New Updates:

Campus Advocacy
See continuing updates.

Provincial Advocacy

Provincial Lobby Week & Pre-Budget Submission Period
The UMSU VP Advocacy, President, and Strategy and Research Advisor are in the process of reviewing UMSU’s June 2020 recommendations to the provincial government, identifying those that can be cut, further developed, or added for presentation during the October 2020 Lobby Week. As these recommendations will be presented in the context of a pre-budget submission, the hope is to have them more thoroughly costed for the fall, supported by demonstrable benefits to students and the province.

Strategically, the completed Budget Submission should be presented to the Finance Minister ahead of lobby week, and our team will reach out in September to schedule this meeting with Minister Fielding. The team is also reaching out to other Manitoban post-secondaries to garner the manpower for the lobby week.

Additionally, the hope is to run a number of campaigns in the lead up to/in the background of lobby week to garner public awareness and create pressure to act.

Bill 41:
With the Provincial Legislature set to re-commence sitting in October, UMSU has concerns regarding the implications of Bill 41.

Bill 41 proposes changes to the Advanced Education Administration Act under justification to do the following:
“...enable the minister to issue guidelines concerning...student fees charged by universities...The guidelines and regulations may limit a fee increase or require a fee to be decreased. They may also prohibit compulsory student fees.”

Bill 41 appears to share significant commonalities with the Student Choice Initiative (SCI) passed by Ontario’s Progressive Conservative government in January 2019 – as part of the government’s plan to reduce tuition rates by 10 per cent – but later struck down by an Ontario court in November 2019.

In its decision, the Ontario court found that the government was in the wrong for trying to involve itself in the relationship between post-secondary institutions and third parties - in this case student unions and student organizations - and that the Ontario government’s imposition on universities to allow students to opt-out of paying certain student fees was “inconsistent with the universities’ autonomous governance.”

Ultimately, Bill 41 is a shallow and veiled attempt to increase the affordability of post-secondary education by a) threatening the autonomy of independent organizations, b) risking the long-term viability of student services on campus and c) quashing student-led advocacy. Better measures of affordability include robust funding for post-secondary institutions coupled with greater availability of grants and loans for students.
UMSU is preparing to provide feedback on the Bill to government officials, potentially during provincial lobby week. Creative measures that have the potential to protect UMSU and its members from being adversely affected by Bill 41 are being explored. UMSU is also undertaking an independent review of its own fees with increasing affordability as a top priority.

**Federal Advocacy**

**UCRU COVID-19 Letters**
Separate from the recently submitted federal budget submission, UCRU has created two letters that address COVID-19 specific matters.

The first letter is addressed to the Honourable Marco Mendicino, Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, calling for the Government of Canada to:
   a. Administer student visas to all international students, especially those coming from outside of North America (following safe arrival procedures), and
   b. Extend its waiver of the 20-hour per week limit for international students working in essential services, from August 31st until December 31st.

The second letter is being sent to 3 ministers,
- The Honourable Mona Fortier, Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance
- The Honourable Mélanie Joly, Minister of Economic Development
- The Honourable Chrystia Freeland, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance

And calls on the Government of Canada to:
   a. Extend the CESB by 8 weeks to match the extension added to the CERB by using the unused funds put aside for the CSSG program
   b. Extend the moratorium on federal student loan payments until April 2021.

*Due to Justin Trudeau’s recent prorogation (shutting down of parliament), the asks in the financial aid letter may no longer be achievable. Thus, this letter’s send-off has been postponed while UCRU investigates further.*

**UCRU Lobby Week**
UCRU’s federal lobby week is set for the week of November 23rd, and will be virtual. The Advocacy Committee is reviewing and revising the budget asks to craft the lobby week briefings.

**Projects**

**Consent Culture Workshops for Bison Athletes:**
On August 13th, the VPA spoke with Lisa Tinley of Bison Sports regarding UMSU’s recommendation for all Bison athletes to receive consent culture training by Justice for Women.

Lisa was eager for Bisons athletes to participate in these workshops, and accordingly, the VPA connected her with Riley Shannon of Justice for Women to coordinate scheduling.
UMSU thanks *Justice for Women* immensely for rising to this challenge, agreeing to provide additional consent culture workshops to accommodate each and every Bison’s sports team.

**Continuing Updates:**

**Campus Advocacy**

**Study Accommodations:**

*Dafoe Library* is now open (first floor only) on a drop-in basis. There are 155 spots available. The university is hesitant to open up upper floors at Dafoe due to the study spaces being intimately intertwined with the collections (high touch areas they see difficult to manage).

- I noted to Lisa O’Hara (University Librarian) that I expect demand for study space to be high, and that the second floor of Dafoe with the study carrels should also open with the collections sectioned off and the carrels socially distanced.
- The response was that the University would like to gauge demand first, while allowing their staff on the ground to work out the kinks with sanitizing, booking, etc. before rolling out on a larger scale.

The *science library* will have 80 bookable spots, reserved all-day. I will be inquiring re: more flexible options.

To ensure space for vulnerable students, the university has set aside space in either the *Management Library* or elsewhere (pending completion of construction in the Management Library) exclusively for vulnerable students identified through the advisor network of the University. If you know someone who may need this, they should reach out to their faculty advisors in the fall.

*On Bannatyne* there will be 102 "spots" available across Brodie, Brodie Lounge, Dent, Apotex, and John Doupe Concourse. Raman, Director of Operations and Administration at Bannatyne, is in touch with libraries, and they are preparing a contingency plan for opening should they run out of study space listed.

All libraries will have reduced hours of 10 am-6 pm.

These plans are subject to change as the University rolls out its library re-opening pilot. I do not think 38 is nearly enough for vulnerable students and I also think there is an opportunity to open a greater number of spaces more broadly. As the Fall begins, UMSU will be continually advocating for increased space, which we hope to achieve as the university becomes more comfortable with the management of the pilot libraries.
Time Zone Concerns for International Students:
At the VPA’s meeting with Mark Torchia (Vice-Provost Teaching and Learning), the Vice-Provost noted that a system which accommodates for time zone variations cannot be recommended to professors as it creates an unfair workload burden for faculty, and impacts very few international students in the first place.

Unsatisfied, the VPA began the preparation of a Time Zone Accommodations Proposal document, which demonstrates a system that minimizes workload burdens for professors by accommodating all the world’s time zones with the creation of just one additional exam.

As part of the process, the VPA met with Gitan Armour of the International Centre to gain a better understanding of the number of international students potentially affected by time zone variations. During these sessions, Gitan demonstrated sympathy for students impacted by time zones, and began floating the idea of accommodations past her superiors in administration.

Gitan returned to the VPA noting that her superiors are under the impression that all faculties are already planning to accommodate for time zones, and any classes for which this is not the case should be brought to the attention of the administration. This response is in direct contradiction to the VPA’s earlier conversations with Mark Torchia. Accordingly, the VPA began reaching out to a range of deans to gauge the approach of individual faculties on this issue.

Based on the responses from deans thus far, it seems Gitan’s contact was mistaken: most faculties have either decided not to accommodate, do not have universal plans to accommodate, or, are leaving it up to the discretion of individual professors. As responses continue to roll in, the VPA is re-strategizing the proposal, namely, deciding whether such a proposal is still necessary, and if it is, whether it should be presented to deans individually or to administration.

While the lack of accommodations may seem to warrant immediate submission of the proposal, the issue is complicated by the fact that over the summer some international students noted that writing at odd times worked out very well for them, allowing them to utilize the internet when it is not oversubscribed at their location.

This issue seems to be resolved by simply creating two exams, running them at different times, and leaving it up to the students to decide which exam to take. In reality, such a system opens the door to rampant academic dishonesty. To illustrate, imagine that two friends both living in kangaroooville establish a system where the one takes exam A and the other takes exam B six hours later. Being best friends and next door neighbours, the first test taker simply feeds the answers to the second. The risk for such dishonest practices is minimized when students in certain regions are mandated to take exams at set times, but this also minimizes flexibility for internet use at low-subscribed times.

Furthermore, if exams are run at odd Winnipeg times (which they will need to be), there are issues surrounding the availability of IST support for resolving tech problems during the exam, and professor availability for answering content-related questions. Evidently, this is quite tricky. Feedback is welcome. Stay tuned.
Web Proctoring
Over the summer, the University ran a pilot project to "test run" the use of web-proctoring systems. Lockdown Browser, Respondus Monitor, and group-held WebEx exams were all tested.

Following this pilot, Mark Torchia confirmed on August 20th that Respondus Lockdown Browser and Respondus Monitor will both be made available as options for instructors across campus this fall.

Whether any given student will be using this software for quizzes, tests, or exams, is entirely dependent on whether any of their instructors chooses to use the software. The university has not mandated its use.

Privacy wise, data is stored in the ‘cloud’ and managed by Respondus. These products have been vetted by both IST security and the Office of Access and Privacy. Individual instructor access to student information is carefully controlled through permissions-based system built in to UM Learn.

Additionally, as per Mark, “the recordings of exam sessions are managed on a strict retention schedule and will be destroyed following the end of course and the time allowed for course grade appeals.” Furthermore, only the professor for the course will have access to the recording, to be reviewed only in cases of suspected cheating. Should there be an academic integrity concern, this recording may also be reviewed as evidence by a disciplinary board.

During the course registration process, students are made aware of the possibility that web-proctoring software may be required to be installed on their computer to complete the course. Instructors are also provided a set of web-proctoring best practices.

Students will accessibility concerns should communicate with Student Accessibility Services.

For anyone interested in knowing more about how Respondus Monitor works, this video does a good job of explaining: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7J1K8-R20ao](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7J1K8-R20ao)

Safe change rooms at the ALC
Following a meeting with students-at-large regarding the safety of the Active Living Centre facilities for trans folks, it was decided that UMSU would support these students in crafting a set of recommendations to present to Dean Douglas Brown who, as Dean of Kinesiology and Recreation Management, oversees both daily functioning and long-term planning for the ALC. The document is under construction and the hope is to present it to Dr. Brown in September.

Provincial Advocacy
No continuing updates.

Federal Advocacy
No continuing updates.
Projects

Internet Sticks:
After the Province of Manitoba rejected the COVID-19 ask related to the provision of internet sticks for ~ 2000 U of M students with poor internet quality, the VP Advocacy and VP Community Engagement began collaboration on a partnership proposal for Rogers and Bell.

Rogers has not responded to the original proposal or follow-up emails. Bell Media has acknowledged receipt of the proposal and is forwarding it to the appropriate departments.

In the case that the proposals to Bell and Rogers fall flat, the UMSU VPA has been in contact with Jane Lastra of the Financial Aid and Awards Office to suggest that future funds raised for the Tech fund be utilized in part toward procurement and provision of internet sticks for at-risk students.

Legal Services
The VPA was able to gain greater perspective on potential options for a legal service centre following a conversation with Allison Kilgour, student leader and JD candidate at Robson Hall. Conversations will continue to be had with community leaders including ProBono Manitoba, Legal Aid Manitoba, and Robson Hall to identify the most appropriate framework for the legal services centre.

External Events and Meetings Attended:
*This excludes all meetings internal to the organization.

July 23rd: Meeting with the Office of Sustainability Re: Sustainability Strategy
July 24th: Meeting with Mark Torchia, Vice-Provost Teaching and Learning, Re: Online Exams
July 27th-July 30th: CASA PolyStrat Conference
July 28th: Meeting with students-at-large Re: Trans inclusion and safety at the ALC
July 29th: Sexual Violence Communications Subcommittee
July 30th: UCRU Board Meeting
July 31st: Meeting with student-at-large Re: Trans inclusion and safety at the U of M
August 4th: UCRU Advocacy Committee Meeting
August 5th: UCRU Governance Committee Meeting
August 5th: Senate
August 6th: Board of Governors Executive Committee meeting
August 7th: Meeting with Allison Kilgour Re: Legal Aid
August 10th: Meeting with Gitan Armour, Director of International Centre Re: COVID-19
August 11th: COCA Conference Session, Trends in Post-Secondary Mental Health
August 11th: Meeting with Mackenzy Metcalfe Re: Strategic Planning, UCRU
August 11th: Board of Governors meeting
August 13th: UCRU Board Meeting
August 13th: Meeting with Lisa Tinley of Bisons Sports re: Consent Culture Training
August 13th: Touch-base with Gitan Armour, Director of International Centre Re: COVID-19
August 14th: Quarterly Meeting with Lisa O’Hara, University Librarian
August 17th: Pitch meeting from ZoomInfo
August 17th: Bi-Weekly meeting with Laurie Schnarr, Vice-Provost Students
August 18th: Call with Dawn Montebruno, Director of Campus Children's Centre RE: Introduction + Questions
August 18th: Meeting with Mackenzy Metcalfe Re: Strategic Planning, UCRU
August 18th: UCRU Advocacy Committee meeting
August 18th: Emergency Meeting of Board of Governors Executive Committee
August 19th: UCRU Governance Committee Meeting
August 18th: Meeting with Wab Kinew and Jamie Moses RE: Bill 41
August 20th: Special meeting of the UCRU Governance Committee
August 24th: Meeting with Jane Lastra re: Tech Fund
August 25th: Board of Governors Executive Committee meeting
August 25th: Meeting with Mackenzy Metcalfe Re: Strategic Planning, UCRU
August 26th: Meeting with Student Accessibility Services Re: Fall Term
August 26th: Meeting with Justice for Women Re: Partnership