



REPORT

From the office of the...

Science Caucus

TO: Members of the Student Representative Assembly
FROM: Sinthu Senthillmohan & Connor MacLean, SRA Science
SUBJECT: SRA 18H Report
DATE: Tuesday, October 9th, 2018

Hello members of the assembly!

We hope you enjoyed your reading week and are ready to jump back into the school year! Our year has been off to a great start and we can't wait to continue the work we've started as a team. Below, we've outlined our progress, successes & challenges. Feel free to reach out to us with questions, comments, compliments, and concerns. We'd be happy to chat and collaborate!

Stay rad,

SRA Science 2018-2019

PROGRESS ON YEAR PLAN

Accessibility

After we ran our "Action Potential" survey in March, we have been working to get our results to relevant groups on campus. The survey asked students questions regarding accessibility on campus (i.e. podcasts, textbook costs, and SAS note taking) and got 370+ responses. The Dean of Science was pleased with our initiative, and said she would take these results to higher committees before giving us an update next week (October 15th). Additionally, Sinthu is currently a member of the IT Student Advisory Committee (ITSAC), and was able to distribute these results to Marzena Kielar (Manager, IT Reporting & Data Analyst) and Lee Anne Bodo (Assistive Technologist, Student Accessibility Services). Both of these individuals will give us more updates at the next ITSAC meeting later this month. The data was also shared with Tasneem Warwani (AVP University Affairs), and we hope to work collaboratively with the UA committee to achieve our common objectives (namely, increased podcasted courses).

Mosaic Improvements

This is a project that we have discussed at length with both the Dean of Science and Marzena Kielar from ITSAC. Right now it seems that the priority is determining a way to provide updated course outlines on Mosaic during course registration. Once the Dean of Science has given us more information on how this was done for Humanities in the past, Sinthu will work with the University Affairs committee to make it a reality.

Academic and Career Resource Expansion

The Science Career and Cooperative Education Centre has made progress on the concerns that were raised at the start of the SRA term about career resources and making information available for how students can use their degrees in the workforce. They assembled a team of summer students to work on the project and investigate the best way to communicate and deliver the information to students. Connor met with some of the students over the summer to discuss key findings from his communications study in the previous year and through the work done for the MSS. The SCCE was very receptive to the needs of students and this is mostly due to the work done in consultation with them and the MSS at the end of last year/beginning of this year. More updates will come soon on when they are planning to roll out this information plan.

Extended Thode Library Hours Partnerships

Conversations have begun to create a promotions plan for the upcoming re-implementation of Extended Thode Library Hours, more popularly known as “3AM Thode”. We will be working closely with some MSU Services and University bodies to promote their services should students need them during the more stressful portions of the school year. We will have more to report in the future on the success of the promotions plan after it has been implemented.

Better Promotions in the Faculty of Science

Connor has been working closely with the Dean of Science to continue conversations around promotions in the Faculty of Science. A Communications Officer is about to be hired specifically for the Faculty of Science to focus on social media and digital media communications. Connor will be continuing his work with the Dean of Science as a Thesis project to investigate trends in social media usage and the efficacy of certain types of media on each of the platforms. The MSU will be informed of the outcomes of this study when they become available.

Mental Health Awareness

Ashley is currently in the consultation and information gathering phase of this project. Upon having conversations with Kristina, it seems that the best option would be to gather information about mental health resources both on and off campus, with a priority to those on campus, and distribute this pamphlet to students specifically in their first year in the faculty of science. Ashley will continue by reaching out to the residence manager to discuss possible avenues to share this pamphlet such as resident bulletin boards and possibly through the community advisors.

Improving Study Spaces

Raisa and Connor assisted Ikram to identify spaces in Innis, Mills, and Thode libraries that would benefit from having more outlets. Images of such places were sent to Ikram and forwarded to Anne Pottier. A bottleneck we face to increase the number of outlets in study spaces is the availability of power sources in older buildings. Further efforts to identify places without working outlets and the process involved to increase and fix outlets will be explored in the future.

Increased accessibility for those who are visually/hearing impaired

Vaishna has consulted with Kristina as to which ideas in the platform would be feasible and manageable to accomplish during the term. From this she has decided to focus on interpretations during lectures, braille signage and printing. Kristina has provided Vaishna with the contact information in order to accomplish this platform. Vaishna will contact SAS for interpretations during lectures. In terms of braille signage Ikram, housing and conference (Nancy Marco), and MUSC (Lori Diamond). Lastly, for braille printing Kristina has said she bring up the topic in a BoD meeting in terms of the underground. To assess the feasibility in libraries, Vaishna will contact Vivian Lewis.

PAST EVENTS, PROJECTS, AND ACTIVITIES

Continued MSS Relationships

During Welcome Week, Connor, Eric, Sinthu, and Raisa gave a quick speech to the first year cohort in the Faculty of Science. We shared some advice for first year in general and provided them with information about the SRA and MSU, and encouraged them to engage with us on social media. Raisa, Sinthu, and Ashley were also able to present at the MSS' General Assembly earlier this month. We have also held regular office hours in the MSS Office, which is discussed in more detail in the "Successes" section.

UPCOMING EVENTS, PROJECTS, AND ACTIVITIES

Master Events Calendar

After Sinthu had a brief conversation with Kristina about this, it seems like it would make more sense to go about improving and promoting the existing events calendar on the MSU website rather than creating a new one with the MSS. She will be setting up a meeting with Pauline Taggart soon to figure out how this can be done.

Freedom of Speech Town Hall & Survey

Connor and Ikram have begun conversations with Patrick Deane and Arig al Shaibah to host a town hall discussion where students can voice their opinions and concerns with the Freedom of Expression Guidelines that were released earlier this year. After a motion by the SRA in the summer for the MSU to actively promote marginalized voices in the conversations surrounding these guidelines, there was little movement for a variety of factors. However, these issues were resolved after voicing concerns about how to navigate some of these conversations when we are trying to bring voices to the table that are opposing viewpoints to some members of the assembly. This town hall will ideally allow students to have a direct say in the Freedom of Expression Guidelines before the provincial government pushes the university to create a policy that is harder to amend. The survey will come after the town hall if there are still concerns that were not able to be voiced at the in-person event.

CURRENT CHALLENGES

Gathering 7 people together to meet each other has proven difficult, with us having to split our office hours between two separate times with the MSS (although this provides us with more opportunities to engage with students and get to know the MSS better). We have yet to have a caucus meeting in the school year due to busy schedules, but a meeting is scheduled for the Monday after reading week. We are also working on getting headshots for each of the SRA members to put on social media, but again, schedules are hard to coordinate.

Connor is finding it difficult to stay on top of accomplishing platform points seeing how fast everything moves in the school year and how slow the university can be to respond sometimes. He will continue to work on finding time in his schedule to dedicate specifically to holding himself accountable and to reaching out to more constituents on important issues, like the Freedom of Expression Guidelines, which he recognizes has not been a strong point in the past few months for him.

Sinthu has been struggling with maintaining work-life balance in her final year of school. Balancing a thesis, three courses, extracurriculars, and work has proven to be difficult to balance alongside SRA responsibilities, especially since a large part of this role requires self-directed progress. Similar to Connor, she is finding it hard to coordinate meetings with the right people at the right times, when everyone seems to be busy and/or waiting on someone else to get back to them first. She hopes that by implementing bi-weekly caucus meetings she can work with the rest of the caucus to divide important work amongst themselves, and in turn be held accountable for her work.

Maryanne has also been struggling with maintaining a work-life balance with her other commitments. Being an Exec for an MSU Service, a Community Advisor, and also trying to be a good caucus member has been difficult, since sometimes it seems that to do well in one commitment, others have to be lost. To combat this, Maryanne will continue to be a viable member in the committees that she is currently in, and will continue to support initiatives brought up by the SRA that align with her specific goals.

Raisa is also struggling to maintain balance between her school, work, and other MSU service commitments while actively working towards fulfilling her SRA platform goals. She plans to begin discussions on anticipated projects such as building a research hub with the MSS, and being an active member on her standing committees.

Ashley has been finding it difficult to create a clear path for her platform points and struggles with trying to balance school along with her commitments to the SRA. Keeping up with the ongoing changes within the MSU and with fellow caucus members' progress has been difficult due to conflicting schedules and other commitments. To combat this, she plans to reach out to the resources available such as the VP admin when her path seems unclear or blocked. She also finds that in the future, she will make it a priority to keep up to date with fellow caucus member progress.

Vaishna has been struggling to maintain a balance between her school work, and other commitments. It has been difficult to keep up with the meetings and various duties which are required to be an active member of the caucus. Vaishna has also found it difficult to identify a method to go about achieving her platform point, but after further conversations she now has a more clear cut plan. She plans on being an active member of her standing committee by actively taking part in conversations.

SUCSESSES

Communication/Promotion

Our instagram has been much more active than it has been in previous years. Aside from posting official MSU graphics (such as biweekly meeting promotions, and updates from various services), we have also expanded to include many more pictures of ourselves! This has definitely increased our

engagement (shout out to Haley Greene for the tips), as students can see us actively taking part in events around campus. Our most notable posts included a group picture from training day, and a picture of us speaking at Science Faculty Day during Welcome Week. We also post on our instagram story to inform followers of ongoing meetings & office hours!

Continued MSS Relationships

We hit a road bump when the president of the MSS had to resign over the summer, however, the new team has been quick to take our suggestions to work together. We were able to present at both the Science Faculty Day & MSS General Assembly, introducing ourselves and our roles to hundred of constituents. Additionally, we have started hosting office hours in conjunction with the MSS, taking two time slots within their office hour schedule for the main office (BSB B108). Lastly, we have been including them in our communications with the Dean of Science, who we will all be meeting with this upcoming Monday (October 15th). Eric had a meeting in September with the MSS President, Science Advocacy Representative, and the fourth year representative. The aim of this meeting was to help them define their upcoming objectives of academic advocacy for Science. In this meeting Eric talked about his advocacy experience from being a voting member of the University Affairs committee during the 2016-2017 year. Some of the things discussed were surveys and data collection to hear student voices, talking to the dean of science, and ways to improve science courses.

Evaluating and Improving MSU Communications, Advertising, and Student Engagement

Eric has worked hard to introduce the “CASE” Ad Hoc committee. After consultations with Michael Wooder, Scott Robinson, and Kristina Epifano, Eric decided to create an ad-hoc committee at the last SRA meeting. The committee is called the Communications, Advertising, and Student Engagement Ad Hoc committee (CASE). The committee has aims to investigate various areas that fall under this umbrella and hopes to meet in the coming weeks after the next SRA meeting where voting members will be elected.

OTHER

We hope everyone is having a great year and we think you're all really cool. If you read this far in the report, you rock and you're doing amazing sweetie.

Best,

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