



# REPORT

*From the office of the...*  
**MSU President**

---

TO: Members of the Student Representative Assembly  
FROM: Jovan Popovic, President  
SUBJECT: Takin' Care of Business  
DATE: June 18<sup>th</sup>, 2023

---

## **Progress on Year Plan**

### Artificial Intelligence in Education

The Generative AI Task Force is the team put in place to determine how McMaster shall proceed with the usage of AI come this fall. They are determining guidelines and policies that will impact the short term, and long-term future for students. I am very fortunate to have been a part of these discussions as a member of the task force, as of June.

In July, the task force met for the second phase of policy/guideline changes. Having identified extreme concerns on behalf of students within the suggested academic dishonesty policy, as well as the grading and assessment policy, the Abby (VP Education), Craig (VP Finance) and I took it upon ourselves to complete a brief policy paper, which was submitted to the task force to outline these concerns.

The paper appeared to be well received. Further meetings to discuss our concerns are being scheduled ahead of the next task force meeting, where the policies will be finalized and sent to the university senate (where I hold a seat as an observer, and can voice further concerns should ours not be addressed ahead of time).

### Inspire Course Design

Through the Vice Provost of Teaching and Learning, I have been offered the opportunity to work with a team to redesign a course, Inspire 3AR3, which aids in translating skills learned through athletics into true, polished, leadership skills.

In our last meeting, we went over the general outline of the original design, defining goals and measures of success so that we can redefine the course purpose before moving forward with amendments. Actual amendments to this course should start about 30 minutes after this SRA report is due (and will have happened by the time this document is circulated). We will be focusing on assessments. It is a very unique opportunity ahead to directly affect students at McMaster, ensuring that courses are fine tuned to their needs.

I am hoping that this opportunity will lead to further opportunities in mainstream course design going forward. We shall see.

### Athletics & Recreation Discussions

As a major pillar of the platform that got me elected, A&R discussions have remained a major focus over the past month. There are three major areas of discussion that have been taking place of recent: clubs coordination in athletics theme nights, peer mentorship programs, and possible facilities usages.

A&R wants to affect more people on this campus. There is mass potential to offer consistent event programming, giving students a reason to stay on campus and contribute to the campus community. We have been discussing the possibility of theme nights, so that students can come

for the entertainment aspect, regardless of whether they are a sports fan or not. I have tied in Nardos (clubs administrator) so that we can coordinate club involvement in creating cultural nights, where we can celebrate the diversity of cultures on the campus. A&R has been extremely eager to get on this, as am I.

The next topic of discussion I've held is peer mentorship programs, albeit these discussions are very early on. One of the major concerns brought forth from athletes during my consultation and campaign period prior to my being elected was the lack of preparedness of athletes in first year, who train 3-5 hours every single day, usually with game days on weekends. Apparently, it is very well known that athletes' grades will tank in their first year, as they struggle to adjust with the substantial time commitment. Like the MSU does for typical students through the peer mentorship programs from Spark, I am attempting to generate a similar program through A&R where upper year athletes can help guide first year athletes. The life of a student athlete is very different than that of most students. Seeing the affect Spark has on students, I would love to attempt to recreate something like that within A&R to benefit students.

Lastly, I have worked hard towards building my knowledge base and connections with members of A&R to properly understand what is necessary for facility usage for events. Over the year ahead, I want to be able to offer more for students to do on campus, and with that, we need facilities to properly host these events, many of which are within A&R. The hope is to use these facilities, while also tying in the events around gamedays to continue maximizing the give for students.

### Parking Services Discussions

I have spent so much time working with parking services lately... But don't worry, it has been for good. This time around, I've been working to connect McMasters parking services team with that

of Western University and the USC (University Students Council – Westerns MSU equivalent). We are attempting to work on a new micro transit system to improve campus transit at McMaster, replacing the lot M bus with something far more effective, spanning across the entirety of campus. This has been a major pain point for students, and finally addressing the issue is a big win for students.

As well, in my last SRA report I spoke about a new, far more affordable parking offer I negotiated for athletes when they return for training campus in August – I was able to yield the same offer for Welcome Week representatives. They will be able to pay \$51, as opposed to \$20 a day or illegal parking in Westdale with fines of \$30+ each and will have access to lots on the main campus (ie. Stadium parking), providing them with a great sense of convenience. It's the first time the Welcome Week committee has seen an offer like this, and we will be proceeding with it.

### Homecoming

As once said by the great Michael Jordan, "I'm back."

After long discussions and several meetings with university administration, we've received the green light to bring homecoming back to campus for the first time since 2019. Having campus events works with A&R, we will have a full day of event programming scheduled for students in a safer environment than the unsanctioned street parties that occur off campus. Welcome Week aside, this should be the first big event of the year for students to enjoy.

### University Students Council (Western) Visit

On July 7<sup>th</sup>, Craig, Abby and I took a drive to Western University to visit our friends in the University Students Council. We were provided with a tour of their facilities and were taught how the organization functioned.

Following the tour we each took independent meetings with our equivalents. In my meeting with their President, Sunday Ajak, I took the time to ask about their restaurant operations, as well as their engagement. I felt it was important to gain a stronger knowledge base of their restaurant operations given that theirs are very, very successful. I was glad to gain greater insight towards what factors into that success so that we could potentially try some of these strategies with our own facilities (1280, The Grind).

The biggest takeaway from my discussions came from the student engagement piece. My entire platform was centered around student engagement when I was elected. Student engagement at McMaster and the MSU is at an all-time low, and needs to be revived. With the incredible high engagement levels that the USC experiences, I was beyond eager to learn about their strategies in engaging students. I was taken through the variety of events that they run through the year, and Sunday and I collaborated on what we can potentially/feasibly bring to McMaster based on the USC model. I was provided with numerous fantastic ideas, and have since begun discussions with Campus Events to create new plans for the year ahead. I have some very ambitious plans in mind that I will bring forth in the next SRA meeting, once they are a little more developed.

### Clubs Hiring

Over the past several weeks, I have spent quite a bit of time on clubs hiring between the clubs assistant, as well as the clubs administrator. The clubs assistant process is complete, and the role has been filled! The administrator role lags behind a little bit – we had a relatively long shortlist and opted to provide candidates with an assignment to continue narrowing it down. Assignments

have now been submitted, and this week will be spent creating a new shortlist amongst those candidates before scheduling interviews for next week.

### PTL & OER Grant Reviews

In the last month I was provided the opportunity to be a reviewer for two separate grant reviews/applications – partnered in teaching and learning grants and open educational resources.

The PTL grants were the first I reviewed. I reviewed six applications, providing feedback on their strength and feasibility. The program is designed for university administrators to create their own programs towards the benefit of students. I'm not sure how much I'm allowed to elaborate on my review prior to the release of the results, so I'll cut myself off here...

The OER grants were a very similar process, but for specific educational tools that educators want to provide students with free of charge, such as textbooks or study/assessment preparation programs and such. I was able to provide feedback on the group I was given towards which candidates are most worthy of a grant for their tool(s).

### VP Recruitment

As you likely know – or at least I really hope you know by now – Vithuyan and Craig will be leaving us for grad school come late August/early September, and at the upcoming SRA meeting, we will be electing a new VP Administration, and a new VP Finance to succeed them. I, like most of the board, have made it a priority to set out in finding new VP candidates. Following our one candidate race for each of the VPs in the original/first election earlier this year, we are seeking a more competitive race with qualified candidates this time around, and thus far, are of the belief

that we were successful in doing so. Hopefully by time you read this report, this will have aged well.

### Missing SLEF Courts

In the previous SRA meeting, I took time in my report to discuss the problems surrounding the missing SLEF courts. For those who don't recall, a brief summary; in 2017-2018, two outdoor volleyball courts were installed using SLEF money. Within under a year, without MSU consultation, McMaster removed these courts for "temporary" parking during the construction of PGCLL. Construction has been complete for three years and the courts aren't back. I've since been made aware that this temporary parking will remain for the foreseeable future.

I've been attempting to work with university admin to resolve this issue. I have two goals – (1) recover the money that McMaster wasted that was supposed to go to student life, and (2) construct new facilities to replace those that the students were stripped of. Thus far in my discussions, despite long and lengthy processes, it looks like the courts will finally be resurrected.

Facility services is in agreeance to rebuild the courts on the oval, the plot of land next to Ivor Wynne. The process is still not over – I will continue to advocate for more than just two beach volleyball courts, as I want a tennis and basketball court there as well for students to use.

However, this is a huge win in and of itself, and it appears they will likely be in place by the start of the school year.

### **Upcoming Priorities**

#### Early Year Event Planning

I said in my platform that I wanted one staple event per month for students to be drawn to campus and am actively working towards those goals. Homecoming should be the first of them to come, but there are many others in the works. Of course the winter marketplace, as well as light up the night continue to be in the works, but that's only three events for an eight month school year. More will come, and as I continue to work with stakeholders such as Campus Events, Athletics and Recreation, Avtek and others, my understanding will only improve, and I will get more done.

### Generative AI Task Force

Unexpectedly, artificial intelligence has become a huge priority for my board and I as the university continues to be at the forefront of AI in education, internationally speaking. It is critical, especially with our limited understanding of AI as it continues to be such new technology, that we approach this field with caution. Students should be allowed to be curious and experiment with how they can use these tools to improve in the classroom without fear of penalization, and our focus is to make sure that can happen as policies continue to come forth and be finalized heading into the fall term. There are a few more meetings left with the Generative AI Task Force before these changes are brought forth to the senate. We need to be as vocal as possible before that happens to make sure our students are put in a position to thrive.

Best,

Jovan Popovic

President & CEO

McMaster Students Union

[president@msu.mcmaster.ca](mailto:president@msu.mcmaster.ca)