

YEAR PLAN

MSU President & CEO
Jovan Popovic
2023-2024



OFFICE OF THE *PRESIDENT*

Objective	Smooth Hub Opening
Description	The Hub – the expansion to DBAC – is likely to open in the fall term. To provide the most benefit to students, and the best experience for campus engagement, it is critical that the opening of the new student space be rolled out smoothly. Along with the rest of the board, and other involved stakeholders, we need to manage a proper building opening.
Benefits	Regardless of our preparation level, the building will open eventually. If we are prepared, we can ensure that students will have a fully completed and modern non-academic space where they can spend their time. The campus is very overcrowded and does not have enough capacity for all it's students. To be able to roll out a large new space successfully allows students to enjoy a new experience that they haven't had at McMaster for a long time.
Difficulties	This is a major project that requires significant coordination and a lot of stakeholders. Between preparing the building for opening, coordinating proper media, aligning the space for proper usage for events (between campus events, clubs, individual enjoyment), there are many people that need to be involved in this process in a relatively small timeline.
Long Term	The long-term benefit of a new center like this speaks for itself. Being able to hit the ground running will go a long way toward student usage and popularity of the space.
How	Organize consultative rounds and construct a committee for consistent feedback and input from the most critical of stakeholders, ensuring a well thought out opening plan, while maintaining high awareness of all active processes throughout these key individuals.
Partners	BoD, GM, Student Life Director, Campus Events, The Silhouette

Objective	Consistent Event Programming
Description	The typical student campus interaction is simple; students come to campus, go to class, and go home. That shouldn't be all university life is. Over the course of the upcoming year, as students continue to adjust back into a sense of normalcy, there should be consistent event programming each week, providing them with something to do outside of pure academics.
Benefits	Students will finally begin to experience a greater sense of engagement, and community, allowing for campus life to become a thing again. Students will have the opportunity to network, enjoy themselves, and become a part of a community while feeling a sense of connection to the university and their peers.
Difficulties	Consistent coordination is difficult, as it again involved a lot of stakeholders. This isn't a one group project- so many different individuals and groups are required to make this a success.
Long Term	As these consistent events become successful, they will find themselves as a staple on campus, showing off campus culture while offering students with opportunities.
How	<p>Work with stakeholders such as campus events, the clubs department, and athletics and recreation to hold events for students through the course of every week.</p> <p>Coordinate these groups with venues like 1280, or event spaces at McMaster (hospitality), etc.</p> <p>There should be regular events scheduled at 1280, such as club nights, which were extremely well received by students. Clubs should also have access to 1280, privately or publicly, both driving revenue at the campus restaurant, while also giving clubs a great place to hold their functions. 1280 should be open later in the</p>

	<p>day, so people don't have to worry about leaving campus for food or drinks.</p> <p>Campus events and A&R should start working together more to create entertainment opportunities out of sports games, rather than drawing exclusively Mac sports fans (which is a rather small group...). There is so much that should be happening that just isn't, and it's largely because of a lack of coordination that I want to re-establish.</p>
Partners	<p>Campus Events, Clubs Administrator, Athletics & Recreation, Hospitality Services, several potential one-off stakeholders, University Students' Council (Westerns Students Union, for consultation)</p>

Objective	<p>Revive Sanctioned HOCO Events</p>
Description	<p>Students have been waiting years for homecoming to return. It's about time they get it.</p>
Benefits	<p>Despite the lack of sanctioned events the last few years, it has not stopped students from enjoying homecoming through dangerous and reckless unsanctioned events in Westdale and the surrounding McMaster neighborhoods. By holding sanctioned events on campus, not only are we creating a greater sense of campus culture and community, but we are also drawing the crowd back to campus to be less disruptive to our neighbors, but we are also creating a safer and more contained environment to minimize the damage. At the same time, the offerings of an on-campus homecoming could be more enjoyable and enticing for students (ie. In the way of a concert).</p>
Difficulties	<p>University administration has been dead set against holding homecoming the last few years and has not wanted to be associated with the parties that go on. In holding homecoming, we will either have to convince them this is the way to go (largely</p>

	pushing the safety and damage control narrative), or risk hurting our strong pre-existing relationship with the university administrators.
Long Term	Clear the slate after the unfortunate events that muddied the water the last few years and allow for these types of events to continue into the long term future year over year.
How	<p>Coordinate campus events and A&R to create a day long event of gameday activities.</p> <p>Work with university administration to prove to them that this is the best thing for students, and for the school. It's unsanctioned events with students from other schools that are destructive. That won't happen if we just make the events sanctioned again.</p>
Partners	Campus Events, Athletics & Recreation, McMaster Administration (AVP Students & others), Security Services, City of Hamilton

Objective	Avenue Tab
Description	Create an MSU tab on avenue to aid students in their awareness of the MSU and its offerings. The MSU has done a great job with transparency, but students aren't willing to go digging out of their way for information. If we want students to reap the benefits of the MSU, we have to clearly show them what we are doing.
Benefits	Having a tab on avenue at our disposal, we will have access to a constant checkpoint for students where it will become significantly easier to make them aware of the MSU and its activities. Between the notifications and the calendar, our communications can be directly streamlined to provide students with a far more convenient point of access.

Difficulties	I don't foresee many difficulties with this one, as it has been in talks for a while and the university is receptive to the idea.
Long Term	Easier communication means greater long-term engagement with the MSU, which we are in desperate need of. We cannot best represent students with engagement this low. This will go a LONG way towards fixing that.
How	Put an avenue tab into development with IT and publish upon completion. Use the functionality strategically to engage with students.
Partners	Director of IT (and others in IT), Director of Marketing & Communications, McMaster IT Department

Objective	Recover SLEF Funding for Courts & Green Space
Description	In 2017, the student life enhancement fund was used to build two outdoor beach volleyball courts. Less than one year later, these courts were removed to create "temporary parking" during the construction of PGCLL. That project has been done for years, and yet the courts have not returned. Thousands of dollars (five figures) of student money went to waste. I will advocate to the university to get that money back to build new on-campus sports facilities (basketball court, volleyball court, tennis/pickleball court) and green space.
Benefits	Student money should not be wasted. Students deserve that money back and used towards something that will benefit them. With that money, the hope/plan is to build several new courts where the volleyball courts should've been to give students recreational space on campus to enjoy while also promoting a healthy lifestyle; physical health with the courts, and mental health and relaxation with the planned greenspace/garden area next to the courts. The plan,

	though it is ambitious, is to have this accomplished and built before the fall term begins.
Difficulties	We have a very short timeline with big ambitions. Though the construction can be done quickly, the concern comes with getting approval from all the right parties and stakeholders on time.
Long Term	This will provide a long-term facility for students to use for both athletics, and recreation.
How	Seek funding from university administration and SSAC for the project, get approval from facility services, and then work with A&R to follow the project through to completion (and future maintenance).
Partners	VP Finance, GM, A&R Coordinator of Outdoor Recreation and Natural Lands, Facility Services

Objective	Parking Solutions
Description	Parking options on campus are far from ideal. Parking is expensive, students must park far from central campus, parking lots are in terrible shape and are poorly maintained, and the shuttle bus is ineffective and inefficient. The MSU needs to work with Parking Services to strive for a greater product for students.
Benefits	Better facilities for student use that are actually usable on a day-to-day basis with an effective and affordable system in place for commuters that have no other choice.
Difficulties	Ultimately, we don't have control here, we just have a voice. Parking services does not have to listen to us or follow our suggestions. We just have to do our best to explain why these solutions are necessary and urgent, and hope they understand our frustration and agree to do better for students.

Long Term	These facilities are hardly useable now. Short term, or long-term fixes will go a long way. At the same time, there is potential to build a strong relationship with parking services, especially with several new staff, to potentially continue garnering better conditions for students going forward.
How	Listen to student pain points and effectively convey these points of concern to Parking Services in a manner which they understand that something must be changed.
Partners	Parking Services

Objective	Athlete Advocacy
Description	Working through the Varsity Leadership Committee to identify pain points in the athletics community to better the university experience for student athletes.
Benefits	It seems forgotten in recent history that student athletes are still students. As a student representation group, it is our job to make sure that students receive fair and equitable treatment, which is something athletes at McMaster have struggled with. By working as a voice/representative for the student athletes, I will work towards creating a better environment for them to succeed, both within the athletics department, as well as academically speaking. It's unfair that they have a more difficult university experience because of the substantial commitment they have to their respective teams, and because of the inequitable treatment they receive. I am just doing my job trying to best represent an underrepresented group.
Difficulties	Identifying key struggles and pain points for this group. They are so used to not having an outlet to turn to like this. Traditionally, it was either going to the department themselves (which individuals don't want to do – goes back to the analogy of don't bite the hand that feeds you), or just staying quiet and living with

	<p>what they are given. Though there will soon be a direct path for student union to student support, it may be difficult drawing students forth, and raising awareness of this new representation with athletes.</p>
Long Term	<p>I see potential for a new, long-term relationship between A&R and the MSU. They have been extremely receptive to our feedback, inquiries, and concerns, and seem to view us as a major asset. They want to know how they can better the lives of their athletes but acknowledge that they just aren't coming forth like they have been with the MSU, now having a student group representing them.</p>
How	<p>Partner with the Varsity Leadership Committee – a student athlete group with members from nearly every team – to provide a proper safe space for concerned student athletes to go. I hope to meet with this group on a monthly basis once the school year gets started to identify problems athletes are facing, while keeping an open line of communication throughout.</p>
Partners	<p>VP Education, Athletics & Recreation, Varsity Leadership Committee, Ontario University Athletics</p>

Objective	<p>AI Educational Usage</p>
Description	<p>Advocate to university administration on behalf of bringing artificial intelligence into classrooms as a learning tool.</p>
Benefits	<p>As AI continues to take the world by storm, students entering the labor market will be forced to compete with it. They need to prove that they are worth an entire salary more than AI. Students need to be taught how to function alongside AI, using it as a tool for greater education, rather than be shielded (and eventually blindsided after graduation).</p>

Difficulties	<p>Much of the university admin that has been discussing the matter seems to believe in an AI ban may be the way to go. Significant conversations will need to happen to convince the group otherwise. I fear as a young student representative that I may not get the respect of the room on a matter as important as this.</p> <p>Please note: Thus far I have been treated with the utmost respect by university administration – this is just a fear that there may be a flip of the script when it comes to substantial decision making on the future direction of the university.</p>
Long Term	<p>The long-term impact of this decision, one way or another, will be bigger than I can possibly explain. This is the future of university education.</p>
How	<p>Advocate strongly within university committees, such as the Teaching and Learning Committee, as well as the Generative AI Task Force for the use of AI in classroom settings.</p> <p>The TLC is a committee the Presidents role sat on already prior to my beginning of the role. The Generative AI Task Force however is a new role that was taken on in my tenure, by invitation of the Vice Provost Teaching & Learning, after strong advocacy for AI in the first TLC summer meeting.</p> <p>I will continue to leverage my seats on these committees towards achieving this goal.</p>
Partners	<p>VP Education, Teaching & Learning Committee, Generative AI Task Force, Vice Provost Teaching & Learning</p>

Objective	Housing Advocacy
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Description	Working heavily alongside the VP Education, advocate on behalf of students for better housing solutions on the university, municipal, provincial, and federal level.
Benefits	Housing has become extremely unaffordable for students. Should any of these campaigns be successful, they will go towards making student housing more livable to remove some of the strain from students, financially speaking.
Difficulties	The difficulty of all advocacy is that you don't know if the primary stakeholders and difference makers (the government) are prepared to make a difference.
Long Term	The long-term benefits speak for themselves. The housing situation in Hamilton is at a dangerous point.
How	Leverage student groups to push the issue – organizations like OUSA, featuring many of the largest schools in Ontario, as well as CASA, featuring 26 schools from around Canada, to push the agenda of housing supports and supply. We have already made a significant difference in CASA, pushing hard to make housing a priority (to which it now is), as well as in OUSA, where a housing policy paper is now on the docket for the next general assembly. We need to continue this path and push housing as a clear, dead set number one priority for students.
Partners	VP Education, VP Finance, Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance (OUSA), Canadian Alliance of Student Associations (CASA), City of Hamilton

Objective	Unnecessary Cost Review, Removal & Solutions
Description	Begin looking into potentially previously unthought of and unnecessary costs and burdens on students. Things that wouldn't traditionally stick out for students (ie. Costs outside of the standard).
Benefits	More affordable education. By seeking out these additional costs, we can potentially keep money in students pockets by seeking unique solutions.

Difficulties	Finding these unique costs – they’re usually very niche, and only affect small groups of students. To save all students money, we will likely have to find many different unique costs, that could be very time consuming.
Long Term	Finding solutions and work arounds to these unique costs to prevent future students from falling into potential traps.
How	<p>Listening carefully for student feedback, while also focusing on costs students might suffer outside of their typical tuition.</p> <p>A key example already identified and resolved during my time in office is parking for athletes and welcome week volunteers, who were previously stuck in August because transponders don’t kick in until September, forcing them into paying \$20 a day for on campus parking every day, or risking parking tickets while disturbing our neighbors in Westdale. I negotiated with parking services to cut down cost options while offering better (temporary) parking options to these groups while they need them. Athletes will save \$150 a year while WW volunteers will save \$50. There are countless more examples like this that simply have yet to be identified. I want to make it a priority to see these out – they’re easy ways to save students significant amounts of money.</p>
Partners	VP Finance, GM, several one-off stakeholders

Objective	Club Sponsorship Training
Description	Despite having doubled the clubs budget for this year, clubs can still always use more funding. To make sure they can reach new lengths, and aren’t as dependent on the minimal MSU provided funding, we want to offer training on how to acquire private sector sponsorships.

Benefits	Clubs will be able to afford more while costing the MSU less. The initial fee can be used to kick-start, while potential sponsorships could get these clubs running like larger organizations, capable of far more. I've seen it work. I've done it as a former club President (McMaster Sports Community) before I started this position as MSU President.
Difficulties	This is another area where I don't foresee many difficulties. The only thing I would challenge is the effectiveness of the training – this will be the first year we attempt something like this. How much benefit will it provide? How will we be able to adjust over the course of the year to provide greater training value to clubs.
Long Term	If clubs can learn to operate in this manner, they will be able to move away from a complete dependency, instead leaning on the MSU more for facilities and coordination rather than monetary benefit, which is extremely ideal all the way around.
How	Provide a new training course at the beginning of the year, alongside the VP finance, to demonstrate how to attract sponsors and partners to your club. We want to provide the knowledge, as well as a potential handbook for them to refer to throughout the year.
Partners	VP Finance, Clubs Administrator

Objective	Improved Accessibility for Off-Campus Students
Description	Living off campus is financially unfeasible for many students. Between the cost of housing, transportation, parking and more, students struggle to get to campus regularly. Having identified many pre-existing issues with the system through past boards, we believe we are ready to start taking action with local stakeholders to

	begin improving bus routes, parking on campus, and potentially even the housing situation.
Benefits	A more affordable education means a more accessible education with far less stress on students worrying about how they can pay for their schooling.
Difficulties	Working with third parties – this isn't an in-house project. While I'm confident progress will be made, I question how much progress is possible. Is a large impact feasible?
Long Term	A more affordable education goes a long way for students struggling to pay of their debts.
How	Engage with stakeholders in each of the mentioned areas towards better solutions. The HSR is redesigning their bus paths right now – we will attempt to work with them to provide better coverage in lacking areas for students, for example, up the mountain. Metrolinx needs more frequent bussing options for students given the long waits and full bus loads – we will attempt to work with them! Parking is extremely expensive compared to other universities (\$20 day pass here vs \$7 at Waterloo) with subpar facilities. Things like this need to be discussed, and advocated for! We plan to make it a priority.
Partners	VP Education, Parking Services, Hospitality Services, Facility Services, Campus events, Metrolinx, Hamilton Street Railway (HSR)

Objective	MSU Transparency Campaigns
Description	The previous board did a fantastic job of transparency in terms of making information available for those that want it. Unfortunately, although it was available, students had to go looking, and that made things difficult and failed to make this information well known. I want to adopt transparency campaigns so that

	students not only know what we are doing for them, but also how their money is being spent. It's up to them to hold us accountable, so they need to know this information!
Benefits	It is far easier for busy students to remain engaged with the MSU when the information is presented to them, rather than having to go digging.
Difficulties	Choosing what information is relevant so that students aren't oversaturated with information, further continuing their disengagement.
Long Term	More engagement means better representation. The more the students know about us, the more we know about the students, and the better a job we are able to do, in turn.
How	Aside from the previously mentioned avenue tab, I want to launch basic social media campaigns. I want to review the possibility of a Presidential Twitter account so individuals can always be provided with updates as to how I am spending my time and understand what I am doing for them. We've had discussions on a possible video series for updates from the BoD. Last year towards the end of the year the previous BoD ran in person information sessions, offering giveaways while getting the opportunity to draw students in and talk to them about the MSU. Things like this go a long way in raising awareness and generating engagement between students and the MSU.
Partners	BoD, Director of Marketing & Communications

Objective	Improved BoD Transition Processes & Information Retention
Description	Each year when the BoD transitions in April/May, lots of information is lost. I want to work on better transition processes to leave a clear sense of direction and understanding.

Benefits	Better information retention and clear direction provides the new board in a position to flourish early, rather than to take a significant amount of time orienting themselves.
Difficulties	The more successful you want a transition, the more time each individual has to commit to spending. I personally sacrificed and dropped two courses to make the transition easier for me, and may struggle to remember that this won't be the case for all students.
Long Term	More productivity from the board each and every year.
How	<p>Creating shadow program concepts, allowing the incoming BoD members to see what day-to-day operations look like.</p> <p>Review the possibility of adding one week to the contracts of current BoD members so that there is a week of overlap in each BoDs contract, allowing them to work together towards a more productive transition – this is a concept already in place at Western.</p> <p>Beginning transition preparation in phases – have a transition report due each school term (spring, summer, fall, winter) to capture more accurate “in the moment” transition reports rather than reports bases solely off memory at the end of the year.</p>
Partners	BoD, GM

Objective	Review McMaster People Project & Potential Variants
Description	In his 2017 year plan, Chukke Ibe, the President at the time, brought up the possibility of something called the “McMaster People Project”. It was a concept to help build a better pipeline for individuals external to the MSU to set them up for

	<p>better opportunity within the MSU. It was to be structured as a club that closely followed MSU operations while also offering limited involvement, basically acting as a prep course for future MSU executives (VPs, AVPs, etc.).</p> <p>Given the well known so-called “MSU bubble”, this could be an effective way to draw on individuals external from the MSU, who may have previously felt too detached to have had a chance at success.</p>
Benefits	<p>Could help set up the MSU better for long term success through a more depthful and thorough candidate crop. This allows for more competition, and in turn, potentially more qualified/prepared candidates.</p>
Difficulties	<p>This project is not alive today. I do not know why, and this will cause problems if I don’t properly understand why it didn’t work the first time.</p>
Long Term	<p>More competition is a really position thing for a better run MSU.</p>
How	<p>I don’t want this exact project coming up again – there’s likely a good reason it failed the first time. However, I could see a similar, more simplified concept potentially functioning better. Working alongside the below partners, I want to garner a grasp of the history behind the previous project, while evaluating how a similar, but improve project could potential help future MSU executive candidates, and eventually working towards a functioning solution, if deemed useful following these investigations.</p>
Partners	<p>BoD, GM, Clubs Administrator, Chief Returning Officer</p>