Midway Summary

This year, my goal coming into the term was to build on progress in a number of advocacy initiatives that were underway from the previous year, to get them over the finish line, as well as implement a number of new campaigns and initiatives to improve the situation of UMSU going forward beyond my term.

Externally, significant progress has been made on a number of advocacy fronts that I either led or was involved in including sexual violence policy revisions, a new university sustainability strategy, and the initiation of a healthcare relief fund for international students. I have also sat on the search committee for the new University President, been elected as the Vice-Chair of Undergraduates of Canadian Research Intensive Universities (UCRU), and worked on Get out the Vote (GOTV) campaigns for both the provincial and federal elections.

Internally, I have initiated a new student research assistant program, worked with Governance Committee to start a governance review, and am beginning the development of a sustainability strategy for UMSU, as well as debuting Student Financial Awareness day for Inner City Campus, and Open Education week on Fort Garry campus.

UMSU Committee Reports

1. Selections Committee (Chair)

   Selections Committee met over the summer and filled all positions as well as hired a Chief Returning Office (CRO) for the upcoming elections. Selections committee is currently in recess for the year unless there are any resignations.

2. Governance Committee

   a. The Governance Committee commissioned Strategy and Research Advisor (SRA) Kyle Hiebert to enact a review of the governing documents of UMSU. Major edits of redundancies based on this will be presented at a later board meeting.

   b. The Governance Committee approved the change in composition of the Board of Trustees to include the VPCE instead of the VPSL.

   c. The Governance Committee approved an external review of governance structures and board composition and performance and will work with the consultant over the next couple months toward recommendations.

   d. The Governance Committee will soon be working with the CRO towards an Elections & Referenda Manual (ERM) review and implementing any possible changes ahead of the election period.

Ongoing and Completed Business

3. Research Department Development

   Last year I spearheaded the beginning of assembling a dedicated UMSU research team, by bringing in a Governance Research Advisor – later renamed Strategy and Research Advisor. This has since been fleshed out with the hiring of our first student research assistant. Their self-submitted project – based on solar panel integration – will be completed by the end of
the term and UMSU will look to work towards this goal hereafter. Two more spots will be available in the winter term.

4. University Advocacy
   a. I have set on the Board of Governors (BOG) since the inception of my term with Vice-President Advocacy, Sarah Bonner-Proulx. We passed multiple motions through the BOG this year which approved fees and student association status for new groups, and fee increases for some. As well, we successful passed a motion incorporating all outbound exchange and co-op students into the UMSU membership.
   b. We successfully advocated for the administration to approve a $500k hardship relief fund for international students facing financial difficulties due to the loss of funded healthcare.
   c. We successfully advocated for the creation of a Sexual Violence Resource Centre that will be initiated in January!
   d. We saw 14/15 of our policy recommendations implemented in the sexual violence policy review. These will hopefully be implemented fully in May 2020. Some highlights include;
      i. A ban on faculty student relationships where a power dynamic exists
      ii. An elimination the cap on time between an incident and when it can be reported
      iii. The development of a Sexual Violence Resource Centre

5. External Advocacy
   a. I have worked on External Advocacy efforts alongside VPA Sarah Bonner-Proulx through our own work provincially and with the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations (CASA) and UCRU federally.
   b. I was elected Vice-Chair of UCRU on a platform of formalization, consultation and a cultivation of a unique policy identity
      i. Thus far in my role I am serving as chair of the Governance Committee where I am overseeing efforts to create an election procedure, transition procedure, a consultation framework that we need to follow before any lobbying work is done, an organizational strategic plan, and incorporation of the organization.
      ii. I will also work with the policy committee to create a set of lobbying priorities that prioritizes issues especially relevant to large-scale research universities and work to create partnerships with other effective federal advocacy organizations in areas where are interests align.
      iii. We are planning our UCRU lobby week for February, wish to have briefs completed by early January and will hold consultation sessions prior to creation.
   c. We worked on Get Out the Vote efforts for the 2019 Manitoba Election.
      i. This included creating a list of 10 student priorities and tracking parties’ commitments to these. We submitted these briefs to all parties ahead of the election and met with the NDP and Liberals while receiving a written feedback letter from the PCs. We had a number of our asks discussed in debates and include in party platforms. We were even given direct credit on a number of our asks as the reason why they made it into platforms.
      ii. Our job going forward is to keep these issues on the agenda and to meet shortly with the new Minister.
d. We also ran a GOTV campaign for the federal election with CASA:
   i. Sarah took lead on this and can discuss more in her report. But we signed
      approximately 1000 voting pledge forms and helped usher hundreds of students
directly to the polls during advanced voting on campus.
   ii. We also signed on to a national student letter calling for improved work integrated
learning and easier work opportunities for International students, a commitment to
implementing the TRC, and increasing upfront student grants.
   iii. We look forward to continued lobbying with CASA and UCRU on these and other
major student priorities in the winter term.

e. This summer I helped spearhead the ‘Health has no borders’ campaign to restore funding for
international healthcare. We sent out hundreds of letters to the Premier, Minister and MLAs
regarding this campaign and got all but one party to commit to this in the election. We
culminated this effort with a major rally on the steps of the legislature hearing from numerous
strong voices in the international student community and from supporters in student and
political leadership. We must work to keep that momentum going and push for restoration of
funding in this government term.

f. We also are taking a strong stand, alongside UMISA and the UMISA Womxns Council, against
the construction of the thirty metre telescope on Mauna Kea.
   i. We have discussed the project with admin and raised it at the Student Experience
Committee, co-signed a national letter opposing the project, and issued our own
alongside the UMISA Co-Presidents to the University Administration and specifically
David Barnard.
   ii. While we have gotten the University to modulate its support to some extent we
remain unsatisfied. As the only ACURA University on Treaty 1 land, and as the
university that is home to the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation (NCTR), we
ought to show a much greater commitment to respecting Indigenous sovereignty. We
call on the University to strongly denounce the use of police force against land
protectors and to reserve its support until and unless a clear consensus of Indigenous
communities in the area express their support.

6. Open Educational Resources
   a. This year we ran the inaugural Open Education Week at UofM and signed hundreds of student
pledges calling for more Open Education Resources (OERs) to be used in classrooms at UofM.
   b. We ran an OER book fair to show off Open sources texts to students and professors, including
running a faculty pop up event to display the options available to them.
   c. We have been working with Campus MB on briefs to this effect and have gotten positive
response to government investment in this area from all parties thus far.
   d. We will continue work on this at a university level and are expecting the formation of a
university wide working group on this in the next semester.

7. Sustainability
   a. This is the second year of the UMSU Sustainability Working Group (SWG) and we’ve had a
major increase in interest.
i. We have struck a Strategic Planning Committee and will work towards creating an UMSU Sustainability Strategy this year
ii. We helped organize and promote Climate Strike actions at the UofM campus
iii. We co-hosted a campus clean up this October

b. We also saw the University pass its 2019-2023 sustainability strategy which was heavily influenced by UMSU advocacy over the past year and we look forward to working on implementation alongside them.

c. We declared a climate emergency on UMSU in September and are working to organize an open letter from UMFA, GSA and UMSU pressuring the university to do the same and work towards a zero-emissions target by 2050

8. Financial Awareness Week
a. While Mbuli ran this campaign on Fort Garry Campus, I organized the first Student Financial Awareness day on Inner City campus and spoke to dozens of students in the inner city social work program, promoting funding and bursary options.

b. This event also brought many fantastic not for profits to the campus including SEED Winnipeg, Futures Forward, Youth Employment Services and the Louis Riel Institute.

9. Assisting with Student Association Matters
a. This past year I worked to assist the Inner City Social Work Council (ICSC) in the creation of a new constitution and election process
b. We worked to officially create a new student association for students in Community Health Studies and Sciences
c. I worked to assist the Education Council in lobbying for improved attendance policies
d. We worked over a long period of time with Pharmacy students towards ensuring compensation for students during the transition to the Pharm D program.

10. Transit
a. We took a decisive stand to support the Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) during their labor dispute with the City of Winnipeg on a motion I had the pleasure to write. A contract was agreed to shortly after and I have reason to believe our efforts helped to make a difference in avoiding a stoppage.

b. We are currently embroiled in negotiations with the city regarding an increase to the UPass fee. While the public service is proposing a $24.50 per term increase to compensate for additional costs due to Red River College joining the program, our students will pay more for no additional benefits.
   i. We have submitted an alternate proposal based on months of lobbying efforts dating back to last spring that would extend the winter UPass into the summer for a 50% cost increase of $68. Allowing for this change would increase ridership for the city, address the need for additional revenue and allow UofM students to vote for an option that increases value as well as cost.
   ii. No matter what, any cost increase will go to a referendum next term.
Committee and Board Assignments

1. UMSU Executive Committee (Chair)
2. UMSU Selections Committee (Chair)
3. UMSU Governance Committee
4. UMSU Finance Committee
5. UMSU Marketing Management Committee
6. University Senate
7. Student Senate Caucus
8. Senate Committee on Academic Appeals
9. University Disciplinary Committee
10. University Board of Governors
11. Board of Governors Finance, Administration and Human Resources Committee
12. Student Experience Committee
13. Sustainability Working Group
14. SWG Strategic Planning Sub Committee
15. University Presidential Search Committee
16. University Brand Advisory Committee (Co-Chair)
17. University Campus Planning and Design Committee
18. University Sustainability Committee
19. UMSU Endowment Fund Board of Trustees
20. University Substance Use Advisory Council
21. UMSU Business Managers Committee
22. UMSU Participatory Budgeting Committee

Conferences Attended
1. StudentCare Stakeholders Meeting
2. Canadian Federation of Students’ NGM
3. CASA Foundations
4. CASA GOTV