



REPORT

From the office of the...

Associate Vice President Finance

TO: Members of the Student Representative Assembly
FROM: Craig Dawdy, AVP Finance
SUBJECT: SRA 22P Report
DATE: March 13, 2023

Hello all,

I apologize for the delay in the circulation of this report, sometimes in the pursuit of our futures we fail to remain beholden to the eminence of the SRA's love of reading reports on the MSU's finance committees' comings and goings within the broader community. But I am happy to report that you can hold your breath no longer for my update, as it can be found within the proceeding words.

Progress and Success – Finance Committee

Overall seeing great participation and attendance at meetings from all SRA and MSU finance committee members. Happy to report that our in-person meetings have really fostered an environment in which everyone is comfortable sharing their opinions, asking questions, and contributing to discussion.

As you all know, the primary task of the first semester was the review and associated discussion of the bylaw 9 groups. Since completing that reviews, we have moved into a more ad-hok phase of committee activity. We are pursuing multiple initiatives in smaller working groups and using our weekly meetings to report progress and discuss any challenges.

The projects are as follows:

Bylaw 9 Policy Review and potential revisions with Internal Governance

As you may recall from my previous report, there was a dissatisfaction with the state of SRA bylaw 9 decision making process in relation to productive relationship building, information communication, and oversight. This was communicated both by the bylaw-9 groups themselves and members within the MSU, all of which were concerned that the current process was hampering the development of a more productive relationship and work processes of the bylaw 9 groups. Most notably, with the uncertainty of funding and need to meet and potentially debate with the SRA during the fall (sometimes quite late in the fall) distracts from core value-added activity within these groups. A number of solutions have been proposed both by the groups themselves and MSU/SRA affiliated peoples. For the sake of brevity, we can consider these as measures that would seek to; strengthen information communicated throughout the year around the groups to the SRA, increase MSU oversight with the potential for more segmented management capabilities, and potentially a redrafting of certain clauses related to the disbursement of bylaw 9 funds. All of these constructed with the goal of avoiding the hostile nature of referendum situations. Should you feel the need to hear

more on these, please reach out and I would be happy to discuss or incorporate your ideas. These various ideas have been compiled and formatted into practical and pragmatic applications. We as the committee have held focus group style meetings with multiple of the group's leaders to reach discussion and consensus on what would work best with their needs in moving forward in this objective. I will likely within my next report have more solid directions for what this will look like moving into the next year.

Student Discount Program Enhancement / Student

The functional task team has begun work and is actively outreaching to local businesses to pursue the previously mentioned objective of enhancing the discount benefits offered to McMaster Students with various local businesses. I too have placed a large volume of calls and emails to businesses across Dundas and Hamilton, many leads have been generated and final details will be updated either in the courtesy card program or in the student discount page.

Clubs Budget Appeals

This is related to the current clubs budgeting system in which a club can request additional funding to the amount they have been granted. Per MSU Bylaws, it is the responsibility of the finance committee to review any appeals that are filed. That being said, there is a large quantity filed that are quite straightforward in nature, so they are not always discussed in great length during committee hours. However, in the event of appeals that need broader discussion, the committee would be available and familiar with such discussions.

Clubs Budget Process

Every year, VP Finance and the clubs team have to review, correct, and approve hundreds of budgets. It has been indicated that this is quite a cantankerous task and can become a drain on resources of the MSU. We hope to look into ways to make this process more efficient. Efficiency as a starting point has been suggested to be potentially achievable through; improved financial education of individual club's finance managers, automatic feedback systems (integrated checks in excel templates), encouragement of collaboration and knowledge resource sharing of certain groups. In working with the VP finance and club's administration, it is hoped that proposals for improved structures can be fielded by the end of the semester.

Upcoming Events, Projects, & Activities

- See major upcoming projects above
- Looking forward to the upcoming financial transparency events!
 - VP Finance will have many more details on this.
- Should anyone have a project/audit in mind I would be glad to chat!

Current Challenges – Finance Committee

- It is not an inaccurate assessment to note that the burnout of late semester two is upon many facets of the MSU, and in some ways the finance committee has not been spared, attendance of some members has been rather spotted in nature
 - I am working to fix these issues via outreach and one-to-one meetings with some members to ensure they are up to date on activity and are comfortable and confident in their abilities to participate in the broader meetings.

- It deeply saddens me to an existential level that we are once again without our spiritual mentor business representative Tadrous for the second time this year. Due to his conflicting schedule with SRA Sunday meetings he is no longer without his SRA seat, and thus the committee loses a voting member once again.
 - I hope that for the emotional well-being of the committee members he will choose to join us again as a general MSU member.
 - Despite this loss of irreconcilable proportions, we will power forward with the year and the trails he blazed in the realm of student union financial transparency.
- As you probably noticed, there is a wide variety of tasks we are simultaneously tackling. A challenge arising from this is primarily to do with the management of the subgroups to ensure progress is still being made.
 - This is being addressed through weekly status updates with the whole team as well as working on the side to help address any concerns.
 - Also, we are going to be heavily documenting all progress. In the event that our time expires, these are projects that can be handed off to next year's team
- Meeting times that work for all members. Given the team is now ten people, we have found a time that partially works but is precarious.
 - Overcoming this we have ensured that there is at least two people assigned to each task so if one is unable to make it their work can be passed along. Also addressed similarly to the previous concern, by keeping in contact with committee members outside of meeting times.

While I know the work of the sponsorship and donations committee is not required or even requested for that matter to be included in this report, I have decided to include it for the general informing of the altruistic impacts the MSU is making. Perhaps the waves of these benefits being cast into the greater community may see to eventually benefit the MSU and all the values it is beholden beyond a charitable namesake, but who's to say. Not of the least to mention the positive reflective nature it has on yourselves, its representatives.

Progress and Success – Sponsorships and Donations

The S&D committee has had a strong presence during the second semester. We have met quite a number of times in the last months and have been able to award a generous amount of financial aid.

The greatest focus has been on formals and conferences. Conferences being the potential to educationally enlighten and engage the McMaster student body of various faculties and the higher education community. Paired with formals that have largely stood to celebrate the unique diversity of cultures represented within the MSU's general membership. These two focused have enables the uplifting of all of the MSU's greatest value, while encouraging life and the activity of in person student activity at Mac to flourish once again.

It is also worth highlighting that there is a great diversity of reasons for applications for our funds to be filed, and there is no selectivity in the process we undertake to provide aid. When the term 'focus' is used, it is more so to highlight a rising motif in the opening up of in-person student life than to claim that application selection is fraught with biases of constructing some sort of altruistic narrative that serves to uphold fun dance formals as the MSU's final destination as an organization.

With all that being said, the funds have reached closer to depleting themselves by the end of the year. I cannot provide an exact figure, as it would be obsolete by the weeks end with the impending decisions to be made, both in the core committee

meetings and in seeking approval in with the executive board. However, it is of great satisfaction that we have been able to disperse these funds and create benefits of sponsorship and donation within the McMaster community.

Current Challenges – Sponsorships and Donations Committee

- There seems to be a gap in interest and action. Noticed primarily in the imbalance between inquiries and stated need for funds followed by no action by the groups. I am planning to reach out and see if there is a lack of clarity, uncertainty, or other influence that may be driving this.

Best,
Craig Dawdy
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