



# 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: February 18<sup>th</sup>, 2020

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Dear Members of the Assembly,

I hope you are all having a relaxing reading week! Time has flown by since my last report in November and I cannot believe there is only 2.5 months left if this role. Since my last report, I have been busy wrapping up my year plan goals as well as additional initiatives I have taken on since creating my year plan. As you can see below, I have currently completed 26/30 of my year plan goals and the other 4 are in-progress and on track for completion by the end of April. I am happy and proud to say I think I will have completed 100% of my year plan by the end of my term.

With there being only 2.5 months left, I did want to make a quick note to anyone who may be reading this report and considering running for this job in April! If you are considering running for VP Finance and want to learn more about the role, get feedback about ideas, or ask any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out, I want to help you and be a resource for you! Running for this role is scary, and if you are reading this and feel like you're not enough of an expert in everything MSU or do not have enough experience, please know you do not need to be and there will never be the perfect experience for this job! These jobs are unique, but the governance process, finance procedures, and internal operations are all teachable. If you have a passion for improving student life at McMaster, have some ideas to enhance student experience and want to make a difference for the McMaster community then you are totally qualified! My inbox is always open for anyone who has questions about running 😊

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

See you all soon,

Alexandrea Johnston  
Vice-President (Finance) & CFO

## PROGRESS ON YEAR PLAN

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

**Status:** Complete

See previous reports for full update. The individual opt-out percentages for each service were also circulated in a separate memo in November 2019.

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

**Status:** Complete & on-going

Please see my last report for full updates of everything from this year. A current advocacy initiative I am working on is for the University to contribute more funds to support the operations of EFRT in 2020. Over the next two months, 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: complete.

For an update on September, please see my last reports!

This past January, thanks to the help of the Finance Committee, on January 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> there was financial transparency tabling in MUSC and DBAC. This was a great way to interact with students and it was great to have these early in the semester for folks who have questions about getting involved, the MSU, and their fees. Something I have observed from the financial transparency tabling initiative is that it is also a great way to increase overall MSU transparency. There are a lot of students who approach these tables and have questions about the MSU in general. I find the financial transparency tabling also acts as an overall MSU transparency table as well! In the future, I would recommend not tabling in DBAC as there is overall more traction in MUSC. Thank you again to the Finance Committee for your help, you are all superstars ☺

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

**Status:** Complete

On top of the financial transparency tabling, I have worked to update the [Your Money page](#) and the [VP Finance page](#) to include all updated documents. Initially, I had hoped to generate service specific graphics containing each of their fee breakdowns, however with the uncertainty around SCI, I feel that could create more confusing for students so I have decided not to pursue this goal for this term.

**Objective #5: Expand The Grind**

**Status: Complete**

Please see my previous report for the full detailed report!

The expanded Grind continues to be a success, the space is routinely full of students utilizing the space and the new product offerings are a hit! I am still waiting for the invoice for the lighting, once I have received it, I will present a year recap to the SRA.

**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, roughly 11% of all orders are now 2-Go! Finance Committee is currently evaluating trends for 1280 and the success of the take-out initiative so I am looking forward to seeing their findings.

**Objective #7: Improve TwelvEighty Space**

**Status: Complete**

Please see my previous reports for details!

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

**Status: Complete**

This year, I was 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 efforts. The final presentation was December 3<sup>rd</sup> and at that time, the group recommended creating a Grind rewards card and we launched this initiative just a couple weeks ago! Additionally, I have worked with Kyle, the 1280/Grind Marketing Director to order mugs for the Grind. We did a poll on Instagram so students could vote for their favourite mug which will students can use when they are staying in to order a drink. These initiatives both aim to reduce our single-use cup waste at The Grind.

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. I am currently in the process of selecting a mug that we can sell! The vision for this mug is it would have both the University and the MSU logo and to be a joint collaboration! There has been interest from both the Library and Hospitality services to sell this mug as well ☺

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

**Status:** Complete

Please see my previous reports for full updates!

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

**Status:** Complete

Please see my previous reports for full updates!

**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. Additionally, with the consultants now conducting their review on staffing and organizational structure, I am excited to see their recommendations for streamlining operations, increasing revenue, and reducing overhead costs. Their report should be complete within the next few weeks.

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

**Status:** Complete

Please see my previous reports for full updates.

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

**Status:** Complete

Please see my previous reports for full updates.

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

**Status:** Complete

Please see my previous reports for full updates.

At the next Silhouette Board of Publication meeting, we will begin discussions around the print schedule and Silhouette budget for 2020-2022. The Silhouette advertising revenue is low and consists of mainly internal advertising so it is important to plan ahead for 2020.

**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 reports for the full update.

**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. I have since taken these ideas forward and have been working with Josh to create a Clubs Financial Procedures policy which will improve and streamline clubs funding for the 2020-2021 year. The implementation of these new procedures will coincide with the overall clubs review.

**Objective #18:** Improve clubs support

**Status:** Complete

Please see my previous reports for full update.

**Objective #19:** Continue Rep Support

**Status:** Complete

Please see my previous report for full update.

**Objective #20:** Improve MUSC space

**Status:** Complete

The SLEF funds were allocated and approved to hire an architect to consult a feasibility study on the entire 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of MUSC. The goal with this is to maximize student space in MUSC. Additionally, the MUSC Board approved a capital allocation for furniture improvements to the second and third floor furniture for 2020-2021. Unfortunately the feasibility study will be complete once my term is over, however, I think Josh and I have created a strong foundation for our successors to continue working to maximize usable space for students in MUSC.

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

**Status:** Complete!

Please see my previous reports for additional detail!

At the SRA Meeting in October, the SRA approved the 3 final shortlisted names that students voted on in January. These names were: Student Life Center, Marauder Activity Center and The Hub. In January, we promoted the voting to students, we closed voting on February 7<sup>th</sup> and received 2724 votes, of which 2609 were usable. The top name has been

recommended to the University and is currently going through the final approval process. Following final approval from the Board of Governors on March 5<sup>th</sup>, the winning name can be released publicly, woo ☺

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

**Status:** Complete & on-going

Please see my previous reports for full update.

**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. The consultants we have hired are looking into different digital strategies the MSU can adopt to increase communication with students and that can be used to foster a digital community on campus. I am very excited to see what they recommend and I am excited to work with the Comms team to implement changes for the 2020 year.

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

**Status:** Complete

The MSU Wide Feedback Survey was SO SUCCESSFUL!! It was great to reach out to different students and obtain their feedback about the MSU, how we can improve, what we do well, etc. The survey was open for 5 weeks and we received 1045 responses with a great distribution across faculty and level of study. It is so valuable and helpful to see trends in how students interact with our social media and put rough data to our service usage and event engagement. I am so proud of the success of this initiative and will be presenting a summary of the data to the SRA. I really hope this is continued in the future; it is so important to continue to seek feedback from students as it helps us continually improve our operations.

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

**Status:** Complete

The pushed up SLEF timeline worked incredibly well this year, we received around 70 idea submissions! Additionally, voting was open from January 28<sup>th</sup> to February 7<sup>th</sup> and we received 338 votes total. The top ideas that are being recommended for 2020 funding are: improvements to the space outside clubspace in MUSC, updating the Thode first floor washrooms, adding better power outlets in HSL, and purchasing new radios and packs for EFRT. The SLEF timeline and process has been incredibly smooth this year, I am happy with the improvements we made as it allowed the SLEF sub-committee to vet ideas for feasibility and cost, expediting the approval process once voting was finished.

**Objective #26:** Promote the Sponsorship and Donations Fund

**Status:** Complete

Please see previous my report for full update. The Spon Don line has been nearly exhausted so we have ceased promotions for this year.

**Objective #27:** Renew HSR Bus Pass Agreement

**Status:** Complete

Please see my previous report for the full update.

In the January referendum, students voted to continue the 12 month bus pass with extended service for the next three years. Overall, I am very proud of the terms we put forward to students and I am happy with the terms we negotiated.

**Objective #28:** Piolet Board Office-Hours

**Status:** Complete & on-going

In term 1, Shemar and I piloted bi-weekly office hours which were successful. However, for this term we have decided to do monthly office hours with all 4 Board members. We had our first group office hour on February 12<sup>th</sup> where we gave out swag and interacted with students to promote currently available jobs and VP Positions, this office hour was by far our most successful yet and it was great to interact with students!

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

**Status:** In-Progress

Following SRA approval in December, we hired KPMG to conduct a review of our organizational and staffing structure to focus on improving internal efficiency, streamline processes, identify areas of duplication, and propose ideas for revenue generation. The review began at the beginning of January and to date, KPMG has conducted 18 interviews and 2 focus groups with staff and folks from the University. Due to lack of student staff engagement/interest, we were unable to conduct student staff focus groups, however, student staff were able to contribute in the survey KPMG conducted simultaneously. The consultants are currently conducting their leading practices analysis industry scan and compiling their recommendations. The review should be wrapped up within the next 3 weeks and I am excited to dedicate most of March and April to implementing as many recommendations as possible before my term ends.

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

**Status:** On-going

Please see my previous reports for examples of support I have provided to students and staff this year. I have consulted with many student groups on project initiatives ranging

from health to sustainability on campus, worked closely with faculty societies and continued to be a support for staff for any questions they have.

## **ADDITIONAL/NEW PROJECTS**

### 1. Website re-development

I am currently in the process of drafting a service agreement with Media Production Services for the new website. I am excited to see how this project folds out over the next two months. The Communications Officer, Connor, and Creative Director, Paula have been super helpful in this process so far.

### 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.

### 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. This year, I created and implemented goal setting procedures and performance reviews for staff. The feedback has been incredibly positive and it was great to sit down and chat with our full-time staff members. I am excited to wrap up the process in March.

### 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. The 2020 Welcome Week Memorandum of Understanding is on track to be renewed in April.

### 5. 2020 Budget Planning

As my term comes to an end, I have begun planning for the 2020 budget. I will be consulting with part-time staff and full-time staff budget managers over the coming weeks.

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

The three largest upcoming projects for completion over the next two months are:

- Website Redesign
- Wrap up the consulting review with KPMG and
- 2020 Budget Cycle

## **SUCESSES**

As you can see, I have nearly completed my entire year plan which I am very proud of. Additionally, I feel very lucky to work with the great full-time staff that work at the MSU and the rest of the Board members, they are all awesome!

## **CURRENT CHALLENGES**

It is definitely tough trying to balance work and personal life in this job. This job has been pretty exhausting but I am working on setting and sticking to boundaries I set for myself for the final months of my term!

## **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 prior to the meeting.

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**

Vice-President (Finance) & CFO  
McMaster Students Union  
[vpfinance@msu.mcmaster.ca](mailto:vpfinance@msu.mcmaster.ca)