



# REPORT

*From the office of the...*  
**Vice-President (Finance)**

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TO: Members of the Student Representative Assembly  
FROM: Alexandra Johnston, Vice-President (Finance)  
SUBJECT: SRA 19M Report  
DATE: November 28<sup>th</sup>, 2019

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Dear Members of the Assembly,

It has been two really busy months since my October 6<sup>th</sup> report and I am very proud of the work I have accomplished over that time. The past 7 months in this role have been challenging however I continue to learn more every day and I am excited about what is still to come moving forward.

As you can see, I have made progress on all 30 of my year plan objectives while taking on new projects. I have completed 19 of my objectives with my remaining 11 objectives on-going or in-progress. Additionally, I have added new projects onto my plate, while this makes my days even busier, I am really trying to leave my mark and ensure I make the most of this incredible opportunity to improve student life.

Lastly, to any folks who may be reading this and considering running for the VP Finance role next year. If you have any questions for me about anything at all, please do not hesitate to reach out to me, I want to help you/be a resource for you :)

As always, if you have any questions for me after reading my report, please do not hesitate to email me [vpfinance@msu.mcmaster.ca](mailto:vpfinance@msu.mcmaster.ca).

See you all soon,

Alexandra Johnston  
Vice-President (Finance) & CFO  
McMaster Students Union

## PROGRESS ON YEAR PLAN

**Objective #1:** Lead the Student Choice Initiative Campaign

**Status:** Complete

See previous report for full update. The individual opt-out percentages for each service have been circulated in a separate memo.

**Objective #2:** Assist the Vice-President (Education) and President with Advocacy Efforts

**Status:** On-going

Since my last report, I have met with Doly Begum, the Deputy Opposition Whip in October for a lobby meeting with Josh and Angel. At this meeting we discussed the Student Choice Initiative amongst other student priorities. Additionally, I attended OUSA's fall General Assembly over the November 1-3<sup>rd</sup> weekend as a delegate and advocated hard when it came to the Ancillary fees paper. I will continue to act as a resource for Josh and Shemar when/if needed when it comes to having a Financial perspective in lobby meetings.

**Objective #3:** Implement September and January Transparency Weeks

**Status:** September, complete. January: in-progress

For an update on September, please see my last report! Planning for the January transparency week is underway. I will be working with Jess, the AVP Finance and the Finance Committee to continue to promote Financial and Operational Transparency. If any folks who contributed and engaged in Septembers week have feedback or suggestions for January transparency week, please email me!

**Objective #4:** Enhance the MSU Financial Transparency Resources

**Status:** In-Progress

The September transparency weeks were a great start to enhancing the MSU transparency resources. I was able to update our fee graphics and the website, specifically the "Your Money" tab. I noticed the Your Money tab was very outdated and was missing SRA monthly memos, overall it needed some TLC. As such, I worked with Connor, the Communications Officer to update the Your Money page and the VP Finance page to include all updated documents. As a next step, I will work to create service specific graphics to continue my transparency efforts and work with the Finance Committee who is looking to provide improvements to the Your Money tab this year.

**Objective #5: Expand The Grind**

**Status: Complete**

Please see my previous report for the full detailed report!

The expanded Grind space continues to be a success and I have received a lot of positive feedback. I have one outstanding invoice that I am waiting to receive for the light installation and once I have this I will present to the SRA on the total cost of the expansion. I anticipate I will do this presentation at either the January 12<sup>th</sup> or January 26<sup>th</sup> meeting. At this time, I will also provide insight into how the sales revenue is trending for the year! Overall, I am very proud of the expansion and the high utilization it has from students, every table is full almost every time I am in the space.

**Objective #6: Create and Promote a TwelvEighty take-out**

**Status: Complete**

Please see my previous report for the full detailed report!

TwelvEighty 2-Go continues to be a success. The popularity has continued to grow and I continually see students (even lines of students!) waiting for their order any time I am down there! I am very proud of the work and success of this project and the success has also been reflected in TwelvEighty's sales numbers, we are on track for the best year financially in 5+ years.

**Objective #7: Improve TwelvEighty Space**

**Status: Complete**

Please see my previous report for details.

**Objective #8: Increase TwelvEighty/ The Grind Sustainability Efforts**

**Status: In-Progress**

This year, I have been a Community Project Champion for the Sustainability 3S03 course. With this, I worked with students to collect students feedback on how The Grind can increase its sustainability and the group is going to provide me with final recommendations. The final presentation is December 3<sup>rd</sup> and I am excited to hear from the group about their final recommendations.

Additionally, in an effort to further reduce our single use cup waste within the MSU and also McMaster, I reached out to Donna Shaprio from the Campus Store and asked if we could collaborate on a reusable mug to sell. Donna is very interested and over the next month, we will be working together to design a mug that can be sold at MSU locations, the Campus Store and hopefully other Hospitality Service locations on campus. The vision for this mug is it would have both the University and the MSU logo to be a joint collaboration!

Lastly, an additional sustainability role I have taken on has been that I now sit as a member on the University Sustainability Committee. The goals for this committee include composting on campus, addressing single use plastic bottles, and IT waste. It is my hope that through this work we will find ways to also implement a form of composting at The Grind.

**Objective #9:** Re-brand the Union Market

**Status:** Complete

Please see my previous report for full update.

**Objective #10:** Add a large coffee-cup size at Union Market

**Status:** Complete

Please see my previous report for full update.

**Objective #11:** Re-work Underground staffing structure/product offering

**Status:** In-Progress

I have been working closely with the new Underground Creative Director, Paula to address outstanding issues that have carried over from last year in the Underground. Paula has been a fantastic new addition to the MSU team and we have improved our invoicing system and project management. Additionally, pending SRA approval at the meeting, it is my hope that we are able to hire the external consultant they who will review our the MSU's staffing structure and provide recommendations on additional tools for revenue generation.

**Objective #12:** Adjust the Compass Hours of Operation

**Status:** Complete

Please see my previous reports for full update.

**Objective #13:** Increase MSU presence at Compass space

**Status:** Complete

Please see my previous reports for full update.

**Objective #14:** Evaluate the Silhouette publication and printing schedule

**Status:** Complete

The Silhouette Board of Publication finalized the term 2 print schedule at our meeting on November 26<sup>th</sup>. At this meeting, it was a unanimous agreement upon to move to a bi-weekly print schedule starting in January. With the change to bi-weekly print, the Silhouette will continue to publish articles online in the off weeks. Additionally, with the shift towards a more long-standing print product and more digital content, the Board of Publication recognizes the need for more online resources, i.e. the Silhouettes website.

The Silhouette Online-Editor, Razan and the Silhouette Editor and Chief, Hannah are exploring options for a website revamp to be planned for the 2020-2021 academic year and will continue to update The BoP. Additionally, I will continue to work with Hannah to plan for the changing needs of The Silhouette for the 2020-2021 year while ensuring overall financial sustainability.

**Objective #15:** Re-work the Programming Advisory Committee

**Status:** Complete

Please see my previous reports for the full update.

**Objective #16:** Refocus Campus Programming to large-scale events and introduce bi-weekly trivia

**Status:** Complete

Please see my previous report for the full update. Rainn Wilson and Charity Ball tickets are on sale now tho ☺

**Objective #17:** Streamline clubs budget submission and funding process

**Status:** In-progress

After meeting with Aditi and allocating clubs their 2019-2020 funding, I have a lot of ideas about how we can streamline the clubs funding process moving forward. To address streaming club funding, I strongly think we need to explore the idea of bringing clubs budget management in house to the MSU (i.e. no more individual bank accounts for each club). I think this would increase ease of clubs budgeting for the clubs executives. However, with the review of our overall clubs department happening I have delayed working on this until we have the final direction we are taking moving forward. I have been collaborating with the rest of the Board, Aditi (Clubs Admin) and Graeme (AVP IG) to share my feedback. Additionally, upon receiving SRA approval, the third party consultants we are looking to hire can also assist in coming up with the best, most sustainable solution for our clubs department and how we fund clubs.

**Objective #18:** Improve clubs support

**Status:** Complete

Please see my previous report for full update.

**Objective #19:** Continue Rep Support

**Status:** Complete

Please see my previous report for full update.

**Objective #20:** Improve MUSC space

**Status:** In-Progress

Unfortunately, in early July, the basement of MUSC flooded and severely damaged the Silhouette's office and other MSU departments. Now that the renovations to the basement are complete, Josh and I have refocused our efforts on improvements to the MUSC 3<sup>rd</sup> floor patio. Currently, Lori Diamond is working to finalize the Facility Services project lead for the feasibility study and from there, they will create a Request For Proposal to hire an architect to review the space.

**Objective #21:** Oversee Student Activity Building and solidify building name

**Status:** Naming, Complete; Building Construction Management, On-going!

At the SRA Meeting in October, the SRA approved the 3 final shortlisted names that students will be voting on in January. These names are: Student Life Center, Marauder Activity Center and The Hub. In January, we will promote the voting process to students and once we have the final result, the top name will go through the formal University naming process.

Additionally, overall construction on the building is moving along well. The early snow in November creating some small scheduling hurdles however, we are continuing to push forward. We just finished reviewing the final AV package for the building. Tony and Trish from Campus Events were great at sharing their insight to ensure there is the correct built in equipment for the multitude of events the space holds. Additionally, we are now beginning conversations about the space signage and the interior design, including finishing's and furniture design. I will continue to provide updates and I am planning to do a presentation for you all towards the end of my term as a wrap up of the progress made this year!

**Objective #22:** Promote affordable food options

**Status:** Complete & on-going

Now that the 1280/Grind promotions coordinator has been working, we have begun promoting affordable food options to students. This has gone well so far and we are brainstorming additional ways to reach out to students. If anyone has any ideas about how we can further our out-reach to students, please let me know :) Additionally, to draw further attention to our food and beverage updates and our affordable food options, we have been highlighting our Food and Beverage departments more on our main social media!

**Objective #23:** Create an MSU wide Digital Media Strategy

**Status:** In-Progress

The initial stages of this have begun, however we are still at the early stages. This past week there was a meeting where the Comms team and The Underground team reviewed

the MSU's brand guidelines and began to talk about our strategic planning moving forward. This will pick up more in the new year!

**Objective #24:** MSU Wide Feedback Survey

**Status:** In-Progress

The MSU Wide Feedback Survey has been going GREAT so far! I am so proud of this initiative as it really stems from my disconnected feeling with the MSU throughout my first three years of undergrad. I created a long survey which asks students about their awareness, engagement, perception and overall feedback for the MSU. **The survey has been live for a week and a half so far and I have 450 responses!** The responses are incredible valuable and really identify our strengths and weaknesses as an organization. The survey will stay open until mid-December and I will absolutely present an overview to the SRA after it closes in the new year. **Please encourage your constituents/friends to complete this survey.** I would really like to see the MSU continue this on a year or bi-yearly basis going forward. Overall feedback is so important, especially in a sector where students needs change so rapidly.



**Objective #25:** Update the SLEF timeline

**Status:** Complete

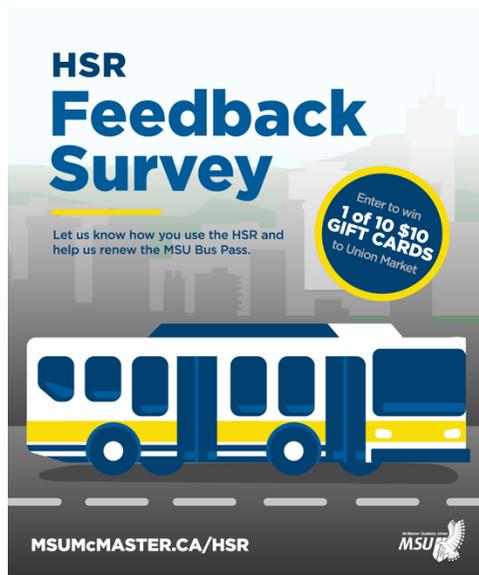
The pushed up SLEF Timeline worked incredibly well this year, we received around 70 idea submissions! Jess and The Finance Committee did a fantastic job with promotions. We are currently vetting down/consolidating ideas and the top 8-10 ideas will be voted on by students in January... stay tuned :)

**Objective #26:** Promote the Sponsorship and Donations Fund  
**Status:** Complete & on-going

Please see previous my report for full update.

**Objective #27:** Renew HSR Bus Pass Agreement  
**Status:** In-progress

The HSR Survey in October was a big success, in just two weeks we received around 250 responses. The data has been very helpful to add insight into students average trip length and overall frequency, as well as their suggestions for service improvement. The contract renewal discussions have really picked up over the last week as they moved quite slowly before then. As such, unfortunately due to bylaw constraints and the SRA meeting schedule this year, the HSR referendum will occur with the SRA general elections in February/March. This said, John and I have been working and pushing hard to ensure what we present to students is the best offer for them and I am excited to wrap up the final terms we will be bringing forward.



**Objective #28:** Piolet Board Office-Hours  
**Status:** Complete & on-going

Shemar and I have developed the bi-weekly office-hour schedule which began in the fall term. Overall, I think it is a good initiative, however, I have noticed overall low student engagement (at my office-hours!). Over the next month, I will work with the Board to see if we can re-envision the office hours for term 2 to increase student engagement.

**Objective #29:** Re-work MSU Organizational Structure

**Status:** In-Progress

Pending SRA approval, we will be hiring the external consultants to come in and review our overall staffing structure. This project would wrap up in February leaving enough time to implement changes for the 2020-2021 year. **I am very hopefully the SRA approves the operating fund allocation, it is imperative that the MSU establishes a sustainable structure to support all of our amazing services and staff. This will ensure we can continue to provide great services to students on campus!**

**Objective #30:** Support our part-time managers, full-time staff, and student leaders on campus

**Status:** On-going

Overall, this is going really well. I have been engaging with many staff, volunteers and students in the hopes of supporting them the best I can in this role. Some updates from my last report include:

- Student Choice HST meeting with Faculty Societies
  - I collaborated with the University's Financial Affairs department to plan a workshop with KPMG. At this workshop a tax specialist came to discuss the impact of charging HST on non-essential student fees.
- Departmental SWOT analysis
  - I have been working with full-time staff and department heads to create SWOT analysis for each of our departments. This will be very helpful moving forward into the 2020 year and to provide to the consultants during their onboarding process.
- PTM mid-year budget check ins
  - With the help of Jess, we conducted mid-year budget check-ins with all of the PTMs to see how their year had been going and make sure they're on track with their budgets for the year. This has been helpful in identifying issues PTMs are facing to ensure we can address them for the new year!
- Additionally, I have had many different meetings with students to help with a range of things from ticketing, to budgeting, to banking... there's just a lot to list so I picked the highlight!

## **ADDITIONAL/NEW PROJECTS**

### 1. Website re-development

An unexpected project that I have ended up taking the lead on this year has been the MSU website re-development project. This project has been a huge undertaking to lead, however, **I believe the MSU website will be revamped by the end of my term!** I have spent time connecting with various MSU staff to understand their website needs and am now working to create a template for the new website. We will be switching to a WordPress format which is much more current and adaptable, and the new interface will be AODA compliant!

The goal with the new website is to really trim down overall content and backend functionality possibilities. The reason for this is our current website is 7 years old and was created right before the popularity of social media and things like google docs/forms. As such, the new website will not need to have a lot of the functions or current website does! This will create a cleaner website with content that does not get stale as fast!

## 2. Hire McMaster

I sit on the Hire McMaster Steering committee which is a University Committee focused on increasing recruitment on campus. I have been working with Daniel Hess, the director of this initiative, to plan their industry weeks. In November, I assisted with the Government Job industry week and panel discussion generated a packed room with over 250 students and the job fair also had over 200 students attend. I will continue to assist in the planning of the next industry week for February and March!

## 3. Increased Full-Time staff support

Although I have this as objective 30, I do believe this has almost become a separate objective on its own. A large undertaking of mine this year and particularly over the last month has been to lead and implement full-time staff goal setting and performance reviews. Additionally, I implemented 360 reviews so I am currently in the process of collecting anonymous reviews from our service part time staff and contract employees about their direct supervisor!

## 4. Welcome Week Fee review

As a member of the Welcome Week Advisory Committee, I have been tasked with reviewing the financial accessibility of welcome week and making suggestions about the 2020 fee structure.

## **UPCOMING EVENTS, PROJECTS & ACTIVITIES**

- Completion of MSU Feedback Survey
- Website Redesign
- Consultant Lead (pending approval!)
- 2020 Budget Cycle

## **CURRENT CHALLENGES**

At times I find it really hard to balance the separation between work and my personal life. Quite often I receive Facebook messages either late at night or on the weekend which makes it challenging to have a break. This role can be really demanding and can take a lot out of you/ Additionally, I just wrote my LSAT on Monday so managing studying on top of work has also been hard to balance. Thankfully, I feel incredibly supported by the

other Board members and my family, I could not and would not like to imagine what this role would be like without them!

**CLOSING REMARKS:**

Overall, things are progressing well and I am on track with all of my year plan objectives and then some for the end of the year! If you have any questions or would like to discuss anything further, please do not hesitate to email me.

Best,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alex Johnston". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping flourish at the end of the name.

**Alexandrea Johnston**

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