YEAR PLAN
MSU Vice-President (Administration)
Vithuyan Sugumar
2023-2024

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INTRODUCTION

Dear members of the Student Representative Assembly,

Congratulations on entering your role! If you are new to your role like I am, you might be like me – nervous, but also excited to see what is ahead. I am looking forward to working with all of you! Now that McMaster has finally had its first mostly in-person year since the 2018-2019 school year, it is time to build on our accomplishments. You hold a very valuable role in advocating for students and making McMaster a safe(r) place for all our students. The MSU values your continued support and dedication to making this school the best it can be.

My time in this role so far has been a rollercoaster. The VP Admin role is a lot more layered and nuanced than one would expect initially. The VP Admin is known to be a role with a variety of responsibilities, and this is definitely true. It has been quite the transition, but I am grateful to say that it is been a smooth one due to the amazing staff at the MSU. The role has been a lot to navigate and understand, and my days are usually filled with work to do. But as someone who is passionate about student life and student engagement, this work has been energizing for me. I am looking forward to doing as much as I can to ensure that the MSU represents the students and their needs.

I take a mentorship approach to my leadership and my portfolio. This was evident in my platform, and something you will come to see in my year plan. I truly value growth and development to foster the next generation of student leaders. Building our leaders will not only make the MSU as strong as it can be but will empower students to create change in anything that they pursue. My vision is to unlock the vision that McMaster students have. Whether that be PTMs, AVPs, SRA members, and other facets within the MSU, students have goals and passions waiting to be realized. It is my hope that that can be unlocked with the work that I do.

Please feel free to reach out if you have any questions about my year plan, or if you just want to chat. My door (or my email) is always open!

Best,
Vithuyan Sugumar – Vice President (Administration)

OVERALL OBJECTIVES

Engagement
- 1A: Why should I join the MSU campaign?
- 1B: Investigating barriers to MSU involvement
- 1C: Extend service outreach using the MSU's media services
- 1D: Moving management of Bridges to MSU clubs department

Support
- 2A: DEN Peer Support
- 2B: Open channel of communication between volunteers and myself
- 2C: Create communication channels for PTMs
- 2D: Build culture of support within teams managed by VP Admin
- 2E: PTM/SRA guidebook

PTM Management
- 3A: Improve hour tracking system
- 3B: Improving PTM transitionary periods
- 3C: Having services ready for beginning of fall term

GOALS

Objective 1A	"Why Should I join the MSU?" Campaign
Description	In recent years, the perspectives surrounding being involved with the MSU has changed. Many students believe it is merely an opportunity to build a resume, as opposed to an opportunity to meet fantastic people, build lifelong skills, and contribute to student life. People also are not aware of a lot of the roles that exist within the MSU, resulting in many roles historically having a lower number of applications.

	Some kind of promotional campaign on this can revitalize the student body and show them what role they can play amongst the wide variety of roles available within the MSU.
Benefits	It will show students that being involved in the MSU is not limited to being part of a service, but that the MSU is involved in many facets of student life. It will also provide the student body with a greater understanding of what the MSU does and will potentially entice them to join the MSU.
Difficulties	Trying to reach the student body purely on social media can be difficult, especially if they don't follow us. Finding a way to go beyond social media (in-person booths, posters, etc.) could be an important step to take
Long-term implications	A greater understanding of what the MSU does, and the number of opportunities that exist.

More engagement with the MSU and more applications for different opportunities. |
| How? | Working with the Comms team to develop this campaign in a way that is both intentional and effective. |
| Partners | MSU Comms Team, potential collaboration with students holding roles within the MSU. |

Objective 1B	Investigating barriers to MSU involvement
Description	The MSU provides services which directly benefit its users, as well as providing opportunities which help students in their professional and personal development. However certain groups (faculty, race, etc.) are underrepresented in MSU spaces.
Some kind of investigation into barriers to engagement is necessary in order to ensure that the MSU is adequately meeting the needs of all its members. I am planning on working with the Admin Team Research Assistant to facilitate some sort of survey and research, collecting responses from the student body. I am hoping that we can compile this research into a report, for future MSU Executives to take into consideration and implement any potential changes.
Benefits	Looking into barriers to student engagement will set the groundwork for plans or initiatives that aim to include different groups within the student body. It will also ensure the MSU is better aligned with the goals, needs, and interests of its students, and that student money is being

	used effectively. Finally, it will increase the diversity of perspectives
Difficulties	The students who would be targeted with this sort of investigation would be students who do not typically engage with the MSU. As a result, getting them to participate in this would be difficult – targeted and intentional outreach (collaborating with SRA, faculty societies, and other equity-deserving groups) will be necessary to ensure we are able to obtain a fuller perspective.
Long-term implications	- Further engagement with MSU across the student body, as well as a greater understanding of services that the MSU offers - More involvement and diversity within MSU spaces, resulting in more effective and representative service delivery
How?	Working with Admin Team RA to develop a survey that could be distributed to the student body via MSU socials, and working with faculty partners to promote as well. A final report would be made with the results of this,
Partners	Admin Team RA, MSU Comms Team, Faculty partners

Objective 1C	Extend service outreach using the MSU's media services
Description	The MSU experienced decreased engagement throughout the pandemic. Collaboration is necessary in order to build that community and engagement back up. MSU's media services, such as The Silhouette and CFMU, could be valuable outlets for PTM-led services to explore as they continue to seek alternative means of engagement. For initiatives like podcasts or written pieces it may be interesting for services to look into collaborating with these services.
Benefits	- Increased exposure and engagement for all services involved - Provides PTM-led services with an opportunity to express themselves and amplify their message

	• Provides MSU-media services with the opportunity to collaborate and increase readership/listenership
Difficulties	• Collaboration between the services involved is needed to find a framework and direction that works for everyone • Building a sustained audience may require a sustained collaborative effort
Long-term implications	• Larger student audience for services like The Silhouette and CFMU • Potential for increased quality in creative output for MSU services
How?	Meeting with MSU's media staff to see how they anticipate services potentially getting involved in a collaboration. Reach out to services to gauge interest and act as a middleperson between groups.
Partners	PTMs, The Silhouette, CFMU

Objective 1D	Moving Management of Bridges Space to Clubs Department
Description	Bridges, located in the refectory building is an MSU space that is currently occupied by FCC and DEN. It is also a space that can be rented to host events and other initatives. Historically, DEN has had a paid exec position (Bridges Coordinator) to operate the space. However, considering executives are not being paid in other services, it would be unfair for such a position to exist under a service. Additionally, DEN is aiming to reestablish itself within the McMaster community again, and having to run Bridges can potentially burden them. Moving Bridges to the Clubs Department will allow for more effective management of the service. Furthermore, it will promote space usage by clubs, who would benefit from additional space to operate out of.
Benefits	• Frees DEN from the responsibility, allowing them to put more focus in their initiatives • Space can be managed more effectively, which will increase space usage.

	• Provides an additional outlet for clubs to promote their messages and host their events
Difficulties	• Considering DEN has had historical ownership over the service, it is important to work with them in order to ensure that they feel it is still possible for them to run their programming out of it. • Bridges has not been upkept properly during the pandemic, and some work may need to be done in order to ensure it's in great condition to run programming.
Long-term implications	• Bridges becomes a hub for student connection and collaboration between different groups, which was the space's intended purpose. • Clubs are able to better succeed in their initiatives
How?	• Collaboration and communication with DEN and Clubs to ensure a smooth transition • Updating DEN OP and JD to better reflect the role's current scope • Examining effectiveness of this change and making adjustments where necessary
Partners	DEN, Clubs Department, SRA/EB

Objective 2A	Piloting DEN Peer Support
Description	When DEN last had a service review, it was recommended that they pilot a peer support program for BIPOC students. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, this was not able to happen, but the aim is to pilot it this year.
Benefits	• Providing and promoting a safe(r) space for BIPOC students on campus • Provides another angle to the existing peer support infrastructure within the MSU
Difficulties	• This is something that needs to be done intentionally, in order to make sure that a high quality of peer support is being provided

	• Ensuring that the peer support is directed towards the angle of providing race-based peer support and resources for BIPOC students
Long-term implications	• Provides the MSU with the ability to provide support for a wider demographic for students • Allows the BIPOC community at McMaster to feel more included and welcomed
How?	Consistent engagement, collaboration, and consultation with different offices and groups at McMaster is necessary. Once a framework is developed Peer Support Execs/volunteers can be hired. This framework will include resources, training, and how the peer support should be structured.
Partners	DEN, offices such as EIO

Objective 2B	Open channel of communication between VP Admin & service volunteers
Description	Volunteers are a necessary part of any MSU service's operation; however, for PTM-led services, there can often be multiple levels of authority between a volunteer and the VP Admin. This means that many volunteers are not aware that they can reach out to the VP Admin if they have concerns about the service. While PTM evaluations are done to assess PTMs strengths and areas of improvement, it is also important to keep channels of communication open so volunteers feel comfortable talking about their service.
Benefits	• Makes it easier for VP Admin to identify any preexisting problems within a service that need to be addressed • Makes volunteers feel more comfortable in their role, especially in instances where they may not feel comfortable approaching the PTM
Difficulties	• Can be difficult for volunteers to consistently engage with it or remember it exists

	• If done as anonymous feedback form, potential feedback may lack the information necessary to take action.
Long-term implications	• Allows volunteers to express feelings and uncover potential systemic issues within the services • Correcting issues can help improve service delivery quality and create a more positive volunteer experience
How?	Creating an anonymous feedback form can be a strong way for volunteers to provide comments in a way that is not too intrusive. Additionally, it will be important for me to make an active effort to visit services in order for volunteers to view me as a resource that they can reach out to as well.
Partners	MSU service volunteers, PTMs

Objective 2C	Create communication channel for PTMs
Description	PTMs often use each other as valuable resources to learn from each other. But often times, it can take a while before they get to meet each other as they may not know how to contact one another or may feel awkward doing so. By establishing this for the PTMs they will be able to interact with one another much quicker.
Benefits	• Increase potential for quality collaborations between services • Creates community, which makes PTM feel closer to one another and more comfortable with each other. Creates a safe(r) environment for questions and support
Difficulties	• Moderating vs not moderating a group chat have their own pros and cons for a VP Admin and is something that needs to be considered before moving forward. • Some encouragement from the VP Administration may be needed for PTMs to engage with each other initially.
Long-term implications	• Increased partnerships between services, resulting in sustained campaign and collaboration delivery

	• PTMs who feel more supported, understood, and heard in their role
How?	There will be two parts to this. I will create a Microsoft Teams page with all the PTMs, where I could provide updates and they could provide each other with updates. The second part would be a MS Teams chat that I would encourage them to make, but I would not join. This is to remove the inherent power dynamic that might exist and to allow for ease and comfortability of communication.
Partners	PTMs

Objective 2D	Build culture of support within teams managed by VP Administration
Description	Support is important in any role, and when students feel like they are alone in their role, that is when problems start to arise. PTMs, AVPs, and SRA are three important groups that come to mind when it comes to this goal.
Benefits	• Builds cohesion and community within role groups and allows them to learn from one another • Creates an environment build on collaboration and feedback, which will strengthen them as student leaders.
Difficulties	• Within their roles, they are all diverse. For example, while AVPs are all AVPs, their portfolios look very different. This can create variations in the support they need. Despite this, there are many similarities in their roles – for example, AVPs all chair their respective committees.
Long-term implications	• Creates more passionate student leaders who feel closer to the MSU. This may provide them with the motivation to go for additional roles later on (MSU BoD for example) • Creates a "scaffolded" mentorship where students are motivated to help each other

How?	PTMs – cluster meetings between PTMs have been something that have been done historically, and should be continued going forward
	AVPs – similar to a support circle, all the AVPs (under VP Administration, Finance, and Education) can meet monthly to share support and needs, which they can take back to their own committees.
	PTMs, AVPs and SRA – more socials are needed to facilitate team bonding and promote inclusion in the MSU
Partners	PTMs, AVP, SRA, VP Education, VP Finance

Objective 2E	PTM/SRA Guidebook
Description	While transition and training does occur for PTMs and SRA members as they enter their term, they may not know all the details of what their role entails. Having a small handbook of best practices and helpful tips, will not only better prepare them for their roles, but also develop students into stronger leaders.
Benefits	• Less confusion for SRA members and PTMs will allow them to carry out their role more effectively, which will make their workload lighter. • Can be a collective and continued effort. My perspectives and tips for success may be different from my successors and people I consult so it can be an active document that is changed year by year.
Difficulties	• A significant undertaking that may not be done until the end of the academic year. • Although I am the VP Admin and former PTM, I do not have knowledge of all the small details and nuances that may help a PTM with specific questions. As I have not been a previous SRA members, this would apply here as well. However, consulting with relevant groups (caucus leaders, former SRA members and PTMs) will ensure a holistic view is incorporated into any potential guidebook.

Long-term implications	• A document that can be used for years to come in order to support incoming PTM and SRA members into their role
	• Can make the VP Admin's role lighter as guidebook can answer many questions that may typically be asked
	• Can promote development of leadership in PTMs and SRA members
How?	Creating a document based on my experiences as a PTM and common FAQs I see as VP Admin. Consult with former/current PTMs and SRA members as necessary to fill in any gaps and receive a variety of perspectives.
Partners	Current/former PTMs and SRA members

Objective 3A	Improve Hour Tracking System
Description	Currently, PTMs will track their hours in an Excel spreadsheet template as created by past VP Admin (Graeme Noble). This has been helpful for both the PTM and the VP Admin. However, it can quickly become confusing for PTMs to adequately report their hours, and for the VP Admin to look it over effectively. I have already created folders for hour trackers which makes it easier for the VP Admin to find and look at, but a better system is necessary in order to ensure that we are able to better examine PTM progress and needs.
Benefits	• Hour trackers become easier to fill out for PTMs, and easier for VP Admin to look at. This makes it quicker for everyone.
	• Easier to ensure that PTMs are within their allotted hours
Difficulties	• Finding a system that works for all parties, and training PTMs to use any new system that is established
Long-term implications	• Increased transparency of hours worked between PTMs and VP Admin.
	• Increased accuracy of hours worked by PTMs, as recorded in their hour tracker.

How?	• Looking into existing platforms or examining what other student unions are doing
	• Consult with PTMs to gather their concerns regarding hour tracker
	• Training PTMs to use any new system
Partners	PTMs, Director of Human Resources, other Student Unions

Objective 3B	Improve PTM Transitionary Periods
Description	The previous VP Administration made huge strides in ensuring incoming PTM's were transitioned appropriately. One such change was to ensure incoming PTMs were provided with one week's of pay to transition.
	I would like to build on this to ensure outgoing PTMs are making the effort necessary to ensure they are transitioning their successors.
Benefits	• Ensures a satisfactory transition for incoming PTMs so they can hit the ground running
	• Allows PTMs to feel more comfortable in their role
Difficulties	• It can be difficult to implement or measure success with their goals, but checking-in with incoming PTMs to see if they are transitioning appropriately may be a way to approach this.
	• A successful transition looks different for everyone and it can be difficult to determine if a transition was useful for an incoming PTM
Long-term implications	• Stronger PTMs, resulting in more student leadership in the MSU
	• Improved service quality and delivery
How?	• Creating a "transition checklist" so incoming PTMs know what they should know, and outgoing PTMs have an idea of what the incoming PTM should know

	• Checking-in with PTMs as needed to ensure they are satisfied with the quality of transition they are receiving.
Partners	Outgoing and incoming PTMs

Objective 3C	Preparing services for the start of classes
Description	PTM-led MSU services play an important role in the McMaster community, and it is vital that they are ready to go for Welcome Week, or start of classes latest. This will allow students who use their services to feel supported from the start.
Benefits	• Ensure students feel supported by the MSU and its services • Provides services with opportunity to experience increased service usage at a busy time of the year – this could lead to sustained engagement.
Difficulties	• Services may be busy with hiring or onboarding, making it difficult for services to be ready for the year. • PTMs may be busy with their own commitments (academic, professional school exams, Welcome Week, etc.)
Long-term implications	• There is more awareness and usage of MSU services • Services will build a habit of being prepared for the start of classes
How?	• Check-ins with services to see where they are at and see what support they would need to start the year • Collaborate with different groups and staff needed where necessary to ensure they get adequate support.
Partners	PTMs

Long-Term Planning

Overarching Vision 1	*Create Sustained Student Engagement with the MSU*
Description	Engagement with and within the MSU has declined in recent years, and considering the myriad of opportunities that are provided by the MSU it is critical that this is increased.
Benefits	- More knowledge of the MSU and its services - A diversity of perspectives within the MSU - More engagement by the student body
Year 1	- Investigating barriers to student engagement - More promotional campaigns to increase engagement
Year 2	- Use results of report to create effective change. This can include some kind of "MSU engagement committee" who furthers the research from Year 1 and implements them to make the MSU stronger - Continue to examine effectiveness of promotional strategies
Year 3	- Developing partnerships between the MSU and other student-facing groups on campus (such as faculty societies). This will encourage collaborations that benefit students - Examine any implementations created by an engagement committee or team
Partners	Student-facing groups, Admin Team RA, MSU Comms Team