



REPORT

From the office of the...

President

TO: Student Representative Assembly
FROM: Joshua Marando
SUBJECT: MSU President Report – SRA 19-O
DATE: January 26, 2020

Dear Members of the Assembly,

Happy new year! Sorry I could not be at the meeting today – if you have any questions feel free to email me or direct them to a member of the board. We're over halfway through our term and I am so happy to see all the great work you folks have done. As always the past 8 months have been a wild ride and have been a lot more challenging than expecting but we're making it through! I continue to learn more each and everyday and am excited about what is to come forward.

As you can see I have completed a number of yearplan objects with the rest remaining in progress. I have definitely hit some roadblocks on some and am trying to see what we can do in the next few month to either have all of the completed or leave my predicesor in a good place to continue the work being done. Additionally, I have added quite a few new projects to my plate which have been challenging but it is very interesting to see what opportunities there are for change.

I summarize where we are at with the clubs policy changes at the end of the report as it wasn't orginialy a year plan objective but has of course become a priotity. A big thank you to all of those who have helped and contributed to the review thus far as it seems to be shaping up well and I think we will have a much improve clubs department as a result. Also it's presidents! Please vote next week!!

Thanks y'all

Joshua Marando
President & CEO
McMaster Students Union

PROGRESS ON YEARPLAN

Objective #1: MUSC 3rd Floor Terrace

Status: In-Progress

We have been working with Lori Diamond, the MUSC Director. As I reported previously, SSAC approved a feasibility study to be done on the space. It is looking like the original proposal might be quite expensive and not the best use of capital improvement funds, so we are bringing in an architect to conduct a feasibility study. This will show us some things we can do and what estimated costs for those changes will be. We are still prioritizing making the space a multiple season space, allowing for study space, and ensuring the it remains bright and not just another study room. Since my last report Lori has been working with facilities to solicit an architect but we have been having challenges getting our space on the priority list. I am still hopeful to have the feasibility study completed this year, and initial plans approved, but this has turned into a multi-year project. Overall, I do still think it is a priority as student space is still a challenge, and though SAB will be opening eventually, unassigned general student space is still needed on campus.

Objective #2: Clubspace Renovation

Status: Complete

As mentioned earlier, clubs admin, and Stephanie, our assistant clubs admin have been doing great work with regards to completing our clubspace renovations. Aditi did a great job of ordering adaption furniture and ensured hospital grade fabric is used to ensure everything is best suited to remain in good quality for the years to come. We have been utilizing the current tables and getting some more chairs so there is desk space, but in purchasing furniture, the notion of it being an adaptable lounge and event space for clubs remained at the forefront. Recently, the clubs team worked with Michael Wooder, our Marketing and Communications Director to add design wraps to the walls and poles to iterate the purpose of the space. We are now exploring ways in which we can preserve the space moving forward since the renovations were not cheap and we want to prevent things getting ruined. Open to suggestions!

Objective #3: 2nd & Third Floor Furniture

Status: Complete

At our previous MUSC Board of Management meeting we approved our 2019-2020 capital budget for furniture maintenance and upkeep. This will go to upgrading and improving furniture on the second and third floor. This is already started in the area outside of clubspace and I am excited to see continued improvement.

Objective 4: Tuition Tax Credit Reallocation

Status: In-Progress

Currently, approximately \$1.5 billion is spent on tuition tax credits. Though they are a classic form of financial aid for students, tax credits should be viewed as vestigial, as they have been widely criticized by stakeholder groups, private consultants, and even the Parliamentary Budget Officer for as a result of fewer credits being claimed, higher income families benefitting from credits more than low income families, and students directly receiving only one-third of the tax credit. By reallocating the funding into upfront grants, students will be able to receive the money when they are paying for their tuition and related expenses rather than when they are filing taxes during their degree or after when they are earning enough to claim the credit. I am currently finalizing our lobby brief on financial aid for UCRU lobby week and this is a core priority.

Objective 5: Tuition Late Fees

Status: On-going

This has been an ongoing advocacy recommendation. We have voiced and registered concern and will be having continual conversations on alternative incentives for payment and supports for students with financial challenges.

Objective 6: Re-examining exams

Status: On-going

A number of student staff along with myself have been working on the long term goals of restructuring our assessment and examination structures. There has been great strides in terms of looking at how we assess students with a new intersessional teaching project, different projects taken on at a faculty level, and working with SWC and student affairs on how to best structure courses. This will be an ongoing initiative.

Objective 7: Accessible Learning

Status: on-going

Again, some good movement on this. I am working with the Echo 360 working group that is being headed by Shemar. We have written our advocacy brief and will begin meeting with key university administrators and professors shortly to begin our meetings to discuss the inclusion of Echo 360 use within courses. Additionally, as a part of the Student Mental Health Advisory Group we are working on a set of modules to be administered to student-facing professors and staff on mental health, accommodations, and accessible academics. This has been moving well and I am hoping to see these roles out before the summer term.

Objective 8 & 9: Campus Maintenance and Physical Accessibility

Status: on-going

This has been a priority of the university as well and is a key point in the EDI framework moving forward. We have begun our EDI steering committee, which oversees a number of other working groups including the mcmaster accessibility council, age friendly university committee, and a number of other groups working towards EDI. A key point in the accessibility framework is completing the accessibility audit and utilizing the information already gathered to determine next steps and a long term plan to improving the physical accessibility of campus.

Objective 10: Sexual Violence Reponse
Status: On-Going

The MSU and the EIO have been working together to ensure we are improving the safety of campus. We have seen some great improvements with two positions being hired within the EIO regarding sexual violence prevention and education and sexual violence education. Sarah will be helping to hire both these positions and they have been receptive to student feedback. Additionally we saw improvements to the university sexual violence and harassment policy which we supported the consultation process for and Sarah is working with her team to improve our internal workplace documents.

Objective 11: SVRP at Events
Status: On-Going

This is another objective that Sarah has been doing great work on. She has been working with campus events, main office staff, EIO, and our Peer Support services to improve the safety and SVPR at our large scale events. We got positive feedback from changes made to the welcome week concert, volunteer appreciation events, and we are continuing to take feedback on how to improve and change moving forward.

Objective 12 + 13: Mental Health Support
Status: On-Going

Myself and Sean are still working to see how increased staff could be best used – with the thought currently being increased councilors in SWC specifically focusing on identity representation as that is something many students have identified as a barrier to accessing support from their councilor. That will hopefully be supplemented by increased resources for SAS to allow for more support academically for student seeking accommodations.

Currently, I am undergoing a review of student services fees at our university comparators and we are exploring the option of increase the fee by an additional 2% over inflation to accommodate for increased staff and safeguard against potential service changes as a result of expiring grants.

Along with this, we have been beginning conversations about additional methods of support that can be introduced to expand what is offered through the Student Assistance

Plan and allow students to access support without having to go through the SWC. Along with this there has been a new committee struck as the second phase of the Student Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy. This will focus on mental health education for educators and with hopefully help reduce the barriers folk face in the classroom and allow for a more accessible education. Additionally, we have been having conversations with SWC staff about easier bookin and assessments, and they have introduced options for folks who don't feel comfortable saying the nature of their appointment outloud and have been working to improve the set-up of the reception area.

Objective 14: International Student OHIP

Status: In-Progress

At last general assembly we selected the Internation Student Support paper to be written by OUSA. I gave feedback to amend our policy to recommend that International students would be eligible to opt-in to OHIP+ at no premium. We will be reviewing this policy at the winter GA and will hopefully have this become OUSA advocacy policy.

Objective 15: Off-campus lighting

Status: In-progress

The municipal affairs team has done a lot of work on this including a survey and audit. Feel free to refer to either the VP Education or AVP municipal affairs reports

Objective 16: Bike Lanes

Status: On-going

Have been having communication with our Ward 1 city councillors about seeing if it is a possibility to invest in bike lanes in the surrounding area. Come the next budget cycle we will see if any additional funds have been allocated and asses whether it should be added to the next municple budget submission.

Objective 17: Sidewalk Snow Removal

Status: In-Progress

This was a priority within our 2019-2020 municpal budget submissions. Shemar, Ryan, myself, as well as other members of the Municipal Affairs Committee have been lobbying to all city councilors on this priority ahead of the budget approval. We have received mixed feedback from councillors and are continueing to lobby on this priority.

Objective 18: HSR Service Improvements

Status: In-progress

There have been communication regarding service somewhat as a part of the fee renegotiation which will be voted on by students this election cycle. Once this is approved, we can have on-going coversations about specific service improvements and

continue our work with the re-invision the HSR project, which has plans to come back to campus.

Objective 19: Welcome Week Support
Status: Complete

Please refer to previous reports

Objective 20: EOHSS/Room Bookings
Status: On-Going

The new EOHSS system was implemented this year and had a lot of success in fast tracking the room booking process. On-going support and system improvement is occurring. Additionally, we are exploring opportunities to improve sustainability and possibly incorporating environmental risk into the system.

Objective 21: Expand Clubsfest
Status: Complete

Please refer to previous reports

Objective 22 + 23: Arts Based Initiatives
Status: In-progress

Have run into challenges with this specific objective. I am in the process of re-evaluating possibilities and exploring options and will provide an update in my next report.

Objective 24: 1280 to go
Status: Complete

Please refer to previous reports

Objective 25: \$5 meals
Status: Complete

Please refer to previous reports

Objective 26 + 27: Review organization structure and revenue generation
Status: In progress

We are in the process of completing our organizational review with KPMG. Please refer to the VP Finance report for more details.

Clubs Review

Status: In Progress

The clubs review is well underway and we have been working with a large number of groups to facilitate feedback and suggestions. Graeme, our AVP Internal Governance, has been liaising with the IG Committee to get feedback, suggestions, and best practices, and has been working with Sarah and I to see how they best fit within the MSU. Sarah and I have also engaged with a number of our other university counterparts through either phone meetings or doing a review of their clubs policies and structure. We have gotten good movement on our ratification procedure and should be making the final touches on that shortly. We are currently looking at our clubs definitions and requirements as well as our judicial policies. We have done some brainstorming on this and are now in the consultation and writing process for these sections. We are working on revisions to the CEC to change to an advisory council with more SRA representation so there can be more responsibility put on that body as well as exploring an appeal board to mimic our elections system to allow for appeals to be made more impartially. Additionally, we are exploring clubs financial systems and perhaps moving to internal banking for our clubs. This would allow for the elimination of bank fees, which currently sit at around \$18,000 per year, as well as smoother reimbursement methods and more financial accountability measures to support our student leaders. Along with this we are exploring what the staffing structure should look like with the ideal creation of a permanent full time staff member to assist with the transition and revising the clubs administrator role in light of that change as well as the changes to the CEC to allow for more support. This process should be done mid-late February, and will be done in tandem with our KPMG review. We are hoping to get their expert opinion on the finance and staffing changes, which impact the policies, so we will likely see these changes brought in late February early March. With this we can expect the judicial, staffing, financial, and committee changes to take place April 2020 and the changes in ratification to occur in September 2020 to accommodate earlier deadlines for documents as it will not be completed in time for this year's ratification cycle. If you have any questions please feel free to reach out to myself, Sarah, or Graeme. If you would like to be involved and have not talked with either of us already, please liaise with Graeme for the Internal Governance Committee schedule.