



REPORT

From the office of the...
MSU President

TO: Members of the Student Representative Assembly
FROM: Jovan Popovic, President
SUBJECT: I Got 99 Problems but a GM Ain't One
DATE: June 9th, 2024

To the esteemed members of the SRA,

I hope to keep this update short and sweet (compared to my norm). Usually in the first month of a new term, things are very slow and quiet. While compared to the school year things have certainly slowed down, things have been a lot busier than this time last year! I'll get right into it.

2024-2025 Term Updates

VP Transitions

The recent leadership transition with the onboarding of our new VPs has been achieved at an exemplary pace. While VP transitions can often be lengthy due to the extensive knowledge required, Declan and Maya's strong foundational understanding has significantly expedited the process. Within a few short weeks, they have demonstrably grasped our current priorities and ongoing projects, reflecting a remarkable capacity for adaptation. They've thoroughly impressed me with their existing knowledge and their ability to integrate themselves effectively into our team, and the transition process is far ahead of where it would normally be. Huge congratulations to them both.

GM Hiring

Recognizing the importance of a strong leadership fit for the General Manager position, a comprehensive selection process was undertaken over the last month or so. Over the initial two weeks, a collaborative effort was initiated, involving the VPs and myself, to gather valuable insights from full-time staff members through rounds of face-to-face consultation. By incorporating their perspectives on desired candidate qualities, a targeted shortlist was established for subsequent interviews, which occurred the week of the 20th (May). I am pleased to report that we have chosen our next GM, which we hope to announce shortly.

Wallingford Hall

Early in the April exam season, several students from Wallingford Hall approached me with concerns about the construction surrounding the building through the entirety of the year. While I will not go into detail about the concerns, I will say that there were several breaches of McMaster policies, and the students did not nearly have the experience that they should have in their first year on campus. They had attempted to work with Housing and Conference Services, but it had not gotten anywhere, so they brought the concern to me. After having worked with HCS for approximately a month following my meeting with these students, they agreed to reimburse the students significantly, thousands of

dollars each. It was certainly a proud moment for me to see such a large and quick impact on this group of students who were clearly very deserving after all they had experienced.

Homecoming

It's happening – for real this time. One of my platform guarantees when I was seeking re-election was a promise to bring back homecoming on campus. It's something we haven't seen in six years now. It's critical to bring such a cornerstone event, between the sense of community and campus culture it creates, the social aspect that this campus lacks, the difference in student safety on campus versus off campus at unsanctioned street parties, and the impact it makes in the community. I'm proud to be able to bring it back.

Over the last month, working with campus events, and other campus partners towards this large event has been a priority. The university is finally on the same page as us after 12 months of meetings on the matter, and the plan for the day is finally taking shape. Things are coming together very well, and I expect this event to be a huge success come the fall.

CASA

I'll stay brief on this since Maya is sending off a report specifically on this conference. From May 13th to May 18th, we were in Ottawa for the first CASA conference of the year. This year it is important for us to be especially critical, as our observer ship expires toward the end of our terms, and a decision must be made on whether or not to hold a referendum.

Wednesday and Thursday were the most meaningful days of the conference. Other days were more focused on the full-member schools and no observers, so it wasn't as useful for us to have spent our time there, in hindsight. On the Wednesday and Thursday, there were some critical rounds of advocacy training, helping all delegates understand what preparation needs to go into meetings with politicians, holding mock meetings, etc. The training and briefing from CASA is what I generally consider to be their most valuable offering.

There will still be several conferences remaining this year to determine whether or not this is an organization we want to become a part of – after all it's expensive to be a part of CASA (approx. \$65k a year). At this moment in time, between last year's experiences and the first conference of the year, I lean towards no, but am still on the fence.

SLEF

For returning SRA members, this should sound very familiar to you. Back in the fall I submitted an idea to SLEF to build an outdoor sports complex (basketball, tennis/pickleball, industrial swings) to give students more to do on campus, and to encourage physical activity. The project ended up being the most highly voted project by the student body and was selected to proceed. Over the last month I've been working with Athletics and Recreation, as well as Facility Services to keep the project moving. Athletics agreed to be the long-term caretaker of the complex, which was a huge steppingstone, and set me up with a contact to look for quotes. Facilities took me for a campus walk through to look for potential locations. Three spots were identified – none of which were perfect, but some better than others – and a location was selected as the most ideal of the bunch.

The next steps on this project are finding quotes so that we can have an exact price and securing the location through proper approval channels. Parth, who has been hired as my Assistant to Presidential Affairs, has since taken on the project to determine these final steps. Once these are complete, we hope to see the SLEF committee initiate the project.

Upcoming Priorities

AI Expert Panel

Similarly to the Generative AI Task Force from last year which created the generative AI guidelines for the school year, the university has created a new AI Expert Panel to review, revise, and understand AI use at the university over the summer. Maya and I have been offered the opportunity to join the panel, and after how large and ordeal the task force from last year was, I expect a very similar path this summer. While we had to miss the first meeting due to the CASA conference in Ottawa, we should be available for the remainder of the summer meetings, which will be made a priority in ensuring students are able to learn with AI without worry of being wrongfully accused of academic misconduct.

Homecoming Planning

The closer it gets, the more work it becomes, especially as the largest event the MSU will have hosted in years. It's critical that this event becomes extremely successful given the recent perception surrounding off campus/unsanctioned homecoming events from the last several years. While the most difficult part of working with various stakeholders and overcoming perceptual hesitancy is behind us, there is still plenty of work in coordinating the full day of programming ahead.

Food & Beverage

After finally returning to self-operation last year for TwelvEighty, The Grind, and Union Market offered a much better space for students. However, as was expected, it was a difficult financial year as we figured out all of the processes with our completely new staff. Over the course of the summer, significant planning is underway to create a more successful establishment altogether. Our F&B team has done a great deal of planning alongside the BoD, and have provided me with a much improved sense of optimism.

Best,



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