



MEMO

From the...

Office of the MSU President

TO: Student Representative Assembly
FROM: Joshua Marando, MSU President
SUBJECT: President Year End Report
DATE: March 26, 2020

Dear Student Representative Assembly/EB,

I know I cracked just a few jokes at your expense during the Swan Song at student rec night, but I just wanted to express my gratitude for all you folks have done this year. This has been a really challenging year not just for the BoD, but for you all as well. Thank you for having a lot of challenging conversation, asking a lot of hard questions, and always trying to represent your constituencies the best you can.

Going into the job I knew I would learn a lot and it would be challenging at times, but tbh I did not expect the whirlwind that happened. There are many times we had to have long days, work a lot of weekends, and had lots of challenging meetings. There are many times when stake are high, when stress is high, and we have to try to make sure our emotions don't get the best of us, but through it all, we always tried our best to fight for students. I am thankful for you folks this year who often took the time to do your research into what we were doing, ask good questions, and understand the process it takes to come to a lot of the difficult decisions we had to make this year.

We had lots of projects we worked on this year, and even more meetings, and I tried to summarize them as best I could in this report. Transition is difficult when you have yearly turnover, so I am glad to see any projects we were able to complete fully and am hopeful that projects that will span over a few more years are continued to be prioritized. Thank you to all the students who allowed us to take on this challenge and thank you to our MSU staff who supported us through hard times. Above all else, thank you to Shemar, Alex, and Sarah for their support, intelligence, strength, and amazing capabilities. There is no way I would have made it through this year without them and I will always be grateful for everything they do.

Sincerely,

Joshua Marando
President & CEO
president@msu.mcmaster.ca

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 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. 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.

Due to current public health situation, as expected this project has been put on pause for the time being. I am excited to see it continue as there is still funding earmarked for this project, it will just take quite a bit longer than expected. I am hopeful that the feasibility student shows some good ideas for the third floor and I'm excited to see that space being put to better use.

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 adaptable 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.

Moving forward, we are looking towards converting the office spaces to meeting rooms. As to not create too stark of the change I am hoping this transition is done incrementally. Most if not all office spaces are used as storage spaces for clubs, which is not their intention. As such, converting them to meeting rooms will allow for more clubs to have space to meet on campus and more flexibility when clubs want to book rooms within the student center.

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. Again, these changes will be put on hold, but I am excited to see these continued improvements. Additionally, we have approved a project to improve MUSC infrastructure by redoing our waste disposal area which will allow for more storage and

less pests. Though this is not directly student facing areas, I think that these improvements to the infrastructure of MUSC will go a long way in supporting the longevity and use of the building.

Objective 4: Tuition Tax Credit Reallocation

Status: On-going

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 when they are filing taxes during their degree or after when they are earning enough to claim the credit

This was a lobby priority during our UCRU lobby week and was well received. We have already seen commitments to putting more money into the Canada Student Grant program and I am hopeful we will see more increases in the upcoming federal budget

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 affair 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 eco 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.

The requirement of classes to continue remotely has brought to light the effectiveness of our Echo 360 technology and I hopeful that from this experience professors will see the accessibility tools that are available to them and will utilize them more often.

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 Prevention & 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 new 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

Sean and I 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.

I underwent 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. After reviewing the fee I decided to not put forward the fee increase as I believe there are ways to use our student services fee more effectively and I would like a priority for next year to be reviewing our ancillary fee agreement and ensure the effectiveness of the subcommittees so student voices are prioritized in their use. That said, we did see an increase in the number of counsellor, physicians, and psychiatrists at the student wellness center which have increased support and decreased wait times.

Along with this, we have been having 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 booking and assessments, and they have introduced options for folks who don't feel comfortable saying the nature of their appointment out loud 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 International 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. As GA has been moved online, this policy has not been approved, but I am hopeful to see this recommendation present

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 councillor 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 assess whether it should be added to the next municipal budget submission.

Objective 17: Sidewalk Snow Removal Status: In-Progress

This was a priority within our 2019-2020 municipal budget submissions. Shemar, Ryan, I, 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 councillor and are continuing to lobby on this priority.

Objective 18: HSR Service Improvements Status: In-progress

There has 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 conversations about specific service improvements and continue our work with the re-envision the HSR project, which has plans to come back to campus.

Objective 19: Welcome Week Support Status: Complete

We expanded the welcome week extended Go Bus hours. It went well and students had the opportunity to stay late all week. That said, as the president does not sit on any welcome week committees or take part in the planning I want to explore ways to engrain it in the system. As of now it seems easy for this initiative to get lost so I would like to have conversations about who will champion the project each year or if it is possible to set something up with Metrolinx earlier. Additionally, we will be continuing bulk rep suit ordering and will be expanding upon the rep suit bursary to increase the financial sustainability of welcome week.

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. I have also been working with faculty societies to improve their EOHSS experience as there were challenges with clubs that fell under them and their EOHSS systems.

Objective 21: Expand Clubsfest Status: Complete

Clubs fest happened and it went well. It seems as though the switch to two days was positive. It can be a very overwhelming event due to the sheer number of clubs we have at McMaster, so splitting them up by category and making it two day seemed to be a way to mitigate the issue and make it more welcoming for students. We had some challenges getting food trucks onto campus. Due to the cost of permits and projected revenue no vendors were interested, that said, I don't think they were necessary. Instead, there were a number of stations where people could get free food throughout the event. We collaborated with Red Frogs for snow cones and cotton candy, and also had a popcorn station at the main event. The photobooth and signage was overall successful, even though people stole them for day 2. The largest challenge is the amount of work that goes into the event, and specifically the stress it puts on our club's administrator in planning. I am hopeful that this is the final time it will be reinvented for a while, so ideally next year will be easier. That said, steps have been made to make budgeting clearer and to note down steps taken for an easier transition. I also think aligning club's fest and getting support from campus events is useful as it is a challenging event to plan, especially if it is a new.

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

Have run into challenges with this specific objective. I am currently still having conversations regarding on campus performing arts space and understanding who actually creates the procedures surrounding them. We did have a number of performing arts groups use our sponsorship and donations committee funding as well as USIF, which is positive. Additionally, supporting arts based initiatives will be a priority as I am consulting on visioning exercises for the university moving forward.

Objective 24: 1280 to go Status: Complete

This was a project that both Alex and I wanted to work on this year. We paired this with a lot of the great changes she had spearheaded within TwelvEighty and the Grind and hopefully all goes well! There was a new reception desk purchase and it uses our current sales system so there was

not too much back-end work in getting this off the ground. We currently have eight items highlighted where people can get express to go and we are aiming for around 10 minutes from the point of ordering to when food is in the customers hands. Customers can still order anything off the menu as a take-out option, the specific take out menu items are those we classified as able to be “express” and additional items may take longer. This was a fairly straight forward project so not too many challenges as of yet, but one challenge was the Bistro 2 Go stole our name but it’s fine. Overall the project has been very successful and has helped increase the revenue for 1280.

Objective 25: \$5 meals

Status: Complete

The \$5-dollar meal system through hospitality services and is going well, I am overall pleasantly surprised with the quality of the meals and is a good steps towards making hospitality services more affordable.

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

The organizational review from KPMG has been completed and we are now working on implementing a number of those recommendations. In the coming meetings you will changes to the central support services policy to assist in the development of a senior leadership team amongst our full-time staff. Additionally, we are using the review to evaluate the long-term planning for our revenue generators and we can expect to see changes from this occurring within the next few months. This has been and will continue to be a priority in transition so you can expect changes to be coming from this review continuing to next year.

Clubs Review Status: In Progress/Complete

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 comparators through either phone meetings or doing a review of their clubs policies and structure. We brought forward the reviewed personnel, which were approved at the last SRA meeting and have brought the new policies to this EB meeting. Overall, we have created four new policies from the organizational one clubs policy. This covers clubs operations, clubs status (ratification + judicial), Clubs advisory council, as well as clubs financial procedures. Overall, I am very proud of these policy changes and am excited to see them approved and implemented in the coming months. A challenge and priority is going to be communicating these changes as students are no longer on campus. Feel free to refer to the other memos submitted this meeting which go into detail about each policy individually.

Additional Projects Moving Forward:

I have some additional projects I am trying to do some initial work on in the coming weeks to assist in Giancarlo's transition. I have outline three of those projects down below.

Volunteer Hub:

As we have changed up our clubs' policies, external organizations will no longer be able to have branches on campus for the sole purpose of recruiting volunteers. As such, I am hoping to create a plan for a volunteer hub where folk can get connected with volunteer opportunities on campus. I have chatted with the SSC regarding this as I think it is a good opportunity for collaboration moving forward. I am hoping to come up with a more detailed outline of what this would look like and can bring that to EB for information if they would like.

International Student Support Committee

This was something that was brought up at SRA earlier this year. I have chatted with the SSC about this as well and I am homing to write a draft term of reference for a committee surrounding international student support, so it can be implemented next year. The current terms will be more general and will focus around understanding the work that is going on around campus, understand gaps that exist, and finding opportunities to improve support. I would expect it to be chaired by someone from international student services and would request their assistance in gathering representation from international students on the committee. I can also bring this ToR to EB for information once completed so you folks are in the loop.

Ombuds

This year I was helping lead a review of our Ombuds office. So far the results of this review have lead to the creation of an additional full time staff in the office, which will be funded by the university, as well as the creation of an Advisory committee. Previously, the office was managed by a management committee consisting of the Dean of Students and MSU VP Ed, and supervised by both the McMaster President and MSU President. From the review, we saw that the management committee could be improved up so we have moved it from student affairs to the secretariat office and are making it a larger committee that can provide more direction to the office and have more student representation.

COVID-19 Update

We will continue to be adapting and finding ways to better support students given the recent public health epidemic. We have closed all our services and our office. Staff are continuing to work from home and will be on email. The university has been quite helpful at keeping us informed and in the loop of changes. They have also been receptive to feedback as we have put forward asks for in-person class and lab cancellations and ensuring essential services like SWC remain operational, which we have seen implemented throughout this process. We are now having conversations regarding pass/fail options for courses, support for students who are unable to move home, support for students who have increased financial need at this time, and how to better support our healthcare workers. If any of you hear of other concerns or issues that we can assist with or advocate for during this time please do not hesitate to let me or Shemar know.

Committees

A big part of my job has been representation on different university committees. I have summarized most of the work of these committees in other reports, but feel free to ask any questions regarding the specific outcomes or goals of any of these groups.

- Student Success Center Advisory Committee
- Campus Wireless Enhancement Steering Committee
- UCRU Advocacy Committee
- EDI Strategy Steering Committee
- President's Advisory Committee on Community Relations
- Student Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategic Advisory Committee
- Ombuds Supervisory and Review Committee
- General Assembly Planning Committee
- President's Award for Outstanding Service
- University Memorial Committee
- Age Friendly University Committee
- Volunteer Day Committee
- MUSC Board of Management
- Student Administration Consultation Committee
- Student Services Advisory Committee
- Other ones I'm sure I'm forgetting

Anyways, thanks for a great year! We still have a few more weeks to go so rest so work is still going on so I will keep you folk updated along the way. If there are any other questions or anything else you would like to see us doing please do not hesitate to reach out!!

Josh