



University  
of Manitoba  
**STUDENTS'**  
**UNION**

**TO:** UMSU Board of Directors  
**FROM:** VP Advocacy – Liam Pittman  
**DATE:** January 23, 2024  
**RE:** **Report to the Board, January 25, 2024**

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### **New Updates**

#### **FASO Investigation and Engagement with SVRC:**

In the ongoing investigation process within the Faculty of Agriculture Students Organization (FASO), mandated by the board, the focus extends beyond routine organizational matters.

As part of this process, evidence has been diligently gathered from various sources, including the complainant and internal UMSU avenues. Additionally, external entities, such as the Sexual Violence Resource Centre (SVRC), have been engaged to contribute to the investigation.

Collaboration with SVRC is instrumental in obtaining a comprehensive understanding of the allegations and ensuring that the investigation considers the broader context of inappropriate conduct within the university community.

FASO has been contacted and has committed to a thorough, and respectful process, prioritizing the well-being and safety of all students within the Faculty of Agriculture. A scheduling request for a mediation session has been sent back and we are awaiting on confirmation from both parties.

#### **Winter Orientation Week Participation:**

During the Winter Orientation Week, a focal point of our efforts was the organization of daily free breakfasts, providing a healthy breakfast but also fostering a welcoming atmosphere for incoming students. Additionally, we set up informational tables, where my role included addressing inquiries, providing information, and ensuring that new students felt adequately informed and supported.



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As part of our orientation strategy, a daily giveaway initiative was implemented to inject an element of excitement and encourage participation during the orientation period. This multi-faceted approach aimed to create a positive and inclusive environment for students as they embarked on their academic journey during the new semester.

### **Senate Activities**

Attending the Senate was beneficial, offering an insight into discussions revolving around minor changes to the academic schedule. The detailed discussions and proposed modifications are meticulously outlined in the Senate agenda, accessible [here](#). This link provides transparency into the deliberations and decisions made during the meeting, ensuring the broader community has access to pertinent information related to academic governance.

In terms of student senators, I facilitated the transition of U1SC student senators. This process was an introduction to the functions, duties, and roles intrinsic to the Senate and its senators. The goal was to provide the necessary insights and tools to ensure a smooth integration into the Senate process for the new representative, fostering their ability to contribute meaningfully to the Senate at UofM.

### **Meeting with University Officials:**

A key element of my engagement involved a meeting with, President Benarroch and Vice Provost Laurie Schnarr. This meeting provided an opportunity to address a spectrum of general student concerns, ranging from academic matters to broader institutional issues. A significant portion of our discussion delved into the alleged financial mismanagement by the Former Law Dean, where I emphasized the critical need for institutional transparency.



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President Benarroch's assurances regarding the minimal impact on students and the comprehensive replenishment of funding for student development, utilizing contingency funding, were crucial in allaying concerns. Importantly, confirmation that students who applied were not disadvantaged due to funding shortages underscored the university's commitment to fair and equitable practices. Further, a request has been sent to the Winnipeg Police Service to investigate the alleged financial mismanagement and defrauding.

### **UMSU – Financial Aid and Awards**

Collaborating with key stakeholders, including the Vice-President Student Life (VPSL) and the Director of Financial Aid and Awards, Jane Lastra, we engaged in discussions to explore the rather complex process of implementing community scholarships. This collaborative effort sought to enhance financial support for students and improve access to equitable educational opportunities by strategically leveraging available resources.

The discussions were involved a pragmatic examination of the current landscape and an exploration of actionable steps that could be taken to make meaningful progress in this vital area of student support.

### **UM Branding Consultation:**

Contributing to the university's branding consultation, we were able to bring a student perspective to the table. Beyond the surface-level considerations, our input emphasized the need for increased administrative involvement and active participation in student events. These recommendations aimed to bridge the gap between the institution and its diverse student body.



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Promoting a sense of unity emerged as a central theme, emphasizing the importance of a cohesive university identity that resonates with students. The incorporation of these insights into the broader branding strategy can potentially foster a stronger connection between the university and its student community.

#### **Bannatyne Campus Engagement:**

Extending our efforts beyond the main campus, we organized a free lunch event at the Bannatyne campus. This initiative sought to bring a positive atmosphere that promotes a sense of belonging and support among Bannatyne students.

#### **Student Mental Health Discussion:**

Engaging in a discussion with David Ness, Director of the Student Counselling Centre, our focus shifted towards the critical area of student mental health. The conversation delved into not only the challenges but also the potential solutions and support mechanisms that could be implemented to bolster students' mental well-being. The aim was to take a proactive approach to mental health on campus.

The discussion acknowledged the evolving nature of student mental health needs and sought to align university resources with the complex requirements of the student population.

#### **Student Advocacy:**

Maintaining a continued proactive stance on student advocacy, I addressed and escalated pertinent issues to the appropriate bodies within the UM community and assisted students



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largely with the then upcoming revision period. This commitment extended beyond identification of issues; it involved advocating for resolution and actively participating in the collaborative efforts required to effect positive change. Positive results emerged and students were grateful for positive outcomes by and large.

#### **External Events & Meetings Attended**

- UMSU Free Breakfast – Jan 08
- UMSU Tabling – Jan 08
- UMSU x Women's Centre – Jan 08
- UMSU Free Breakfast – Jan 09
- UMSU Tabling – Jan 09
- UMSU Free Breakfast – Jan 09
- UMSU Tabling – Jan 09
- UMSU Free Breakfast - Jan 10
- UMSU Tabling – Jan 10
- UMSU x Financial Aid and Awards – Jan 10
- Senate – Jan 10
- UMSU Free Breakfast – Jan 11
- UMSU Tabling – Jan 11
- UM Branding – Jan – 16
- Bannatyne Event – Jan 17
- CASA Policy Consultation – Jan 18
- Student Advocacy Meeting – Jan 19
- U1SC Transition – Jan 22
- David Ness Consult – Jan 22