



REPORT

From the office of the...
MSU President

TO: Members of the Student Representative Assembly
FROM: Jovan Popovic, President
SUBJECT: Oops!... I Did It Again
DATE: February 25th, 2024

To the esteemed members of the SRA,

I am extremely grateful for the privilege of serving another term. The support from the student body is humbling, and I'm committed to building upon the collaborative achievements of the past.

Together, we have made significant strides, and I will ensure we continue sustaining this positive momentum. Listening to your concerns will be a priority, ensuring that our community's well-being remains at the forefront of our efforts.

In the coming year, I look forward to working closely with you to address challenges and capitalize on opportunities. Your insights are invaluable, and I believe our collective dedication will lead to continued success.

That said, let's get on to the Presidents report.

Progress on Year Plan

Hub Launch

Despite being years behind schedule due to construction delays, the long-anticipated opening of the Hub is finally behind us. The official opening took place on Wednesday, Feb. 7, and the event

went extremely well. With students having formed an extremely long line leading up to opening, we had thousands of units of MSU merch to give away in celebration, as well as free food and a live band on the fourth floor. We were able to show off the newest space on campus (which is fully MSU operated) very effectively, and students looked right at home. It was as if they had been in the building for years and were extremely comfortable with it.

While the building is only open from 10:00 AM until 6:00 PM at the time this report was written, hours are expected to extend in the very near future. The hurdle standing in the way of longer hours is staffing, and hiring will be taking place shortly.

Food & Beverage

F&B has continued to be a priority for the BoD this year as we continue to steer TwelvEighty back into self-operation. The biggest challenge of recent has been operating with limited staffing capacity while we replaced our Food and Beverage Manager. The new hire is expected to begin the week of the 19th (which will have likely passed by time you read this), and we hope to see the strain on our TwelvEighty staff ease up a little bit after January having been the most successful/busiest month thus far.

I'm of the belief that much of the January rush came from the Presidential election, where all candidates seemed to be heavily discussing TwelvEighty and their plans with it. Resultantly, we saw awareness spike, and the number of consumers rise.

In February the Campus Events team, in collaboration with the McMaster Sports Community (MSU club), hosted a Super Bowl watch party in TwelvEighty as well. Despite fearing trouble getting people on campus on a weekend, the place was packed, and every seat was taken, marking an extremely successful event.

Upcoming Referenda

As you may have seen, we have two referenda upcoming, both having taken a significant amount of my time in the weeks and months leading up. The first is for a bike-share agreement, where we will be asking students if they would consider increasing their fee by \$24.50 a year for an annual bike pass, allowing 90 minutes of use a day. This price point is down significantly from the typical annual rate of \$200 + HST. This agreement will also allow uninterested students to opt out of the bike pass each year, even if the referendum is successful – similar to our health and dental plan.

The second referendum is the Food Accessibility Initiative – derived from my campaign promise a mere few weeks earlier to bring a referendum to students. Students will be asked if they would be willing to increase the MSU organizational fee in \$5 in order to address food inaccessibility. The plan for that money would be to provide soup and bread to students at no additional charge, four days a week, every week for the entire school year.

Whether for, against, or neutral with these referenda, it is important for students to vote and make their voice heard. Without hitting our 10% quorum, these referenda will not count regardless of the outcome.

New Service Evaluation

In my last report to the SRA, I mentioned that we were looking into the creation of a new service. This service would've been similar to a legal aid, but specific to university academic integrity policy to aid students being wrongfully accused of academic misconduct. This was necessary due to the looming implementation of TurnItIn AI detection software, planned to go live in January,

which has been found by many reliable sources to be unreliable, producing a high number of false positives.

Our potential service creation has since been put on pause. This is because we have successfully advocated to the university to reconsider the AI detection software, and it is NOT currently live. As long as this software isn't active, there won't be an extreme need for such a service.

If the decision on the AI detection software changes, our service idea may be rekindled in the future. The two are directly tied together.

Staff Hiring

Much of my time, and several others around the office have recently been tied up with hiring. PTM positions, as well as SOP positions have been filled. There isn't much to discuss here, it's standard practice and I'm excited to see our new hires in action next year. I figured I should mention it given how much time it took.

Bounce Software

So, there's something I've been meaning to bounce off you guys... See what I did there?

Back in August during the SUDS conference, I met some representatives from a company named Bounce. Their product is event planning software, and the best way to describe it is like a combination of Instagram, Ticketmaster, PayPal, and others. Over the last few months, we've had various meetings with their representatives, including demos, question periods, etc., and are planning/undergoing a full transition within our Campus Events department, as well as with our services, and clubs. We've also touched base with athletics and recreation about transitioning to Bounce, shifting towards one common platform for students to use for all events on campus.

In realizing we were switching to Bounce, our peers at Western's USC decided to make the switch alongside us and have begun the transition as well.

Cultural Night

On January 20th and February 10th, we held cultural nights at varsity games. For the Jan. 20 volleyball game, we hosted a South Asian night, and for the Feb. 10 basketball game, we hosted an Eastern European night, both in tandem with clubs that shared similar cultures. Our Clubs Administrator, Omer, spearheaded the first, and I spearheaded the second. The Eastern European cultural night worked with the Croatian, Serbian, Ukrainian, and Polish clubs to foster an evening with halftime dance performances by a Serbian and Ukrainian group, a live Croatian tamburitza band in the mezzanine, as well as t-shirt tosses, trivia on the big screen, and more. Each group was able to set up a table in the mezzanine to promote themselves to incoming fans.

The night was a big success and was executed very well. I was extremely proud of the event as a whole, and the clubs involved did an exceptional job. The importance of this event was that it was the first time we tried out cultural nights, and that if they went well, we would be able to continue them (and more often) in the future. I'm very confident this was the start of something that will continue for years to come.

Student Union Visits

On Friday Feb. 2 we had the remaining BUSU (Brock) board members join our team for a day in a standard visit. They came to learn from us, while also allowing us to learn from them. In my platform from January, I said I wanted to implement BUSU's model of social media, leading to an eventual restructuring of our marketing team. I was able to introduce them to our Director of Marketing and Communications, and I discussed the concept further in depth later on.

One week later, on Feb. 9, Adam and I drove up to Western to visit our friends at the USC. Our goal was to better learn about their clubs funding structure, understand how some of their similar services operate, and learn how their execs interact with their General Manager to restructure the GM job at the MSU – for context, there is way too much responsibility under our GM as is, and he is stretched too thin. We are trying to figure out how to better support him so that our organization can function more effectively.

SLEF

Voting for the Student Life Enhancement Fund took place alongside the Presidential election in January! I was extremely pleased to see that my idea for an outdoor sports complex on campus, as discussed in past Presidents reports in the summer, was the most highly selected initiative. Our next meeting for SLEF will be in the coming weeks pertaining to execution of each successful idea, and I am very eager to see this play out. It's about time students had something to do on campus.

VP Recruitment

It's crazy to think VP elections are just around the corner. Recruiting the next wave of VP's had become a priority. Last year, as some of you may remember, it was underwhelming. In the first round of elections, we had one candidate for each, and many of us were desperate just to find someone. Vits and Craig were successful, despite only running for the summer and not the entire year, and our third candidate, the only one for VP Ed, did not have the confidence of the SRA. We continued to hold VP Ed elections at the next meeting and didn't have any nominations. Finally at our third round of elections, Abby was elected. Late in the summer once Craig and Vits left, we again struggled to find VP candidates. We wanted to make sure this would trickle into

this year, and have been successful in doing so, having several candidates that we are currently aware of for each role. It will be a very exciting time.

Upcoming Priorities

Bounce Software

While the decision has been made, the actual implementation still has a long way to go and will be a priority over the coming months before we close out the year. We want to see this in use for events before the academic year is complete.

HOCO Advocacy

It's been a long time coming, but HOCO in the year ahead looks more promising than it ever had in my term. The only sticking point in a partnership with the university appears to be the actual "Homecoming" name itself, which is really odd to me. Regardless of having the name or not there will be events marking the day. Until then, I will be working very hard to get the name in use. It's ridiculous that this is still a point of friction, but nonetheless, here we are.

Internally, I will be working heavily with Sefa over the coming weeks as we determine budgets, ensuring that there is sufficient funding for event programming in September.

OUSA GA

While I am not the lead on this, I am still helping where I can, and I only expect to get more wrapped into this as the days approach. For those who don't know, we are hosting the OUSA General Assembly conference from Mar. 7 until Mar. 10, here at McMaster. It's an excellent opportunity to show ourselves off to our peers at other student unions at what is ultimately one of the most important weeks in our advocacy schedules. The prep work will be intense for our team.

International Student Cap Impact

With the new international student cap having been implemented by the Federal Government, I'm working to try and best understand the potential effects it may have on our student body in the near-, and long-term future. I have meetings booked with university administrators for exactly this topic point, because it will be critical in knowing how to best serve our student body in the years ahead.

Best,



Jovan Popovic

President & CEO

McMaster Students Union

president@msu.mcmaster.ca