TO: UMSU Board of Directors  
FROM: President, Jakob Sanderson  
DATE: July 25th, 2019  
RE: Report to the Board, July 2019

Ongoing Business

1. International Healthcare
On June 25th the Board of Governors approves a contract amendment that increased premiums for international students from $606 to $865. The following is the press release from UMSU on the matter:

“Winnipeg, MB – On June 25, the University of Manitoba’s Board of Governors approved an amended contract for the Manitoba International Student [Health] Insurance plan (MISIP) at a rate of $865 per student premium. This is a sharp increase from the previous $606 per student that the University covered for one year in the 2018-2019 academic year, following the withdrawal of provincial funding for international student health care in April 2018. The decision now forces international students in Manitoba to pay among the highest insurance premiums in Canada, and a higher rate per student than in B.C, Alberta and Saskatchewan combined. The primary reason for this increase is a decision by the provincial government and regional health authorities to increase the surcharge on ‘non-resident health care’ from 75% to 200%. UMSU’s Board of Governors representatives, VP Advocacy Sarah Bonner-Proulx and President Jakob Sanderson, voiced significant opposition to this increase, and to the University’s lack of action in attempting to combat the provincial government’s short-sighted decision.

International students make up 19% of the University of Manitoba student body, and in total contribute $400 million annually to the province’s economy.

UMSU will collaborate with international students across the province to draft an open letter to the Minister of Health and the Premier, demanding that they reverse this decision and re-instate funding for international student health care, as done in several provinces across the country, in the 2020-21 budget, while reversing the increase to non-resident health surcharges immediately. UMSU will continue to advocate for international students and work towards coordinating further action.”

Going forward we have drafted the open letter, are generating co-signers, and gearing up towards planning a letter signing day in late August and a rally in early September. If your association is wanting to sign the letter please contact me and I will keep you posted surrounding future action.

2. Sustainability
Our working group is taking applications! We want to have our first meeting in late August so please apply if interested through the form you can find online and on all our social media.

3. Access Program
I attended and spoke at a meeting at inner city campus discussing the access program cuts as they work to secure legal representation from the public interest legal consortium in a lawsuit to restore funding. They are reviewing the case and we hope to have more information soon.

4. Get out the Vote

We are busy gearing up for the September 10 provincial and October Federal election!

I went over some of our GOTV activities last report and will keep you updated as we involved student associations in those!

Our provincial election briefs on 5 core issues have been sent to all parties and we have met with or will be meeting with members from the majority parties in the lead up to the election. We also have a full list of 10 election priorities that we’ll be launching on social media soon. We’ve circulated this to all parties and we will be updating it to reflect which parties adopt each of our priorities.

We are also attending the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations (CASA)’s GOTV conference in August and will be participating in their campaign this October.

Finally, we are partnering with ‘100 debates for the environment’ to try to host a federal candidates debate on environmental as well as student issues on October 7th.

5. UCRU

I am pleased to announce I was elected as Vice-Chair of the Undergraduates of Canadian Research Universities (UCRU). I look forward to the year ahead and ensuring the priorities of Manitoba students are brought to the forefront in our federal advocacy work this year. We are currently working to organize a national letter with all other associations willing to co-sign surround a few student priorities in the federal election, and we will be working to bring up these issues with Manitoba federal candidates.

Conference Report: CASA Foundations

Myself and VPFO Mbuli Matshe attended the CASA foundations conference May 27-31.

CASA is a federal advocacy coalition that UMSU began collaborating with last year and have been considering joining. CASA membership would be $55,000 as that is the capped cost for a large student union, and can be joined by a vote of this board.

This was the first conference of their cycle this year and we went with the hopes of presenting
Manitoba students to an influential organization, gaining key advocacy skills and knowledge and making valuable connections, and assessing the viability of CASA membership for UMSU.

We found the conference overall to be a positive experience. This was step 1 in their advocacy process, in which they asked delegates to determine 12-15 major, broad advocacy areas and begin exercises to brainstorm more specific policy goals. After that exercise, these goals will be reviewed by their policy committee (elected this meeting) and more concrete proposals will be brought back for review and endorsement at the next conference.

This was a remarkably participative process and allowed UMSU to put our priorities - and those our students have identified - including (but not limited to) national sexual violence prevention standards, increased undergraduate federal research funding, including funding for Indigenous language course offerings and sustainability initiatives, increases in upfront student grants, incorporating student housing into the national housing strategy, and eliminating barriers for intentional students to gain permanent residence after completing co-op terms.

We also talked about get out the vote strategies, and are excited to participate in their event this year. As well, we did lobbying training, cultural competency training and participated in a blanket exercise while discussing ways to be leaders and listeners when it comes to decolonizing our campuses.

We also discussed, and saw the first edition of a CASA conference that included the Indigenous member sponsorship program (IMSP). (Previously each school only sent two executive delegates). This allows all CASA member schools (we are just an observer at this time) to bring an Indigenous at-large student delegate at no charge to each conference. From there, CASA hopes to have a stand-alone conference with these delegates to form a circle of Indigenous students.

In my opinion, the program is not where it currently needs to be after discussion with participating members, mostly due to a current lack of participating associations. It needs time to grow, but given this conference occurred very early in the year, and it was the first attempt, I think it has potential to improve significantly and I’m excited to hear from those participating in the standalone conference on their experience and on how CASA could make significant growth in lobbying on Indigenous student issues and decolonizing their practices. From there, I hope CASA will make earnest attempts at making real progress as a result of this program, but in the mean time I consider it to be a step in the right direction at this time and have heard the same from those members I talked to.

In conclusion, I think CASA has a lot of strengths and we had a very positive experience overall.
On Indigenous issues, this has been a weak spot in the past, and while they’re not where they need to be yet, they’re showing acknowledgement of this, and are taking concrete steps to improve which is encouraging.

On their advocacy process, I think this really is their strength. They are able to generate meetings with a majority of MPs annually and have a great wins record. They also have lobbying priorities that are entirely member driven and the process is very collaborative.

As for membership, we want to work with CASA on their GOTV efforts and lobby week this year, and continue to examine their current strengths and how they progress in other areas. But at this time we are considering bringing a membership vote to this board later in the year.

**Events & Meetings Attended**

*Executive Meetings typically every Monday and Thursday **Schedule excludes many internal meetings *** Open Office Hours Thursdays 1:30-2:30pm

June 25: Meeting w/ Campus MB
June 25: Meeting w/ MCO re: UMSU Centennial
June 25: BOG
June 26: Senate
June 26: Meeting w/ Chancellor Anne Mahon
June 26: UMSU Endowment Fund Board of Trustees
June 27: Marketing Manager Interviews
June 27: Call w/ Mcgill Student Society
June 27: Call w/ Western University Students’ Council
June 28: Call w/ McMaster Students’ Union
June 28: Call with University of Toronto Students’ Union
June 28: Call with University of Saskatchewan Students’ Union
July 2: Meeting w/ MLA Candidate Karen Myshkowsky
July 3: Meeting w/ UMFA
July 4: Meeting w/ StudentCare
July 4: Meeting w/ UMGSA re: UPASS
July 4: Meeting with Muslim Students’ Association
July 5: Meeting with Vice-Provost Students Laurie Schnarr
July 9: Meeting w/ UMES & CSA
July 10: Call w/ UCRU Chair
July 10: Selections Committee
July 11: UCRU Meeting
July 12: Meeting w/ Inner City Social Work students
July 15-16: Out of Office
July 17: Interview w/ Manitoban
July 17: Making the Grade
July 18: Introductory meeting w/ UMSU Chair
July 18: Meeting w/ International Rep
July 19: Meeting w/ ICSC re: constitution
July 22: Meeting w/ LGBTTQ* Rep