



REPORT

From the office of the...
MSU President

TO: Members of the Student Representative Assembly
FROM: Jovan Popovic, President
SUBJECT: The Flies, They Mock Me
DATE: October 29th, 2024

2024-2025 Term Updates

Homecoming

Wow, what a success homecoming was. 13 huge inflatables on campus, McMaster's first sold out football game in 11 years, and one of the largest on campus concerts in the country, if not the largest, featuring Lil Tecca and Loud Luxury.

From the event we got exactly what we were looking for. It was amazing to see so many people on campus for the first time in six years, and it was the most buzz we've had in years. Street parties were down during the peak, and non-existent in the night, proving our concept successful. Students shouldn't avoid street parties out of fear of the nuisance bylaw, or fear of abuse of power or discrimination from the police. Students should avoid street parties because there's something better on campus – that was exactly the trend that we saw.

Media coverage was strong; I had interviews with The Silhouette, the Hamilton Spectator, CBC and CHCH, most of which on multiple occasions. We've seen backing from politicians, including Ward Councilor Maureen Wilson according to the Hamilton Spectator; "Wilson commended the students' union for their initiative in bringing homecoming back to campus". In conversations with university administrators, I've heard nothing but praise and positivity, further reinforcing McMaster's support for the event following the successful relaunch of homecoming by the MSU.

In addition to the success of the event in execution, as well as socially and politically, homecoming was also a financial success. While we always budgeted for a significant loss, our revenue through ticket sales and sponsorship brought down our actual loss substantially. While we still took a big hit financially on the day, the reduced loss only further justifies it as a successful investment into student life.

Our first event on Bounce was successful and ran smoothly, and the analytics our staff received have become very helpful in crafting future promotional narratives and communications.

TwelvEighty

While we've seen TwelvEighty turn itself around over the last year in terms of pricing, quality, portion sizes, ambiance, promotion and events, there's still issues waiting to be resolved logistically as the restaurant continues to grow, which have proven to be a challenge. Coming out of reading week we reduced the menu, removing some of the least ordered items, and the items found to be most difficult to prepare for our new student staff in the kitchen. Additionally, we reduced hours in the evenings to bring down costs at times when revenues were very low. This also helped to reduce strain on staff, who were stretched very thin while struggling to find a balance between weekly food prep, and actually making active orders.

Should business pick back up the later hours as the year progresses, we could reconsider extending hours, and potentially adding to our staff as long as our revenues can justify it.

Presidential Election

At this time last year, I came to the SRA pleading for help because I had zero consultations, and no known candidates for the upcoming Presidential election. While I can't speak on this too heavily, I can say that I've completed several consultations, and interest in the role has completely renewed – something I'm beyond excited to see. It continues to show the power of improving engagement with the student body and speaks directly to the effect of our efforts towards student engagement and awareness.

Athletics & Recreation New Director

Just over a month ago the department of Athletics and Recreation saw Keenan Jeppesen take on the role of Director. I was fortunate to have already had a strong relationship with Keenan, knowing him as someone who always prioritized the student voice. Keenan and I have had the opportunity to meet on a couple of occasions thus far, and our meetings have been nothing but encouraging.

Early discussions with Keenan surrounded our partnership efforts with homecoming, as well as student athlete advocacy pipelines, new service creation, advertising opportunities (going both ways), and more. One immediate change from our very first meeting was the official introduction

of the TwelvEighty Athlete of the Week. Each recipient receives a free meal at TwelvEighty as a reward for their outstanding performance in representing the McMaster community. I received numerous messages from Marauder athletes who were extremely excited to hear about this new opportunity, and word spread very quickly about the partnership with TwelvEighty.

Generative AI Policy

If SRA members got a dollar for every time I mentioned Generative AI in an SRA report, it would probably be enough to add SRA members to our payroll of full-time staff.

Last year Abby and I spent a bulk of time with the Generative AI Task Force to craft the guidelines for AI use at McMaster. While we had some pretty big wins, and the finalized guidelines were very reasonable, and overall, pretty successful throughout the year, we've had a shift in priorities with AI of recent.

While the guidelines were pretty good, the issue is that they are still guidelines, and therefore not enforceable, only encouraged. We've received many emails pertaining to student concerns over AI, most commonly the use of AI grading by professors, or wrongful allegations of academic integrity violations.

In recent discussions with the Vice-Provost of Teaching and Learning, it's been made clear that a shift from guidelines to policy has become a priority for the MSU, both in the short and long term. While there were hesitations to go full throttle on enacting AI policy, we were able to make ground by suggesting a blend of policy and guidelines – move to policy on our biggest priorities and leave lesser concerns as guidelines that can further be crafted and amended.

While changes like these don't happen quickly, I've been told that it is feasible to accomplish before the end of my term, so I have been, and will continue to work heavily towards that.

Presidents Council

The Presidents Council, between myself and the Presidents of the various faculty societies, has been rekindled and active this year, which is great. While the group has been productive, specifically through cross collaboration of advocacy efforts and event planning, attendance has become challenge, as most meetings usually only see 4-5 faculty society Presidents. The time together has been valuable, and I feel bad for those who have decided not to attend. I would encourage SRA members to reach out to their respective faculty societies asking for improved

engagement. I'm offering a lot of opportunities for involvement in my advocacy work, and overall change at this university. Those who don't attend these meetings are missing out on significant opportunities to represent their constituents.

OUSA Conference

The fall OUSA GA took place from Oct. 24 through to Oct. 27. While I missed the first day of the conference on bereavement leave, the next three days were very productive, especially recognizing the strength of the delegation who represented the MSU this year. Three papers were passed; Blue-Ribbon Panel Report, Student Financial Aid, and Environmental Sustainability, the final of which was impressively authored by our very own VP Education, Maya Hobbs.

The Blue-Ribbon Panel Report and Environmental Sustainability were very strong papers, but our delegation held some concerns over the paper on student financial aid. I was very proud of the way our delegates worked to diligently make recommendations and amendments to get the paper up to a standard in which we felt comfortable passing.

Facility Services

While we've had a challenging time working with Facility Services over the last several months on various projects, I was able to organize a meeting with the service Director, Ehab Kamarah. The meeting was very productive, and we quickly saw movement in the weeks following the meeting. While I won't speak too heavily on the projects discussed (as many were under the VP Finance portfolio and would be better explained by Declan), I can say that we finally have movement on the SLEF basketball and tennis/pickleball courts, which has started to feel a lot like an impossible mission up until recently. I am actively scheduling a meeting with a project manager within the department to kick off discussions to actually execute the project, so I'm very excited to continue seeing this project through.

Forge FC Partnership Discussions

I've recently had the privilege of working with Forge FC on a potential partnership to offer students discounted tickets to upcoming games. While we're still working internally to determine if we can make a larger event out of this, it's become a promising development that I think can offer some pretty cool perks to McMaster students. We hope to see something finalized soon.

Upcoming Priorities

Food & Beverage Logistics & Financing

As we continue to maneuver the landscape of the F&B world, we continue anticipating potential future challenges. While we are still making adjustments with TwelvEighty, the significantly improved revenue generation from The Grind and Union Market has had us investigating additional opportunities for growth in both business units. Further, we hope to see the Student Market in the second floor of The Hub open within the next month or so.

Generative AI Policy Creation

The next steps for this project come through meetings with the Vice-Provost Teaching & Learning to understand process, as well as meetings with the Presidents Council to launch a collaborative effort towards changing AI policy. This should lead us through the remainder of the fall term, with the next steps in January being to submit policy recommendations while following proper channels for policy change.

New Service Evaluations

Shocking to see another topic I've talked about probably 100 times in the last year, isn't it? As we get further along in our organizational restructure, I am beginning to re-evaluate the potential for new services, specifically a fitness/athletic advocacy-based service, as well as a student representation service for academic integrity cases. I've pitched both ideas to the SRA before through my reports. The difference between then and now is that in the past I was throwing out ideas. Now I'm actually looking at the process, planning, and feasibility to see these projects through before the end of my term. I would hope to return to the SRA in the near future with something more official.

Best,



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