stakeholders that charge fees to student to ensure the fee accurately reflects the service level they are providing.
 |
| Difficulties | * Trying to accommodate a reduction in fees, while also experiencing a reduction in revenue that would normally help offset some costs.
* Working with stakeholders that are also experiencing significant losses of revenue.
 |
| Long-term implications  | * Building or maintaining a strong rapport with students through ensuring our associated fees are reflective of our service offerings.
 |
| How? |  June* Start conversations with University & HSR to ensure the topic of reductions and student savings are at the forefront of their priorities.
* Evaluate MSU operating fee with John McGowan to look for potential student savings.
* Meet with University & HSR to assess options and request a reimbursement for months when service was not provided.
* Submit MSU operating fee proposal to Fees Committee.

July* Continue conversations with HSR & University to ensure fees are being appropriately adjusted to match the service levels provided.
* Confirm what HSR fee/operations are for Fall 2020.

October/November* Evaluate what Winter 2021 is looking like (i.e. online or in-person).
* Work with University & HSR to ensure that either way, fees reflect what the services offerings to students are.

March* Evaluate MSU operating Fee & financial standings, and determine whether there is additionally funding that can be reimbursed or not
 |
| Partners | General Manger, John McGowanPresident, Giancarlo Da-RéBoard of DirectorsAVP Students (McMaster U), Sean Van KoughnettHSR  |

Objective #2:
Explore Ways to Reduce Student Costs
Status: Complete – Continue to Advocate to University

This objective was a top priority for myself throughout my entire term as we looked for ways to further reduce costs to students given the financial precarity of this year, while also ensuring we continue to offer as many services as possible to provide support to students. Over the course of Fall 2020, we were able to provide students with savings of over $120 across the HSR Bus Pass, MSU Org Fee, CFMU Fee, and MUSC.

When Winter 2021 was announced to remain online, I worked with our Director of Finance and General Manager to find a way to provide students with a further reduction to their MSU fee, CFMU fee & the HSR Bus Pass. With this, we reduced the MSU Org Fee by a further 15% and the CFMU fee by a further 10% totaling a 25% reduction across the Fall & Winter for both fees.

As for the HSR Bus Pass, with the Fall semester suspended, students unable to utilize the HSR saved about $100. Upon the news that Winter 2021 would remain online, we went back to negotiate again with the HSR & City Council. Our ideal offer was to have the fee available as an opt-in for folks residing within the Hamilton area, however this was promptly struck down. In the end we were able to negotiate a further 58% reduction to the Winter 2021 semester fee, equally further savings of over $54 for all students.

While on the MSU side of things, we were able to effectively reduce our fees to save students money, I have also continued to advocate to the University to ensure they are adjusting their student fees to reflect the level of service they are providing as well.

I will continue to have discussions with Giancarlo and university representatives until the end of my term to ensure student fees are actively being revaluated and lowered or refunded to align with the current limited-service operations. As many folks know, the University reduced the Athletics & Recreation fee by 75% for the Fall semester given it was online, and we expect to see the same 75% reduction be credited to Students accounts as the facilities remain closed.

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| Objective 3 | Educate Students on Financial Aid Available |
| Description | As mentioned on countless occasions, the past several months have been financially straining on a lot of students, and thus I will work with our VP Education, President & Communications department to ensure that students are aware of the financial supports available to them at the MSU, University & Provincial/Federal levels respectively. I plan to also work with the communications officer to produce graphics that highlight what resources are available and how you go about accessing them.Additionally, work with the communications department to highlight financial advising component of the Student Assistance Plan that is free and available to all MSU members. It is important to ensure student feel supported during these difficult times and thus we need to highlight the aid and resources that are available. |
| Benefits | * Highlighting services that the MSU currently offers to students that can be a resource and further educating students on our service offerings.
* Ensuring students feel supported and are aware of the resources and funding available to them.
* Increase usage & awareness of the Student Assistance Plan that was previously underutilized.
 |
| Difficulties | * Outreaching to all 24,000+ students when restricted to just online platforms.
* Ensuring students are not only directed to the resources, but also understand how to accurately apply to the various grants/bursaries as the websites are not always the most user friendly.
 |
| Long-term implications  | * Ensuring our students feel supported through this difficult time will help build trust and additionally will make students more aware of our services and resources available for years to come.
 |
| How? |  June* Work with Comms team to create graphics that outline the various types of funding & subsidies available to students from the MSU, University & Provincial/Federal government.

July* Release graphics to students via the MSU social media pages.
* Circulate to SRA members to post on their respective pages to further the outreach.
* Work on creating SAP specific graphics that outline all of their service offerings (including financial).

August/September* Release SAP graphics to students as they can be utilized more long term.
 |
| Partners | VP Education, Fawziyah IsahPresident, Giancarlo Da-RéDirector Marketing & Communications, Michael WooderCommunications Officer, Elizabetta PaianoSocial Media Coordinator, Khaleel GandhiACL, Student Health Care Providers |

Objective #3:
Educate Students on Financial Aid Available Status: Complete

While I think you can always continue to improve on educating students on financial aid that is available and effectively advertise it to them, I am quite happy with how far we have come this year! We have shared the Financial Aid graphics on our main MSU social medias continuously throughout the year to draw student attention. Additionally, with the help of Michael Wooder (Director of Marketing & Comms), we have an update page on our msumcmaster.ca website under Info🡪 Financial Aid, Sponsorships & Donations, where students can follow the outlined steps on how to see and apply for the various bursaries available to them. I think this project should be continued to the following year (and beyond), as it can still be quite different to navigate the universities application portal for awards and bursaries.

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| Objective 4 | Your Money/Financial Section of new Website |
| Description | Last year’s Vice-President Finance, Alex Johnston worked with the Communications Officer & The Underground to start the planning and development of a new MSU Website as our current website is very outdated and unorganized. With this new website set to go live for September 1st 2020, I plan to have the ‘Your Money’ page carried over the new website and to format it in a much more accessible & user friendly way. On this page, I would ensure the updated, easy to understand MSU operating & Capital budgets are present.Additionally, I plan to collect updated budget sheets from our services on a monthly basis and update on the website in the same section to ensure all information is compiled together and easy for students to access. We can also ensure our updated Financial Graphics are present on this page as well so that we have visual graphics to company the of text & budgets. If room permits it, I believe it may also be beneficial to incorporate a section or line that can redirect students to where they can learn more about applying for financial aid. |
| Benefits | * Utilizing the new MSU website to ensure that Financials are all easily accessible and transparent to students.
* Always for a ‘one-stop-shop’ for everything finance related and avoids confusion of having many, multiple pages for various finance related components.
 |
| Difficulties | * Ensuring the new website has the capabilities required to manage the page in an accessible and easy to read format.
* Deciding who will be responsible for updating the financial page of the website on a regular basis.
 |
| Long-term implications  | * Having an easily accessible way for students to learn more about their fees and how their funding is spent on an ongoing and updated basis.
 |
| How? |  August* Reach out to Paula Scott to ensure capability to have this page is present on new website.
* Establish a format for the page and all of the information we want included.
* Test the page to ensure it is easy to understand what each of the various documents is showing and it is easy to follow.

September* Website goes live.
* Promote financial component of website alongside Financial Transparency days/week so that students are aware of where the information is available.
 |
| Partners | Manager & Creative Director; The Underground, Paula ScottMedia Production Services (MPS)Communications Officer, Elizabetta Paiano |

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

As the New Website has been up & live since about January 2021, this objective was able to be completed! If you were to go under Info🡪Your Money you will see the new video that we created this year for Financial Transparency week, that outlines how the budget is created, approved, and allocated, as well as what my role is within all of that. Additionally, we draw attention to the reduction in our fees for the 2020-2021 year as a result of everything being online. We also include the current years’ operating budget that has been approved by the SRA, as well as the past three years Audited statements if students are looking for more detailed information. To try and make some of the information more easily digestible, we also uploaded the graphics that outline what encompasses our fee, and how much students pay towards various areas. This is all part of our attempt to increase financial transparency and ensure we are making the information readily available for those that may not want to review the full audited statement.

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| Objective 5 | Develop Service Sponsorship Policy & Packages |
| Description | The past few years our MSU services have begun to reach out to external groups looking for sponsorships and donations to help fund some of their various events. With this being said, I will work with the VP Admin and AVP Internal Governance to establish a service sponsorship & donation policy that will identify what types of groups and organizations we will and will not allow our services to receive sponsorships or donations from. Through creating this policy, we are taking away the ambiguity of having different boards allow different types of sponsorships for our services. Rather, by creating a standard, we are pre-establishing what types of sponsors align with the MSU mandate. As a follow up component, I will also be working on developing sponsorship package for each of our service that can be utilized when reaching out to these external businesses to help uphold a high level of professionalism. By having these service specific, MSU branded packages, I hope that services will be even more prosperous in their attempts at acquiring sponsors!  |
| Benefits | * Through creating this policy, we remove the need for individual board members to express their personal thoughts on what groups we should and should not allow to sponsor our services.
* Once the sponsorship packages are created, they can be used for years to come, with only minor date changes needing to be made annually!
 |
| Difficulties | * From initial research it seems other universities do not currently have service sponsorship policies and thus we made not have anything to model ours after.
 |
| Long-term implications  | * This will ensure we have a policy to back up decisions made in regard to service sponsors and additionally, we will be upholding a strong professional standard with the MSU branded packages.
 |
| How? |  July/August* Discuss with Wooder, Paula and VP Admin to establish a reasonable timeline.
* Being research on pre-existing policies at comparable institutions for something to potential model after.
* Reach out to AVP Finance and AVP IG as potential leads on this project.
* Outreach to PTM’s to gain a list of events they are hosting this year that could potentially be sponsored.

August* Begin a draft of the policy.
* Share draft and updates with small working group (VP Finance, VP Admin, Wooder, Paula, AVP Finance, AVP IG).
* Begin design on service packages

September* Finalize draft of policy.
* Bring to EB for approval.
* Try to finish service packages by end of September.

October* Services are able to utilize packages to reach out to potential sponsors/donors that comply with the service sponsorship policy.
 |
| Partners | VP Administration, Anika & TBDDirector of Marketing and Communications, Michael WooderManager & Creative Director; The Underground, Paula ScottAVP Finance, Chen Liu AVP Internal Governance, Michelle Brown |

Objective #5:
Develop Service Sponsorship Policy & Packages Status: In-Progress

For this objective, there need to be more conversations had around logistics. I think this would make an excellent small summer project for my successor and I plan on including a more detailed write up about what considerations would need to go into these conversations. Some of the logistical pieces include, creating a policy or amending an existing one to provide more language surrounding what sponsorships/donations we will and will NOT accept, who gets to make this decision, should sponsorships/donations be optional or mandated for services, should there be limitations for how services are to spend their donations/sponsorships (i.e. for a specific event, or however they choose) etc. As you can likely see, there are quite a few considerations that need to be addressed. I do believe this is still feasible and that it will help services receive more sponsorships/donations, I just also think it is important to understand all the variables at play first!

Enhancing Business Units

General

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| Objective 6 | Adhere to Health & Safety Guidelines |
| Description | With the constantly evolving COVID-19 outbreak, we need to ensure that all of our business units are able to adapt and abide by the new health and safety guidelines that have been put in place by public health and the government. I will ensure that all of our business units are:* Restricting the Number of People in Each Business Unit at a Given Time to allow for physical distancing;
* Place Hand Sanitizing Stations at the Entrance of each Business Unit;
* Ensure the consistent Cleaning of High Touch Surfaces;
* Place appropriate Signage in each unit to ensure Physical Distancing is occurring;
* And work with University to establish consistent regulations on either mandating the wearing of masks or highly recommend them in spaces on campus.

I will also work with the rest of the Board of Directors to ensure we updating these guidelines and keeping all of our staff informed of any changes that are made and ensuring they feel comfortable in the workplace.  |
| Benefits | * Ensures that we are upholding health standards and are keeping both our staff & students safe.
 |
| Difficulties | * Managing people can always present its own set of difficulties so it will be important to be consistent and ensure customers are following the posted signage & maintaining physical distancing.
 |
| Long-term implications  | * While the hope is that this will only be an interim change until the pandemic settles down, it will allow us to improve upon of health and safety standards as an organization.
 |
| How? |  June* Do a walk-through of each business unit to determine how to best manage the flow of traffic.
* Begin discussions with full-time staff on how we can ensure they feel safe at work.

July* Begin to purchase appropriate safety barriers/plexy glass, hand sanitizer, sign decals etc.

August* Install safety barriers & decals.
* Do a practice run through of each space to spot any potential issues/possible problems ahead of time.
* Do a soft open for most of our business units to again see any concerns that may arise & address them.

September* Open business units and be prepared to adapt to the changing environment.
 |
| Partners | General Manager, John McGowanPresident, Giancarlo Da-RéFull Time Staff – Business Units |

Objective#6:
Adhere to Health & Safety Guidelines Status: Ongoing

In the current climate of COVID-19, it is important that we are continuously assessing our operations and business units to ensure we are complying with the health and safety guidelines put forth by public health Canada and the Canadian government. This continues to be an ongoing objective across all of our departments and units. As of Tuesday, February 16th Hamilton has been out of lock down and moved back into the Red Zone. With this being said, the MSU office continues to remain closed to visitors as access to MUSC is still very limited and consists of predominately essential workers. Additionally, we are continuing to discuss timelines and the feasibility of reopening our various business units. Decisions are very dependent on public health recommendations, campus restrictions, and level of COVID cases in and around the McMaster community, as well as looking at the financial viability of our units and what that could look like with reopening the services or continuing to have them closed.

This objective will need to be continued into my successors term and continued to be evaluated on an on-going basis to ensure we are adhering to public health guidelines.

TwelvEighty & The Grind

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| Objective 7 | Develop a Plan for the Long-Term Financial Stability of TwelvEighty |
| Description | For the past several years, everyone that comes into the role of VP Finance is faced with the concern that TwelvEighty is consistently running in a deficit and what should be done to help fix this? While I believe the creation of The Grind was an amazing idea, I think the next step is planning a future direction for TwelvEighty, and one that better suits the needs and wants of students. This year, I plan to work with the TwelvEighty Full-Time Staff, The MSU President (Giancarlo), and the General Manager (John), to develop a long-term plan to ensure the financial Stability of TwelvEighty. The first step in developing this long-term plan is to gain student input. What do students want out of the space? What food offerings are they most attracted to? What currently stops them from regularly engaging with or eating at TwelvEighty? I think once we gain the student input on these sorts of questions, we will be able to have a more concrete direction for where we want the business to go. From there, I will run a business case to further analyze the feasibility of this change and the longevity to ensure the initial rebranding & changes would be financially viable. As the current global climate is not the most financially stable, I plan to develop a multi-year plan that can begin to be incorporated once the organization is financially able to, and once students return to campus and we are able to guarantee more revenue generation. From an initial look at the TwelvEighty menu and recognizing the current dissonance between the much more modern “The Grind” and the TwelvEighty space, I hope to explore the possible shift away from a Pub & Grill and towards more of an Eatery & Café style restaurant. This seems to align more with what students are engaging with at The Grind, and a similar environment could be carried over into the TwelvEighty Space.  |
| Benefits | * Creating a plan for the longevity & Financial Stability of TwelvEighty.
* Aligning our service offerings to the student needs & wants.
* Gaining Student input before making large financial decisions.
 |
| Difficulties | * There is always a chance that a rebrand could only be successful for a short period of time. To combat this, I want to run both a student survey to gain input directly from our clientele, as well as run a Business Case to ensure the back-end Financials are viable.
 |
| Long-term implications  | * Creating a space that students want to utilize and enjoy.
* Aligning our services with what our students want and need.
* Reducing the deficit, the TwelvEighty is currently experiencing and has been experiencing for years.
 |
| How? | August* Create a student survey about their experiences with TwelvEighty, what they enjoy, what they wish it offered etc.

September* Run the survey (keep open for about two weeks), and potentially incentivize it with a TwelvEighty 2GO gift card to ensure more responses.
* Compile information and look for trends.

October* From the trends discovered, run a business case to see what the feasibility of the new model could be.
* Gain Full-Time Staff & Board Input.

November/December* Present results of Business case & survey to SRA and encourage discussion.

January* Begin crafting a multi-year plan on how this new business model/rebrand could be incorporated.
* Bring in Full-Time Staff i.e. John McGowan into the planning of the rebrand to ensure that there are full-time staff involved to help with consistency over the years and ensure plan is carried on.

February/March/April* Present plan to SRA and receive approval.
* Begin initial phases of plan and set up successor to continue forward into the 2021-2022 year.
 |
| Partners | General Manager, John McGowanPresident, Giancarlo Da-RéTwelvEighty Full Time StaffTwelvEighty Part Time Student StaffStudents (Feedback Survey) |

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

As previously mentioned, Adit Dixit from the commerce caucus and some of his classmates from Commerce 3MA3 did market research on TwelvEighty and gained student input regarding what they liked and what they are looking for out of a campus restaurant. The research was done super well and a big thank you to those folks!

Aside from the market research, I continue to have biweekly check-in meetings with our Food & Beverage team to discuss possible next steps for TwelvEighty. The Food & Beverage team continue to do an incredible job given the precarious situation we are currently experience in not knowing when we will be able to reopen and welcome students back. At our bi-weekly meetings we have been having great discussions surrounding how other student unions have been managing their Food & Beverage operations pre & during COVID which has been very insightful. We will continue to discuss with the Food & Beverage team and gain their insight as to what the long term plan for TwelvEighty will look like moving forward.

Due to the continued financial challenges in our food & beverage operations, the MSU has begun the process of developing a Request for Proposal (RFP) to solicit interest on a partnership with a third party to lead the food and beverage operations on behalf of the MSU. The goal would be to continue to provide a great student experience, while providing student employment and mitigate departmental losses. This is one of the few avenues we are exploring regarding both TwelvEighty’s short term and long term financial stability.

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| Objective 8 | Revamp Menu & Increase Plant Based Options |
| Description | Upon first glance at both the TwelvEighty menu and the associated revenue generated from each item, I recognized that besides a few key menu favourites and some new additions added last year, the rest of the items are quite stagnant and do not sell. With this being said, I believe that it is long overdue to incorporate more healthy, nutritious, and plant-based options, while still offering crowd favourites like our chicken fingers! I will work with Stu, the Kitchen Manager and Kornelia the Assistant Kitchen Manager to create a new and exciting menu that is more focused on 2GO. This focus will ensure that the menu items travel well and taste and look as good in a travel container as they do on a plate.  |
| Benefits | * New and exciting menu items!
* Catering to a larger audience by offering a wider array of food rather than the previous typical pub & grill items.
 |
| Difficulties | * Learning to adapt to the student wants & needs and being willing to change menu items. Sometime we get too set in our ways and I believe we need to combat this and be willing to adapt to the changing student environment.
 |
| Long-term implications  | * Providing our chefs with more freedom of expression and being able to help create the menu often allows for more pride in their work!
* Keeping our menu new, interesting and aligning with the students wants will hopefully attract more business & repeat customers.
 |
| How? |  June* Task Stu & Kornelia to create a draft menu for Fall 2020.
* While fall is likely to be reduced operations, limiting menu to about 15 items to reduce waste of items not being ordered or used.

July* Provide any feedback on menu.
* Get in contact with food providers to being pricing out ingredients.
* Set menu prices for new menu.

August/September* Begin ordering ingredients.
* Gage reaction to new menu items.

October/November/December* Depending on Reaction, decide if menu needs any changes incorporated for Winter 2021.
* Additionally, depending if classes are in person or online, potentially decided on remaining items for the menu & print copies of new menu.

March* Review how new menu went for the year.
* Create any recommendations based on the years success for the next VP Finance.
 |
| Partners | TwelvEighty Kitchen Manager, Stu GoldTwelvEighty Assistant Kitchen Manager, Kornelia PalczewskiGeneral Manager, John McGowan |

Objective #8:
Revamp Menu & Increase Plant Based Options Status: Completed

For this objective, I began conversations with the TwelvEighty Kitchen Manager, Stu, and Assistant Kitchen Manager, Kornelia, back in late May/Early June and they immediately began experimenting at home with new recipes! From there we worked through the menu to compare our costs of ingredients and priced the whole menu. The new menu is amazing and includes an increase in the number of vegetarian and vegan options available. Additionally, this menu has been crafted to work extremely well for our 2GO operations, but when the time comes, are just as amazing when dinning in. We also created an online ordering tool for TwelvEighty to allow students, faculty and staff to order their food online to greatly reduce the amount of time they need to spend in the space!

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| Objective 9 | COVID-19 Interim Reduced Operations & Shift to Take Out |
| Description | As briefly touched upon in the menu revamp, with Fall 2020 being virtual for most students, we are likely going to need to reduce our business unit operations to align with the amount of use they will experience. With dinning in not being an option, I will work with our TwelvEighty Full-Time Staff & John McGowan to create reduced hours of operation for the Fall, as well shift TwelvEighty to being take out only. Thankfully last years Vice-President Finance, Alex Johnston already put in place TwelvEighty 2GO, and for the fall 2020 we are able to utilize this existing model and expand its offerings to suit the student need. With this large focus on 2G0, I plan to work with our TwelvEighty Full-Time Staff to evaluate the feasibility of creating an online ordering system, so that customers are able to order the food virtually and come by the 2GO stand to pick it up. This will help reduce the amount of contact between staff and customers and will additionally make ordering food even easier! As all of our menu items will be geared towards take-out, we will be able to ensure everything is take out friendly. |
| Benefits | * Limit the amount of time customers need to spend in the space waiting for food.
* Make ordering more accessible through creation of online ordering.
 |
| Difficulties | * With reduced operations comes reduced revenue.
* Potential costs associated with an online ordering platform.
 |
| Long-term implications  | * If the online ordering system works well, it can be used in the future as well.
 |
| How? |  June/July* Create a plan for the Fall operations, what are the reduced hours going to be? How many staff can we have working at one time? How many customers can we have safely in the space at one time?
* Evaluate associated costs with maintaining an online ordering platform

August/September/October* Be willingly and ready to adapt to the changing demand and need of students.
* If initial reduced hours are not long enough, look into potentially extending hours.
 |
| Partners | General Manager, John McGowanTwelvEighty Full Time Staff |

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

For this objective up until the provincial wide lockdown (end of Fall 2020 Term), we had successfully reduced our operations in accordance with what was feasible and aligned with Public Health Guidelines, as well as offered only take out. However, even with the provincial wide lockdown lifted, Hamilton is still in the Red Zone, and there are still large restrictions for who is allowed on campus. This continues to be a point of discussion in our bi-weekly Food & Beverage check-ins to determine what our next steps should be.

These discussions will need to continue over the next month and into the summer term as well due to the constantly changing environment.

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| Objective 10 | Student Staff & Student-Centred Culture |
| Description | While there will be reduced staff due to reduced hours & operations (no dine in), it will be important to ensure our staff are doing their best to engage with students and make them feel like they are still a part of the McMaster community even at a distance! Distance makes it difficult to connect and having student staff & familiar faces (Even behind masks) reach out and chat to our students to make them feel connected is so important. I will connect the student staff from The Grind that have been managing their social media channels to the student staff from TwelvEighty, for insight and tips on how to translate a similar energy and focus over onto the TwelvEighty socials. |
| Benefits | * A more cohesive environment between The Grind & TwelvEighty.
* A more welcoming environment with TwelvEighty.
* Helping students feel connected even at a distance.
 |
| Difficulties | * Engagement on social medias can always be a challenge.
* Trying to build a relationship with students through the TwelvEighty socials as it hasn’t really been explored previously.
 |
| Long-term implications  | * Fostering a more inclusive and welcoming environment at TwelvEighty!
 |
| How? |  August/September* Work with the TwelvEighty Restaurant Manager, Gabby to connect student staff from The Grind, with student staff from TwelvEighty.
* Determine who will be primarily responsible for posting on the TwelvEighty Instagram stories (similar to that of The Grind).
* Start posting and engaging with students through questions, polls etc
 |
| Partners | TwelvEighty Restaurant Manager, Gabby RempalaTwelvEighty Student StaffThe Grind Student Staff |

Objective #10:
Original: Student Staff & Student-Centered Culture 🡪Revised: Online Student Staff & Student-Centered Culture Status: Ongoing

This objective was originally meant to work to create a student culture within our business units to ensure students always feel welcome at The Grind, TwelvEighty and Union Market. Unfortunately, due to the nature of this year, this in person student culture is much more difficult to emulate and thus I have switched this priority to be more focused on our online/social platforms.

While TwelvEighty, The Grind & UM remain closed, Gabby, Stu and Kornelia have been working behind the scenes to ensure that our fun, food & beverage presence is still there on our social media! The team has been working to put on fun giveaways, as well as film more cooking with Chef Stu videos, to outreach to students and encourage them to try new recipes! These videos have been doing quite well and the Food & Beverage team are looking for ways to partner with other services and groups on campus to continue to uphold their student centered presence in the online environment.

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| Objective 11 | Increase Sustainability Initiatives Within TwelvEighty & The Grind |
| Description | Currently at TwelvEighty our 2GO containers are the only single use item that we provide that is fully compostable. Everything else, because it either comes in contact with food or was not recyclable in the first place, must be disposed of in the garbage. With our operations being take out only for the Fall semester, everything will need to be single use/disposable and thus I will be incorporating more compostable single use items at TwelvEighty and The Grind. I will work with our TwelvEighty Full Time Staff and our product suppliers to source biodegradable, compostable single use straws, cutlery, cups, lids and paper take out bags. This will significantly cut down on our single use plastic consumption and thus reduce the amount of waste we are producing as an organization. In the longer term, we also have the for here mugs ready for when The Grind is able to reopen at its full capacity and have guests dine in. In meantime, this shift to sustainable single use items is the most environmentally friendly initiative we can incorporate while also be conscious of the pandemic and straying away mugs. |
| Benefits | * Reduced our environmental impact and is sustainable.
 |
| Difficulties | * Ensuring our supplier can source all of the compostable single use items we are looking for.
 |
| Long-term implications  | * This initiative can carry on for years to come and over the course of several years will have an even greater positive impact in our shift away from harmful, single use plastics.
 |
| How? |  July* Contact supplier to ensure they are able to source all of the compostable items we are looking for.
* Purchase items and ensure quality is also what we were hoping for (i.e. cups can handle hot liquids etc)

August/September* Phase out any remaining, old single use products that are not compostable.
* Once old inventory is depleted, cycle in new, compostable items, and ensure proper signage outlining compostable nature as well as bins students can dispose of items into are present.

September/October* Work with President & University Facility Services, to ensure there are enough compost bins in and around campus to align with both our shift to compostable items as well as hospitalities on going use of compostable packaging.
 |
| Partners | TwelvEighty Kitchen Manager, Stu GoldTwelvEighty Restaurant Manager, Gabby RempalaPresident, Giancarlo Da-RéHospitality ServicesPackaging Suppliers |

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

For this objective, back in the Fall 2020 term, I confirmed with our TwelvEighty Kitchen Manager, Stu, that our supplier is in fact able to source all biodegradable/compostable single use packaging (i.e. cups, lids, bags, takeout containers etc). As we do still have stock of our current cups, cutlery etc. we are working through stock we had on hand first, as we felt that not utilizing these items in itself would be wasteful and not align with the sustainable practices we are trying to move towards. With this being said, I this objective is complete as we are ready to order the compostable items when we run out of our current stock!

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| Objective 12 | Implement Event Catering Packages |
| Description | While large gatherings are currently not safe to run, it provides us with the perfect opportunity to effectively develop event catering packages for when in-person activities are able to return! These packages that will be advertised online (when safe to do so) will make the booking process much easier. I will work with the TwelvEighty Full Time Staff to establish three different packages (to target different sized groups with varying budgets), list the price, how many people it caters to, the length of the event, and the food & beverage that is included. Additionally, recognizing that some groups may not find a package that suits their needs perfectly, we will include a small note that customizations are possible, and list who they should contact for further details. Additionally, with the current pause on large events and gatherings, we will be able to make graphics in advance, that outline what each package provides so that we are ready with promotional material when the time comes! Likely in the Winter 2021 term, we can also begin reaching out to faculties, clubs, and societies about the opportunity of booking our space. |
| Benefits | * Creates and promotes an additional revenue source for TwelvEighty.
* Pre-created packages allow for a simpler booking process that will encourage more groups to choose our space due to how easy it is to book.
* As we have a large space that can be divided up into smaller spaces, we have the ability to cater to various groups or differing sizes.
 |
| Difficulties | * Determining fair prices that will attract clubs, societies and faculties. To try and diminish this difficultly, I hope to include Jenna, the Clubs Admin in on conversations to determine a fair price for clubs to pay, and what sort of food they may be looking for.
 |
| Long-term implications  | * Sets a standard for event booking and pricing of our space as previously nothing was established, and pricing varied dramatically.
 |
| How? |  August/September* Begin discussions with John & Gabby about what these three packages could look like.
* Determine what size of group, how much time & food is generally requested from previous events as an indicator.
* Determine prices for the three packages that allow for a decent profit margins.

October/November* Work with Comms Officer to create graphics that outline each package and what it includes.
* Incorporate event packages onto new MSU website under TwelvEighty. Add in a note that says we are currently not hosting events due to COVID-19.

January/February* Potentially advertise event packages (depending on state of pandemic and allowance of gatherings).
 |
| Partners | General Manager, John McGowanTwelvEighty Restaurant Manager, Gabby RempalaTwelvEighty Kitchen Manager, Stu GoldClubs Administrator, Jenna CourageCommunications Officer, Elizabetta Paiano |

Objective #12:
Implement Event Catering Packages Status: In-Progress

This objective is going very well so far! I have been working with Stu, Kornelia & Gabby to do more research into what other student unions & university catering services offer to get a better understanding of the current market. The team has complied a ton of information and we are currently working our way through the research to determine what would make the most amount of sense for TwelvEighty and our clientele.

There is no set timeline on this objective due to the uncertainty of when we will be able to return to campus/in-person events, however, now that we have all of the research available to us, it will just be choosing which options we think would work best and pricing them for a menu!

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| Objective 13 | Incentivize Students to Eat at TwelvEighty |
| Description | Last year the MSU switched from its partnership with Coke to being partnered with Pepsi and thus we were provided with an amount of funding by Pepsi to purchase incentive prizes to give away to our customers! While this is not the top priority for the Fall 2020 as operations are reduced to only take out, and we are trying to stray away from encouraging students to actively come to compass. This will be an amazing initiative to run when in person activities are safe to return (potentially winter 2021). With this being said, I will work with the Gabby to determine what sort of prize/incentive we may wish to raffle off to students, then we will work with the comms team to create graphics for promo when the time comes. |
| Benefits | * Prizes & raffles work well as incentives for students to visit and eat at TwelvEighty.
* Students will come in to enter the raffle by making a purchase and be exposed to all of our new menu items. This will hopefully create returning customers upon having a positive experience eating at TwelvEighty.
 |
| Difficulties | * Incentives sometimes draw in a crowd for a short period of time, but we need to find a way to keep the customers coming back. To combat this, I think that our refreshed menu will make our customers more eager to try our new items, and thus keep them coming back.
 |
| Long-term implications  | * There are not many long-term implications with this incentive. Unless we choose to do smaller, bi-weekly or monthly giveaways, this will act as a short-term objective to encourage our students to try TwelvEighty.
 |
| How? |  November/December* Work with Gabby to determine what incentive we wish to purchase for students.
* Determine if we would rather run one larger raffle/draw or having smaller contests that are spread across the second semester.

January/February* If things return to in-person, we will run the giveaway.
 |
| Partners | TwelvEighty Restaurant Manager, Gabby RempalaCommunications Officer, Elizabetta PaianoPepsi Co. |

Objective #13:
Original: Incentivize Students to Eat at TwelvEighty
Revised: Create the MSU Courtesy Card that includes on campus & off campus discounts Status: Complete

This objective has been quite difficult to implement especially given Winter 2021 has remained online. Having said this, I have worked with our AVP Finance Chen, and The Underground to create MSU Courtesy cards for all of our Full-Time & Part-Time Staff, as well as executives & volunteers. This discount card provides discounts both at our business units on campus for those that need to come to campus, but also extends to some local Hamilton businesses to encourage our staff and volunteers to support local as much as possible!

I think this project should be continued into the next year as it is important to support both on and off campus restaurants, and provide our amazing volunteers, and staff with tokens of appreciation.

The Union Market

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| Objective 14 | COVID-19 Interim Reduced Operations at Union Market |
| Description | On a ‘normal’ day, UM can become quite busy and experience high traffic for their best-selling coffee and bagels. With this being said, in order to help reduce the traffic through the space, I will work with FT staff at TwelvEighty & The Grind as well as our General Manager to move the UM coffee & Bagels downstairs to The Grind. UM Coffee & Bagels will still be available at The Grind for the same price but will be prepared by a staff member to minimize high traffic touch surfaces & eliminate the need of self service. This will allow UM to operate as a “convenience store” that has snacks, drinks and grab & go meals prepped by our chefs at TwelvEighty! We will ensure the space has lots of visible signage to ensure customers comply with the one-way traffic route to ensure 6 feet of physical distance between everyone. With the removal of the coffee station & bagel station, we will be able to ensure physical distancing and move product around to better suit the space.  |
| Benefits | * Lowers the amount of high touch surfaces.
* Ensures customers are maintain physical distancing.
* Ensures customers still have access to the same great product at the same affordable price, while upholding strict health and safety guidelines to keep everyone safe.
 |
| Difficulties | * Making sure that our normal clientele know that the UM coffee and bagels are still available just in a different location.
* May lower the general foot traffic in Union Market but hop to combat this but ensuring there are delicious and quick ‘grab-and-go’ meals available in the UM cooler that were freshly prepped at TwelvEighty!
 |
| Long-term implications  | * This model will continue to be effective and allow for proper physical distancing to occur until we are able to revert back to our original layout.
 |
| How? | June/July/August* Do a walk-through of Union Market and The Grind to determine how the product can be shifted around.
* Contact our cooler providers to see if we can request mini fridges that can fit on top of the UM coffee counters in an effort to open up the entrance more to ensure physical distancing.
* Evaluate what the best layout is for the store.
* Discuss and decide on what the reduced hours of operation will look like to start in Fall 2020.

September/October* See how well Union Market is doing without the coffee and bagels present.
* Reevaluate hours of operations if needed.

December/January/February* Depending on what the Winter 2021 term will be, reevaluate having coffee and bagels in The Grind or bringing them back up to UM.
* Determine if any form of self service is okay to do.
* Make changes as necessary.
 |
| Partners | General Manager, John McGowanTwelvEighty Restaurant Manager, Gabby RempalaTwelvEighty Kitchen Manager, Stu Gold |

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

As mentioned above, we are continuing to discuss timelines and the feasibility of reopening our various business units. As Hamilton is currently in “Control”/ Red Zone, there are still large restrictions in place for who is able to visit campus. Decisions are very dependent on public health recommendations, campus restrictions, and level of COVID cases in and around the McMaster community, as well as looking at the financial viability of our units and what that could look like with reopening the services or continuing to have them closed.

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| Objective 15 | Increase Video Promotion |
| Description | Historically our business units have not been widely promoted to our student population and this year I plan to work with the Comms Department to develop multiple promotional videos that can be used to showcase our business units to students. Specifically, Union Market should be more widely promoted as the most affordable place on campus to purchase coffee, snacks and grab and go meals. Again, another point more relevant for later in the Fall 2020 or Winter 2021, but a lot of the backend work can be completed in advance so that the promotional material is ready whenever we choose to release! |
| Benefits | * Having promotional material for our business units will hopefully raise awareness of these services to students that previously didn’t know they existed or didn’t know what they offered.
* Promotional videos can be used year after year, especially when directed to first year students as informational videos.
 |
| Difficulties | * Trying to make our business units seem interesting and eye catching in a video may present some difficulties.
* Trying to find new and interesting way to engage with students so that we don’t saturate the video platform.
 |
| Long-term implications  | * As mentioned, having these promotional videos made allows us to reuse them year after year with small tweaks to hopefully appeal to the new incoming first years.
 |
| How? | September/October/November* Work with the comms department to take videos of Union Market so that they can compile them into a video.
* Provide direction on what we want the video to accomplish.

December/January* Have comms edit video.
* Release when ready/safe to promote the space.
 |
| Partners | Communications Officer, Elizabetta PaianoMedia Production Coordinator, Adit Dixit |

Objective #15:
Original: Increase Video Promotion for Union Market
Revised: Capture footage at Union Market when safe to do so for future promotions Status: On Hold

For this objective there are two different ways that I can see it going given the current circumstances. The first, is collecting some videos of the space to highlight the safety precautions that have been implemented and ensuring the target messaging behind the video is very much focused towards students need to be on campus for class, or staff and faculty that are required to be on campus opposed to the general undergraduate population. This idea would highlight UM as a place where students can safely, and quickly come grab a snack, drink or a ‘grab & go’ item that is made at TwelvEighty daily. The other option for this, is to film some videos that can be utilized as promotional pieces once restrictions are lifted. This would allow for our communications department to have extra video content of the space, that they can edit and promote in the future. Due to the current lockdown, I am putting this objective on pause to ensure that health & safety is our top priority.

This is potentially a project that my successor could tackle in the summer months should these choose ☺

The Underground

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| Objective 16 | COVID-19 Interim Reduced Operations |
| Description | As mentioned for the other Business Units, it is imperative that we evaluate how operations can continue to function for Fall 2020 given the predominant shift to online/virtual distance learning. Look at a potential reduction in hours (similar to all other business units) to compensate for the significantly lower number of students on campus. Determine safe ways to distance students from one another when coming in to print schoolwork. We still want to ensure that students have access to printing services should they need them, but I believe with the current climate it is safe to look at a reduction in hours for the front of house.  |
| Benefits | * We are able to reduce the front of house hours, while maintaining a competitive back of house operations that can be more geared towards graphic design, website design and other digital offerings.
 |
| Difficulties | * Determining peak hours that we wish to stay open for printing may be difficult as this may differ from a normal year.
 |
| Long-term implications  | * This will provide us with time to reevaluate the what digital offerings we want The Underground to provide and whether there is a demand to expand our offerings.
 |
| How? |  July/August* Do a walk through with John and Paula to establish how we can maintain physical distancing within the front-end space.
* Determine what hours we hope to have the front-end operations open to accommodate for students that will still utilize the service.

September/October/November/December* Be willing and able to adjust hours/operations should we notice a need to extend or reduce hours.
* Determine a strategy for Winter 2021 based on whether we return to in-person or online learning.
 |
| Partners | Manager & Creative Director; The Underground, Paula ScottGeneral Manager, John McGowan |

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

While the front end of The Underground has remained closed for the past ten months, the team has continued to operate and fulfill all orders they receive. As there does not seem to be an overwhelming need for the service to students that are on campus, we plan to continue forward with operating our backend of the service and fulfilling any requests that come their way!

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| Objective 17 | Contract External Advertising & Sales Position |
| Description | Upon starting my term in office, one of the first decisions that was made was to contract an external advertising and sales position to help eliminate large upfront overhead costs associated with a full-time employee. This decision continues to make sense during the current COVID climate as the contracted position is based purely in commission and only costs the MSU financially, if an ad is sold. Additionally, this allows time to revaluate what the most effective strategy and employment structure is going forward for The Underground as a whole. |
| Benefits | * No large upfront or overhead costs.
* Allows us to still sell ad space.
 |
| Difficulties | * Potentially a lack in motivation to sell depending on the individual.
* Potentially less consistency with external contractors.
 |
| Long-term implications  | * Provides us with time to establish the most effective structure for advertising and sales within the Underground for years to come.
 |
| How? | * Contract advertising and sales position
* Provide support where needed.
* Ask for updates on how sales are going.
* Begin to discuss what the future of this position should be.
 |
| Partners | Manager & Creative Director; The Underground, Paula ScottGeneral Manager, John McGowan |

Objective #17:
Contract External Advertising and Sales Position Status: Completed

The objective was in the works of being completed when I entered the role, and we have had Vlad in the contracted position for the past 10months! This has been very beneficial especially during the current COVID-19 climate as there has been a reduction in print advertising through the Sil, however Vlad has been able to dedicate his efforts more towards the online advertisements on the Sil’s new website. Having this position commission based ensures the MSU is only paying a percentage of each sale, and thus eliminates overhead costs.

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| Objective 18 | Evaluate Potential of Establishing an Online Ordering System |
| Description | With everything moving to a virtual format for the fall semester, this seems like the perfect opportunity to explore the possibility of creating an online platform for The Underground that will allow students and businesses alike to make orders & purchases online, and then come by the shop to pick up during open hours or have material shipped at an additional cost. The increased online presence will make it easier to limit the number of students in the space using the self-serve printers at a given time & will hopefully help reduce the number of miss-printsAdditionally, an online domain will make it easier to attract external businesses as they will be able to view all of our service offerings online before inquiring. |
| Benefits | * Increase accessibility and ease of ordering products.
* Make it easier to view current offerings and preview your created product online before purchasing.
* Appeal more to external businesses & clientele through having a website and appearing like a more legitimate, competitively priced media center.
 |
| Difficulties | * Costs associated with having an online platform/website.
* Promoting the new website and working out any kinks.
* Ensuring the website has all of the capabilities we wish it to have i.e. previewing product, making payments etc.
 |
| Long-term implications  | * Setting up an online platform for The Underground will make the business unit more appealing to external clientele and hopefully help us more easily outreach to potential, new clients.
 |
| How? |  August/September* Begin conversations with Paula about the potential of making a website dedicated to The Underground.
* Look into feasibility of making it an offshoot of the new MSU website.
* Explore the associate costs of the website with the capabilities we hope it to have.
* Look into potential website designs & layouts we think align with The Underground’s branding.

September/October/November* Begin work on the back end of building the website or contracting it out to be built.
* Compile a list of offerings we currently have at The Underground that we will want included on the website.
* Draft up text that speaks to what The Underground is and what they do to put on the website.
* Look into how we could display mock-ups of customers products before they purchase them.

November/December/January* Begin testing the website to see how orders work be created and work out the logistics.
* Have a test group go through the website the evaluate the accessibility of the website.

January/February* Launch the website.
 |
| Partners | Manager & Creative Director; The Underground, Paula ScottGeneral Manager, John McGowanDirector of Marketing & Communications, Michael Wooder |

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

I am happy to say that all of the base work for The Undergrounds website has been done and the website is live (undergrounddesign.ca). While the team still hope to add additional components to the website that will make it more user friendly, and allow users to fully preview all of their work being ordering, it is an amazing first step and will drastically help in the future when we look to expand in the greater Hamilton community!

I believe there will be more time that can be dedicated to enhancing the website in the slower summer months. This is a project the incoming VP Finance could work with The Underground to complete.

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| Objective 19 | Build a Rapport with University Faculties & External Clientele |
| Description | Up until several years ago, The Underground had a very strong working rapport with the University and University Facilities, and would in tandem with MPS, would aid in creating, printing and supplying course ware packs, lab materials etc. With this being said, this year I plan to work to help rebuild this rapport to mutually help the University in their printing/media design needs, while also help provide revenue to a student-centred service. While this rapport was initially intended to be predominantly surrounding gaining contracts/jobs of printing various course materials, this is likely now no longer the focus as everything is switching to a more digital format. Having more open discussions with The Underground team & looking in the university/faculties to establish areas they may need support in could provide The Underground with additional business during the distance learning time. Additionally, outreaching to external Hamilton Businesses with various packages/offerings focused around digital outreach & marketing could also be a potential revenue source for The Underground as many companies are being forced to increase their online engagement as a result of COVID-19. |
| Benefits | * Could be mutually beneficial for both the university in gaining support, and for The Underground through gaining an additional revenue source.
* Outreaching to external businesses in this switch to digital formats could also gain The Underground more external clients, especially if we advertise our very competitive prices.
 |
| Difficulties | * The University may not have enough work warranting them hiring The Underground.
* Finding an effective way to outreach to Hamilton Businesses may prove difficult.
 |
| Long-term implications  | * If we are able to reestablish a working rapport with the university, they could continue to be a client for years to come.
* If we are able to reach out to Hamilton businesses and gain their trust, they may turn into returning clients.
 |
| How? | July/August* Reach out to Paula & University Admin to begin conversations surrounding potential work for The Underground should the university require any.

August/September/October* Outreach to local Hamilton businesses with all of our offerings and prices, as well as examples of our work.
* Look at the potential of utilizing the advertising and sales contract position to help us look for new clients. If it proves positive establish what the commission or incentive would be for each client brought to The Underground.
 |
| Partners | Manager & Creative Director; The Underground, Paula ScottGeneral Manager, John McGowanDirector of Marketing & Communications, Michael Wooder |

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

This objective will continue to be something that needs to be worked on moving forward. Building rapport is something that takes time and I am hoping to set up a conversation with Paula about what services we hope to highlight that we provide when having conversations with the university and external clientele. Additionally, once the website is to a point where we believe folks can fully preview their orders etc.

It has been even more challenging this year to develop rapport with folks from the university as we are missing that in-person component. With everything being even more scheduled now (i.e. hopping on a teams/zoom call to have a chat), it has been increasingly difficult to develop and build those connections necessary to complete this task.

|  |  |
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| Objective 20 | Develop a Plan for the Long-Term Financial Stability of The Underground |
| Description | Multimedia & digital platforms as a whole, are constantly changing and upgrading. With this being said, we need to ensure our service offerings are adapting to suit the wants and needs of our consumer/clientele base. I plan to evaluate the different services we currently offer, what the associated pros/cons are, as well as run a cost analysis (i.e. is the cost worth the revenue/service it provides) and establish a plan for how we want to proceed forward. For The Underground, I see an opportunity to work towards becoming a fully functioning digital media hub with more offerings & catering to more external clients to increase revenue generation. While this is definitely an end goal, I think it is important to work with our FT staff to establish a multi-year plan that will help us achieve this end result and do so in a viable way. |
| Benefits | * Creating a multi-year plan paves a direction for the service and outlines not only the end goal, but how to get there.
* Through reviewing our current offers and determining what services we wish to continue and being open to expanding our digital offerings, we are openly up a greater opportunity to appeal to external clients.
 |
| Difficulties | * Doing a cost analysis may come back with the most financial stable decision, but as a student service, we also need to effectively evaluate what service it is providing to students rather than simply looking at the finances.
 |
| Long-term implications  | * The long-term implications are creating a more effective and efficient media shop that serves not only students and MSU services, but also produces revenue through catering to external clientele.
 |
| How? | September* Review the revenue generation from the past 5 years to try and see any trends of services/offerings that seem to be increasing or decreasing in popularity.
* After looking at the usage of the service, evaluate the revenue generate vs. the expenses incurred.

October/November/December/January* From the trends discovered, begin developing a multi-year plan and what it could look like.
* Gain Full-Time Staff & Board Input.
* Bring in Full-Time Staff i.e. John McGowan into the planning of the rebrand to ensure that there are full-time staff involved to help with consistency over the years and ensure plan is carried on.

February/March/April* Present plan to SRA and receive approval.
* Begin initial phases of plan and set up successor to continue forward into the 2021-2022 year.
 |
| Partners | Manager & Creative Director; The Underground, Paula ScottGeneral Manager, John McGowanDirector of Marketing & Communications, Michael Wooder |

Objective #20:
Develop a Plan for the Long-term financial stability of the Underground Status: In-Progress

For this objective, I am continuing to discuss long term planning goals with Paula & Steph from the Underground to ensure any work that needs to carry forward in to the next academic year will do so. Paula, Steph and I have begun to set up weekly to bi-weekly meetings to ensure we are continuing to touch base about the planning. In February we posted the Graphic Designer role but did not find a successful candidate to fill the role. With this, I am touching base with the Underground team again this week to re-evaluate what the current needs are, and when we think is the best time to repost the designer role. As the team at the Underground are currently receiving an influx of orders from our services, we are contracting a short term, part time staff member to help aid in the design work and relieve some of the load from our current staff members.

As for the long-term plan itself, I hope to continue to work with Paula to establish feasible goals for the next few months as well as the next year to ensure the Underground is set up for success. Many of the tasks that will be carried over into the summer are, re-evaluating pricing as it has not been done in years, re-evaluating our service offerings to ensure nothing Is redundant to what is offered elsewhere on campus, etc.

Revenue Neutral Services

Compass

|  |  |
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| Objective 21 | Evaluate Purpose & Reimagine Compass Space |
| Description | Currently Compass is closed for the summer (As put forward by last year’s board of directors in response to reduced traffic on campus). Over the past four years, compass (a revenue-neutral space), have accumulated a deficit of $203,845. With this in mind, I believe it is important to note that a service that in its creation was meant to end every year revenue neutral, has continued to end with a deficit for the past several years. While this is no fault of its own, the services original mandate has become obsolete with the shift away from in person ticket purchasing to the online format. While evaluating compass’s purpose, I will ensure that we are still providing students, staff and visitors access to MSU info & HSR/Presto Support via other avenues.I plan to continue the closure for remainder of summer and reevaluate fall 2020 operations & the purpose of the service, especially knowing the significant decrease in students on campus. Additionally, I will work with John and Debbie to evaluate opportunities to “rent out” the compass space to university partners for the fall semester as it is already equipped with plexy glass and could be a prime location for campus tours or other university offerings. Additionally, when looking at reimagining the space, I believe there are many different opportunities available. As Compass is in a prime location, this could be an amazing space to convert into a bookable area for services, clubs or students to book for events, information tabling, or selling tickets. I will work with the current Compass manager to brainstorm how to best utilize the space. |
| Benefits | * Revaluating the service ensures we are adapting to the changing environment and needs of our students.
* In the interim, renting out the space to university partners would be making use of the space, while also potentially producing a slight form of revenue (depending on agreements).
* Reimagining a primely located space to better serve students.
 |
| Difficulties | * Ensuring we still have another avenue available to students to ask questions about HSR/presto as well as MSU information. To help combat this, I believe the new MSU website that will be AODA compliant will provide much more accessible information about the MSU. Additionally, HSR support could be taken on by a staff member answer any concerns or questions over the phone or via email.
 |
| Long-term implications  | * Long term, depending on how we wish to proceed, we could provide students & services with more additional bookable space in a prime location, as this has been something that is always in demand.
 |
| How? |  June/July/August* Begin discussions about Fall 2020 operations.
* Reach out to university stakeholders to gage interest in renting out the space.
* Make a decision about Fall 2020 operations.

August/September* Begin discussion on the future of Compass, what could the space be used for? How can we continue to offer HSR/Presto support etc.
* Start to make a plan for the future of compass

September/October* Draft up a plan on how we hope to change the space to better align with students’ values, and what the next steps will be.
* Propose the changes to the SRA to ensure we have student support

October/November/December* Begin work on space.

January/February* Depending on the amount of construction/changes required, open to services/students to book (when safe to do so).
 |
| Partners | General Manager, John McGowanCompass Manager, Debbie Good |

Objective #21:
Evaluate Purpose & Reimagine Compass Space Status: In-Progress

For this objective, the progress thus far has been to pause compass operations. With the current restrictions that are in place due to COVID-19, there is not a pressing need to have the space open and operational, as there are essentially no students on campus to serve. With this being said, the ‘help’ feature of Compass will be redirected to our website through the incorporation of a widget that allows students to enter a chat to ask any questions they may have.

As we remain online for Winter 2021 as well as Spring/Summer 2021, Compass will continue to be paused for in-person operations. I have been working with Debbie Good (Compass Manager) and Pauline Taggart (Network Administrator) to begin discussions surrounding the future of answering student/visitor inquires on campus and providing folks with the supports that Compass previously did. Debbie and Pauline have been working to research and outreach to university partners about the idea of potentially incorporating kiosks around campus that serve as a point to answer FAQ’s, show maps of campus, purchase tickets to events and more! This concept is still very much in the thought phase but something we are exploring.

The Silhouette

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| --- | --- |
| Objective 22 | Conduct a Review of the Service |
| Description | This past year (2019-2020) we experienced the Student Choice Initiative. While this has now been deemed unlawful and is no longer in affect, I think it is important to look at the response we received from students and work to ensure we are still providing service that students see value in. As The Silhouette and CFMU received the two highest opt out numbers (34.54% & 36.97% respectively), I plan to conduct a review of both media centered services and gain student input/feedback on how we can provide more value to students. As a student union, it is important that both us and our services are able to constantly adapt and change to suit the student need. I plan to work with the Silhouette Editor-and-Chief as well as the Silhouette Board of Publications to critically evaluate the service and gain student input on how we can improve the value of the service. With this being said, I hope to run a survey with students to gage what the currently like about the service as well as what they would like to see change. I believe it is important to gain constructive criticism so that our services are able to critically reflect and make the necessary changes that students are wishing to see. After the survey, we will bring the results to The Silhouette Board of Publications to ensure there is equal representative interpreting the survey results, and from there determine the next steps and create a list of recommendations.  |
| Benefits | * Ensuring that we critically reflect on our service offerings, and actively make improvements that students want to see.
 |
| Difficulties | * Engagement in surveys can be difficult and may be worth while providing a small incentive for students to complete so that we receive more responses.
 |
| Long-term implications  | * The long-term implication is that we will continue to critically reflect on all of our services to ensure that we continue to change and adapt with our student population. A willingness to adapt is important in this environment as student values and options can change annually as students graduate and new students enter university.
 |
| How? | * Work with John and Justin to create a survey that incorporates relevant, helpful questions.
* Run the survey questions through Sil Board of Pub for approval.
* Work with comms to create a graphic to accompany the survey.
* Release survey to students and allow a week for completion.
* Bring survey results back to Sil Board of Pub to interpret and create recommendations out of.
* Approve recommendations and ensure they are passed onto the Sil’s management team.

\*\*Timeline can vary. Determining if student survey should be first or second semester, as first could potentially sway the survey results as first years will not have a chance to engage with print Sil articles. Will work with the Silhouette Editor-and-Chief to determine an appropriate timeline and bring proposal to Sil Board of Pub for Approval\*\* |
| Partners | Silhouette Editor-and-Chief, Justin ParkerGeneral Manager, John McGowanSilhouette Board of PublicationsCommunications Officer, Elizabetta Paiano |
| Objective 23 | Increase Collaboration & Shared Resources with CFMU |
| Description | As mentioned in Objective 22, both The Silhouette and CFMU received the high opt-out rates from students in the 2019-2020 year due to SCI. I believe that this year there is an opportunity to evaluate the current employment structure of both media outlets and explore the feasibility of sharing some staffing resources across both services, as they already have a shared Digital Media Special position. This would help reduce some of the duplication in employment positions that is present within our organization and allow us to re-envision the future for collaboration across our services. Additionally, collaboration between these two services would improve student engagement and increase accessibility to students in regard to how they wish to receive news and information.  |
| Benefits | * Sharing resources across our services promotes more collaboration and creates a stronger cohesion.
* Additionally, I believe having more collaboration truly increases our reach to students as this would enable them to choose how they wish to receive their news/information (i.e. formally written, in a blog, podcast, radio show etc).
 |
| Difficulties | * While there is already one shared position across the two services, I think there may be some hesitancy in wanting to further the collaboration as both services may wish to have their own independence. This is an understandable concern, and I think that through having more conversations about the potential capacities they could share resources in, would help to alleviate some concerns.
 |
| Long-term implications  | * More collaboration across services for years to come!
 |
| How? |  August* Begin conversations with Sil & CFMU.
* Gage interest & willingness to collaborate.
* Work towards creating a plan on how the services can collaborate or share resources.

September/October* Bring a proposal to Sil Board of Pub & CFMU Board of Directors about potential collaboration/shared resources.

November/December* Work on how services will integrate the collaboration component or share resources

January/February* Test a collaborative piece/story and gage student reaction.
* Determine next students from here.
 |
| Partners | Silhouette Editor-and-Chief, Justin ParkerCFMU Full Time StaffGeneral Manager, John McGowan |

Objective #22 & #23:
Increase Collaboration & Shared Resources between the Sil & CFMU/Conduct a Review of the Silhouette Status: In-Progress

I have made the decision to amalgamate Objective #22 & Objective #23 as they are quite related to one another. Over the past few months, the Board, John McGowan (MSU General Manager) and myself have been having conversations with both The Silhouette (Through the Silhouette Board of Pub) and CFMU (through CFMU Board). The goal behind these conversations is to determine how we can continue to share resources across our two-service based, media outlets. Multi-media is an ever changing and evolving industry, and we are working with the Sil & CFMU team to try and determine how we can ensure our media outlets stay on top of the trends and continue to outreach and engage McMaster students & community members effectively.

In addition to the conversations at these boards, I have been conducting some market research and outreaching to other student union run newspaper & radio stations to gain a better understanding of how they are managing the changing environment. We have also had both the Sil team reach out to the Canadian University Press and the CFMU team has been reaching out to Canadian Radio-Television and Telecoms Commission (CRTC) for further insight.

Continue this work through the Ad-Hoc Campus Media Working Group!! ☺

Campus Events

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| Objective 24 | Create a Fund to Alleviate Financial Barriers to Attending Events |
| Description | When comparing the number of students that actively engage on our various social medias and the number of students that choose to attend events, there is a discrepancy. This year, I would like to evaluate the barriers that are currently in place for students, preventing them from attending events, and how the MSU as an organization can aid in making our events more accessible for everyone to enjoy. I plan to explore the idea of creating an application-based fund, that students who are experiencing financial barriers can apply to, and gain access to our events. While during the current COVID-19 outbreak we are not having any in-person events, I would like to further explore the possibility of establishing the fund and incorporating it into the Campus Events funding allocation for the 2021-2022 academic year. When in-person events are safe to run, I want to ensure that students that have a way of accessing our events should they be experiencing financial barriers. I hope to work with Trish to establish the logics of the application process so that we can set everything up to run a pilot initiative next year.  |
| Benefits | * Alleviating financial barriers from our events.
* Encouraging more students to attend our events.
* Providing support to students that require financial relief.
 |
| Difficulties | * Establishing what the application process may look like, how many people can apply to the relief, what is an appropriate pilot amount to put into the fund etc.
 |
| Long-term implications  | * Should the pilot prove successful and we notice a change in the number of students attending our events compared to engaging on socials, this could be permanently incorporated into the budget.
 |
| How? | * Begin discussions with Trish & further gage thoughts on the initiative.
* Establish an application process and potential criteria.
* Work out logistics of the fund.
 |
| Partners | Director of Campus Events, Trish VardonGeneral Manager, John McGowan |

Objective #24:
~~Original: Create a Fund to Alleviate Financial Barriers to Attending Events~~
Revised: Work with University to temporarily Reallocate SLEF (Student Life Enhancement Fund) money to help aids the current challenges that students are undergoing (as a result of COVID-19)
Status: Complete

BACKGROUND: As this year has had a tremendous impact on events, especially those that would normally take place in person; I shifted my focus to evaluating other ways we can provide students with financial aid. Given the unique nature of this year, I believe that many students are experiencing a greater need of Financial Aid and thus, I worked to shift my focus to find ways of providing additional financial aid for the 2020-2021 year.

The way in which I worked to complete this objective is through SLEF (Student Life Enhancement Fund). Generally, SLEF is about $100,000 that is provided by the University annually to help fund student ideas on how we can enhance student life on campus. While the normal timeline consists of idea submissions in October, vetting ideas in November, and voting on idea in and around February, most ideas are not actually implemented until the following academic year at the earliest. While many great ideas have come from this initiative, I believe that with the current challenge’s students are facing, there is a more effective way to enhance student life, than planning for another improvement to campus.

UPDATE: Over the past 3 months, I have worked with the SLEF Sub-Committee and the Student Services Advisory Committee to determine three pillars that we wish to put resources towards in order to enhance the student life during these unprecedented times.

The first was Financial Aid, with this we have allocated an additional $100,000 towards the MSU Emergency Bursary to continue to help aid those who need it most.

The Second is mental well-being, with this we have reached out and tasked the Student Wellness Centre with proposing an idea on how we can better support student’s mental well-being throughout the pandemic and beyond. Additionally, VP Admin, Graeme & VP Education, Ryan have been working with a group of SRA members to create their own proposal for increasing student’s mental well-being.

The third is connectivity and social interaction. With everything being online this year, we recognize that many students feel alone, and it is more challenging than ever to connect with others. I am happy to say that the SLEF funding helped Campus Events & Alumni put together the awesome three consecutive Friday “Light up the Night at Home” events back in January and February! These events went super well and had lots of student engagement.

CLUBS

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| Objective 25 | Assist Accounting Department & Clubs Admin Through Internal Changes |
| Description | With the hiring of the new, full time Clubs Accounting & Accounts Receivable Clerk for the coming year, as well moving all clubs accounts to be internally housed in the MSU, I plan to assist our accounting team as well as the club’s department through this transition and provide support however I can. In addition to preparing to move all clubs bank accounts internally, I will assist the Clubs Admin and the Accounting department in outlining the proceedings clubs will go through in regard to accessing their finances. I will also ensure that the Finance section of the club’s manual is accurate and that everyone is accounting is aware of the proceedings.  |
| Benefits | * Will ensure a smooth transition to internally housing accounts.
* The clubs manual will insurance clubs understand how to gain access to the funding and who their point of contact is.
 |
| Difficulties | * We are moving over 350 to be housed internally to the MSU. While not extremely difficult in nature, it is time consuming and I will ensure that our accounting team feel adequately supported throughout the transition!
 |
| Long-term implications  | * Moving the clubs internally and having this clubs manual for clubs to refer to will help the MSU have better oversight of clubs spending, and will help immensely with the transition from year to year as previously there were always issues with the change in signing authority.
 |
| How? |  June/July* Prep with Clubs Admin (Jenna) and Director of Finance (Sean) to better understand what the process is, and how I can be a support.
* Assist in the creation and editing of the clubs manual to ensure consistency and double check the financial proceedings pages.
* After clubs are ratified by the SRA, check in with accounting and provide the list of clubs that were approved.
* Begin the process of closing all external bank accounts and having clubs funds transferred to the MSU.

August* Continue/finish up process of transferring over clubs.
* Reach out to Accounting & Jenna to see if any additional support is required.
 |
| Partners | Clubs Administrator, Jenna CourageDirector of Finance, Sean DuncanAccounts Receivable Supervisor, Jason BarnesClubs Accounting & Accounts Receivable Clerk, Noel ErpeloAccounting Department |

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

For this objective, while it is complete, there is also a need to address any concerns that arise. While we have made it through the vast majority of this year, and have approved the changes to the clubs financial procedures policy and have solidified how the clubs banking will work, we are continuously evaluating the system to ensure we are making the process as effective and easy as possible. We are consistently receiving feedback from clubs and doing our best to meet everyone’s needs as well as improve our own systems to better serve the needs. With this, we will continue to work through any concerns that arise and do our best to address them!

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| Objective 26 | Work with VP Admin to advocate for reduced WW Levy, Levy Review & Implement NODA recommendations |
| Description | With this year being affected by COVID-19, Welcome Week 2020 will be happening in a virtual format. With the nature of a virtual format, it is well known that the associated costs for Welcome Week will be significantly reduced comparatively to other years. In light of this decrease in associated costs, I will work with the VP Admin to ensure this is accurately reflected in the Mandatory Welcome Week Fee that all first-year students pay. Additionally, for the past several years, many VP Admins and VP Finances have tried to advocate for a welcome week levy review as a whole. Over the course of just five days, welcome week costs over $750,000 and I will continue to advocate to the university the importance of being financially transparency and ensuring we review the fee. This year presents the perfect opportunity to review the fee as we are already experiencing a large change due to COVID-19 making Welcome week become virtual. It will be vital that all stakeholders are open and share their past welcome week budgets so that we can all gain a better understanding of how funding has previously been spent and how it should be spent in the coming years. Last year Welcome Week was reviewed by NODA, a North American orientation, retention and transition group for higher education. Currently, the VP Admin, alongside folks from the SSC and Residence Life, have been going through the recommendations and making proposed changes to our Welcome Week organizational structure. The changes they have come up with these past few months are quite substantial and will likely need some ongoing support as they move through approval and implementation process at the WWAC and SSAC levels |
| Benefits | * Ensuring that first year students are paying a fair amount for a virtual welcome week and that the fee accurately reflects the service they are receiving.
* Financial transparency is something we continue to strive for and will build trust between key welcome week stakeholders and make future planning and budget significantly easier.
 |
| Difficulties | * Potential pushback on receiving budget.
 |
| Long-term implications  | * The long-term implication is that the fee will be critically reviewed and recommendations will be made on what an appropriate fee will be for the following year. As seen through SCI last year, $105 or of the $130 fee was deemed essential. This shows there is room to lower the fee and still host a full welcome week.
 |
| How? |  May/June* Begin advocating and pushing to reevaluate the Welcome week 2020 fee.
* Work with Andrijana to determine a fair and feasible fee reduction.
* Propose reduction to WWAC. Upon approval, propose to SSAC.

July* Make necessary changes to MOU to reflect the updated & reduced fee.
* Continue to push and advocated for a levy review after the 2020 welcome week.

September/October* Begin Levy review.
* Work with Andrijana to compile all of the departmental budgets to gain a better understanding of where and how funding was previously spent.
* Bring to WWAC and establish a set of recommendations we wish to push forward to SSAC.
* Provide support to VP Admin with NODA Review Recommendations.

October/November* Bring levy recommendations to SSAC.
* Gain approval.

January* Ensure recommendations are incorporated in 2021-2022 Welcome Week MOU.
 |
| Partners | VP Administration, Anika & TBDWWAC |

Objective #26:
Work with VP Admin to advocate for reduced WW Levy, Levy Review & Implement NODA recommendations
Status: In-Progress/Complete

For this objective I have put complete & in-progress as I encompassed a few different components into one objective. Thus far we have successfully completed the reduced to the Welcome Week Levy fee for the 2020 year and couldn’t be happier! Additionally, at WWAC I have continued to advocate that the Welcome Week Fee be permanently lowered moving forward. With the uncertainty of how/if Welcome Week will operate in-person moving forward, I worked with the Welcome Week Advisory Committee to draft a memo to the Student Services Advisory Committee, with the recommendation that we permanently lower the WW fee to $100. This recommendation was approved by SSAC and will be implemented for the 2021-2022 year!

As for the levy review, myself, and Andrijana have completed reviewing the finances from this past WW 2020, and have had compiled the financial reports from the past three Welcome Weeks as well. We are meeting quite regularly now to continue the review and to begin working on the MOU for Welcome Week 2021. As for implementing the NODA Recommendations, this has been led by the VP Admin, but I will continue to provide support through my position on WWAC.

MSU PROJECTS

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| Objective 27 | Develop and Run a General MSU Information Campaign |
| Description | When looking through past MSU promotional material, I recognized that there did not seem to ever be a ‘general’ MSU campaign that just highlighted everything the MSU provides to students. With this being said, I thought it would be a very valuable resource to work with the President and the Communications Department to create and run a general MSU Information Campaign. The main promotional item for this campaign is a video outlining all of the different aspects of the MSU. The goal of this video and campaign as a whole is to provide students little snapshots of just how many different services and opportunities the MSU offers. From this video, intrigued students can explore the description section that will be attached that has a link to our new website, where more information on everything mentioned in the video can be found. Having a similar information campaign, annually, will increase our level of consistency as an organization, as well as reset student knowledge every year to optimize accessibility and transparency of information. |
| Benefits | * Students become more informed about the MSU and its offerings.
* Students begin to utilize more of the MSU services and get more involved.
* Students are exposed to this information annually and directed to our website that will provide more in-depth information on how to learn more.
 |
| Difficulties | * Ensuring that the video is exciting enough that students will want to watch it and share with their friends to help us expand our outreach.
 |
| Long-term implications  | * Having this video and campaign idea as an annual occurrence will help for the foreseeable future, as if any offerings change from year to year, small edits and updates can be made to reflect that.
 |
| How? |  May* Initial meeting with comms department, president and myself to establish the goal & brainstorm.
* Assigned responsibilities and duties.

June* Began to look for music to accompany video.
* Comms began to compile video snippets that could be used and incorporated to show off our services.
* Establish a timeline.
* Adit to begin work on storyboard that will depict the video sequence.

July/August* Video Editing.

September* Release video & campaign.
 |
| Partners | President, Giancarlo Da-RéCommunications Officer, Elizabetta PaianoMedia Production Coordinator, Adit DixitSocial Media Coordinator, Khaleel GandhiDirector of Marketing and Communications, Michael Wooder |

Objective 27:
Develop and Run a General MSU Info Campaign Status: Complete

This objective went SO WELL! With over 7k views across Instagram and Facebook, and 780+ comments I can happily say that I think this video was a huge success. The video does an amazing job at outlining and highlighting all the MSU has to offer, as well as breaking down our governmental structure for students to better understand. HUGE shoutout to our Comms team for their amazing work on the video!

Hopefully this video can be used in future years as well as a resource.

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| Objective 28 | Utilize Information and Recommendations from the Organizational Review |
| Description | I plan to work with the incoming Board of Directors to effectively utilize the Organizational Review that was conducted this past year by KPMG to assess the current state of our organization and create a list of priorities of what changes would be beneficial & feasible to implement. Some of the recommendations that I would be interested in leading would be in regards to: improving and updating the organizations ‘core capability’ resources, which is to include; website, social media, vendor management and student feedback collection etc. in order to create a more connected organization, as well as leveraging the prime location of Compass.As the Organizational review was quite comprehensive in nature, I will work with the President and board of directors to establish a multi-year plan that will outline how and when various recommendations should be incorporated in the organization. Additionally, as there was a focus on internal efficiencies, I will be creating activity surveys for all Full-Time staff to complete, in hopes of identifying gaps in our current employment structure.  |
| Benefits | * Utilizing the review will help us better our organizations internal operations.
* Creating a multi-year plan will help to break down the recommendations in smaller more feasible components that can gradually be incorporated into the MSU over the course of several years.
 |
| Difficulties | * Some of the recommendations were more geared towards a traditional ‘business’ that would have a core goal of generating profit (unlike the MSU). With this being said, there is a need to evaluate what recommendations are applicable to our organization and our core values.
 |
| Long-term implications  | * Incorporating some of the recommendations can long term make our organization operate significantly more effectively and efficiently and thus will hopefully translate externally to students in a positive way.
 |
| How? | * Have further conversations with the Board to determine priorities for this year and what should be included in the following years.
* For there, being to develop a multi-year plan, that includes what recommendations we hope to incorporate and work on this coming year.
* Ensure wherever applicable, consult relevant stakeholders.
* Continue to update SRA on direction and next steps.
 |
| Partners | President, Giancarlo Da-RéBoard of DirectorsGeneral Manager, John McGowanRelevant Stakeholders |

Objective 28:
Utilize Information and Recommendations from the Org Review Status: Ongoing

For this objective, I have put it as ongoing simply do to the nature of the review. There are many different areas that we can improve within our own organization, and our board has made large strides in regards to IT and addressing some of the internal workings. Moving into the 2021-2022 year, the MSU will now have an actual IT department consisting of a Director of IT, a Senior IT Technician and a Junior IT Technician! I hope the next board can really tackle the HR aspects within the review!

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| Objective 29 | Oversee Implementation of New MSU Website |
| Description | Last year’s Vice-President Finance, Alex Johnston worked with the Communications Officer & The Underground to start the planning and development of a new MSU Website as our current website is very outdated and unorganized. With this new website set to go live for September 1st, 2020, I will continue to support Paula however needed. Additionally, I will work with Paula to ensure that during the testing phase of the Website before it’s set to go live, we have a wide range of representatives testing the website to ensure its accessibility. |
| Benefits | * A new, more accessible and AODA compliant MSU Website!
* Easier to find information.
* Will align well with our new general MSU info campaign and will work as a mini rebrand/fresh start to the year.
 |
| Difficulties | * Some communication difficulties with MPS as they are also working on many other projects for the university.
* Some pages require custom development which takes more time.
 |
| Long-term implications  | * Going forward we will have a new, updated website that we will ensure does not become cluttered like the last website and continues to meet the AODA compliances.
 |
| How? |  May* Receive transition for the previous working group.
* Appoint Paula as main MSU contact for MPS.
* Reach out to Paula to let her know I am available for support.

June* Continue to just follow up and ask for updates on website progress.
* Continue to compile information from old website to make for an easy transfer when the time comes.

July/August* Custom development pages should be completed.
* Enter the testing phase.
* Ensure accessibility and easy to find titles/subtitles.

September 1st * Launch new website!
 |
| Partners | Manager & Creative Director; The Underground, Paula ScottCommunications Officer, Elizabetta PaianoDirector of Marketing and Communications, Michael WooderMPS |

Objective 29:
Oversee Implementation of New MSU Website Status: Complete

This objective was passed along by the last VP Finance and is something that I continued to help with to ensure its completion.

Paula & Steph from The Underground diligently worked with MPS to ensure the website was up to par and was ready to roll out by January 2021. With the website launched, we will continue to monitor it to ensure it is accessible to all students.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Objective 30 | Board of Directors Video Updates |
| Description | Through conversations with the Director of Marketing & Communications as well as the Communications Officer, I believe that utilizing the Board of Directors as the face of the MSU, and implementing monthly, themed, video updates will increase student engagement. There is a large focus on video promotion as the best means for engaging and reaching out to students, thus, the Board of Directors would be able to provide students with updates on year plans, interesting changes that are in the works, as well as addressing any student questions or concerns on video.This will also be an opportunity to provide a sort of ‘sparks notes’ version of our SRA reports in a much more digestible and easier to access format! |
| Benefits | * Increase transparency.
* Increase student engagement.
* Create a face of the MSU & provide students with friendly and familiar faces as a constant source of new information and projects we’re working on.
 |
| Difficulties | * Ensuring that we are consistent.
 |
| Long-term implications  | * I hope that is this goes well this year as kind of a pilot year, this idea will be continued forward with future boards as videos seems to be the wage most students are choosing to engage with the MSU.
 |
| How? | * Arrange monthly timeslots for each of the Board members.
* Work with the comms department to determine days & times they want videos filmed by.
* Record and release on a regular basis to maintain consistency.
 |
| Partners | Board of DirectorsCommunications Department |

Objective 30:
Board of Directors Update Videos Status: Ongoing

This is an ongoing objective for both myself and the rest of the board. So far, the update videos have been going very well and have really help us to connect with students on a more personal level outside of these more sporadic SRA reports. Even once we make it through this pandemic, I believe it will still be important to continue these update videos regularly as it is just another way that we are working to connect with students and share important & helpful information. I HIGHLY encourage continuing this next year! We saw a lot of positive engagement with these videos and it really helped students get the main messages that we also include in our (usually lengthy) SRA reports!

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Objective 31 | Increase promotion of the Student Assistance Plan  |
| Description | The past year, we the MSU’s first full year with our new health care provider Real Campus. Based on usage rates, the services are not currently being utilized to their fullest extent. With this being said, I will work with Real Campus and our Communications Department to create promotional graphics that highlight some of the key features of the Student Assistance Plan. This will hopefully inform our students of yet another service available to them for free, as well as raise awareness of the services offerings.Additionally, with the current COVID-19 climate, I plan to work with the President to advocate to our providers to explore the opportunities of service coverage for our international students that are remaining aboard for the duration of their studies. Currently we are experiencing difficulties with jurisdictions that state counsellors are only able to practice within the province, and thus the counselling services provided by SAP are not available to students that are currently out of country. I plan to explore potential options to help mitigate this and continue to support our international students that are abroad.  |
| Benefits | * Increasing promotion of the services will hopefully help make students feel more supported.
* Exploring potential options to expand our support for our international students will help build a better rapport and ensure that all of our students are supported.
 |
| Difficulties | * As the first concern seemed to be in regard to jurisdiction, it seems it may be difficult to find counselling services for our international students with our current provider. If this continues to be an issue; I think it would be beneficial to provide a list of additionally resources these students may utilize (i.e. good to talk).
 |
| Long-term implications  | * Promoting the Student Assistance Plan will hopefully encourage more students to explore the various services they provide and will encourage them to continue to engage with the plan in the future.
 |
| How? | * Reach out to and connect Provider & Communications Department to establish which group will take the lead on creating promotional graphics.
* Once promotions are created, wait until students return to class i.e. September/October to share the graphics and encourage students to further explore all of the services the SAP provides.
* Continue to advocate to our provider to look into other options for international students and international student support.
 |
| Partners | ACL, ProviderCommunications DepartmentPresident, Giancarlo Da-Ré |

Objective 31:
Increase Promotion of the Student Assistance Plan Status: Complete

We continued to promote and advertise the SAP to students this year, but I do think it may be worthwhile reviewing in the summer to see if it truly serving the student need. We have previously seen quite low engagement with this service, so it may be worthwhile to re-evaluate and potentially reallocate these funds elsewhere if you continue to find it not being utilized!

A FEW ADDITIONAL PROJECTS NOT INCLUDED IN YEAR-PLAN

* Hiring:

One of the many things I have been putting a lot of time into lately is hiring. I have been working with Maddison (HR Generalist) and Graeme (VP Admin) to ensure that Student Opportunity Position (SOP) hiring is on track. Additionally, I have sat on the Underground Designer hiring board, and the WGEN hiring board, and have quite a lot of hiring for the 2021-2022 year, coming up in the next few weeks!

* Wage Review Committee:

As an offshoot to my involvement in hiring, I am also a member of the Part-Time Staff Wage Review Committee and have been working very closely with Maddison and GC to review all of the updated Peer Support Director Job Descriptions, as well as the new Assistant Director Job Descriptions. In the past few weeks, we have reviewed 6 Director roles and 6 Assistant Director roles! I have also helped with hiring: the Digital Media Specialist, Interim Campus Events Director, TwelvEighty and The Grind Social Media Coordinator & the Graphic Designer Position.

* PTM Budget Trackers & Volunteer Appreciation:

I have also been communicating with our PTMS to check on how their budgets are looking, clarifying any questions, comments or concerns to ensure everyone feels comfortable with where their service is at. Additionally, I have been helping reach out to the PTMs to gage what they are hoping to do for their volunteer appreciation. As it is a very unique year, one of the main options is to send an appreciation gift via mail. With this, I am helping navigate the difficulties associated with mailing multiple items to various addresses to ensure all of our volunteers receive their recognition for their incredible work this year.

* Assisting PTMs with Finances

As financial training for all of the PTMs happened all the way back in the summer, I reached out to see if folks would be interested in having an optional refresher training, to which there was quite a bit of interest! With this, I am planning on hosting a mini finance training session that PTM’s can stop into but will also be recorded for those that may be unavailable. I want to ensure that given this challenging year, all of our PT staff feel comfortable handling their services finances, and are comfortable enough with me to reach out with any questions they may have ☺

* Preparing the 2021-2022 Budget

I have also begun conversations with Sean Duncan (Director of Finance), John McGowan (General Manager) and all of our department heads regarding the 2021-2022 budget submission. We are currently in the process of receiving feedback from the department managers on their budgets, and from there, we will set up weekly meetings to discuss and finalize next year’s budget allocations before bringing it to SRA in April.

* Aiding in Reviewing Clubs Policy

Another item I have been spending quite a bit of time on over the last few weeks is working with the Clubs Department, GC, Graeme, and AVP Internal Governance, Michelle Brown to go through both Clubs policies and make the necessary edits. These edits are going to work to address the concerns with the new policies surrounding membership fees & membership minimums, but also just clarify and correct a few points within the financial proceedings.

* MSU Linked in Page

Over the past month I have also worked with our Comms team to regain access to an old MSU LinkedIn Page so that we can utilize it as another platform to share campus news stories, as well as notify students when new jobs open on our website! As the page has been around for a while, it has over 3000 followers, and we are very happy to have regained access. The comms team is now working LinkedIn, into their rotation of social media posts as well.

* Clubs Manual

Over the past few months, I have also been assisting Jenna, The Clubs Admin in writing sections of the Clubs Manual. The manual is largely modelled off of the USC (Western) Clubs Manual and provide a lot of useful information to clubs on financial procedures, how to become a club, the ratification process & cycle, how to reapply for clubs status etc. The final edits are just being implemented into the package at The Underground, and we will be posting the manual for all the clubs to refer to.

* Student Activity Building/ The Hub

Another project that I have been working on is reassessing the various needs of space within The Hub as it is set to open September 2021. While we have not heard from the project manager for quite some time, I have had a few additional meetings with stakeholders to gain a better understanding of the initial intent behind the various spaces within the building, as well as reassessing to see what the currents needs are, and how these have changed over the last 4 years.

* Renegotiating the HSR Bus Pass

While I touched on this above, I wanted to put it under additional projects as it was not initially something that I had written into my year plan but ended up taking up quite a lot of my time. I am so glad that we were able to come to an agreement with the HSR, City Council & The University to ensure students are receiving some financial relief given the straining year we are facing, while also ensuring that the service is available to those that require it, especially as we head into Winter that presents its own challenges with accessibility of getting around (i.e. walking & biking become increasingly difficult during snowy & icy conditions).

* Financial Audit

The Financial Audit is officially done and will be coming to the MSU & CFMU Inc meeting this Sunday (WOOO!). Truly we joke about this being the audit that never ends, but I expect nothing less in the midst of a global pandemic. I am so proud of the accounting team for working with KPMG to get this audit done as for a few of our staff, this was their first year working on the Audit and they did a stellar job!

* Clubs Financial Training

Another project I had been working on in August and into September was creating the Financial Section of Clubs Training alongside Noel, the Clubs Accounting Clerk. We have received a lot of positive feedback regarding Clubs training as a whole, especially regarding the financial section and I see this as a success! With everything having to be done remotely this year, we are actively working to create trainings that effectively articulate the information that various departments (Such as Clubs), need to know, and this is a resource that can be carried forward for years to come!

**Closing Remarks**

I know transitioning into this role can seem very overwhelming and you can feel honestly like you don’t know, what you don’t know. However, my best piece of advice it to take it day by day and you’ll slowly become more comfortable and confident in what you are doing. I am so excited to see what you are going to accomplish this year and just know you will do great things that will have positive impacts on the university experience for students at McMaster.

While I know we didn’t know each other before a few weeks ago, previous board members are always here as supports for one another. If you ever need to chat, vent, ask any questions etc. feel free to reach out!

Wishing you all the best,

Jess

VP Finance 2020-2021