

PRIORITIES DOCUMENT

2023 / 2024

Prepared by:

STUSU Executive Team

2023/2024



LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

St. Thomas University Students' Union recognizes and respectfully acknowledges that it carries out its work on the traditional unceded territories of the Wolastoqiyik, and Mi'kmaq peoples. This territory is covered by the "Treaties of Peace and Friendship" which these nations first signed with the British Crown in 1726. The treaties did not deal with the surrender of territories, but in fact recognized Mi'kmaq and Wolastoqiyik titles and established the rules for what was to be an ongoing relationship between nations. STUSU members and staff pay respect to the elders, past and present, and descendants of this land.



Dear STUdents,

On behalf of the Students Executive Council, it is my pleasure to present the St. Thomas University Students' Union Priorities Document for the 2023-2024 academic year. Since entering office, your new Students' Executive Council has been working hard to gather student feedback to complete this priorities document.

The document is divided into six pillars as you will see below. These six pillars will be overarching goals for the year, and underneath each pillar you will find individual goals and initiatives specific to one or more executives that we hope to achieve for the year.

While this document does possess the aspirations for the 2023/24 academic year, this document is certainly not accounting for all the tasks the executive team would like to accomplish this year. This is only the beginning, a tool to guide our team towards ensuring effective work will be completed during this year. The priorities listed in the document are certainly subject to change, and new priorities may be added as the year progresses.

I hope that you enjoy this document, and we look forward to speaking to our students about what they would like to see done this year. Your Students' Executive Council will be working throughout the summer to ensure we have a great academic year and that you are represented, that said, please let us know if there are issues important to you that we may have missed, each of us would be more than happy to chat!!

Woliwon,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Stevie-Rae", written over a light grey rectangular background.

Stevie-Rae DeMerchant (she/they), STUSU President 2023/24

PILLAR 1: RECONCILIATION OF INDIGENOUS AND NON-INDIGENOUS STUDENT, FACULTY, AND STAFF RELATIONSHIPS

The St. Thomas Students Union recognizes the negative impacts of colonization and colonial institutions on Indigenous people, more specifically students. Therefore, our Union will continue to work collaboratively with Indigenous people to ensure reconciliation is meaningful and truly reflected within our institution. The Students' Union is committed to growing our positive and effective collaboration with the university and the Indigenous community on this mutual priority. We have outlined a few key areas below in which we would like to collaborate with the Indigenous community, should Indigenous students deem these projects necessary to positively impact their time at St. Thomas.

Working Closely with the St. Thomas Students Reconciliation Committee

The St. Thomas Students Union recognizes and acknowledges that they complete their work on the unceded territory of the Wolastoqiyik and Mi'kmaq people. Reconciliation has been a priority of our union for many years, and it will continue to be a focus in our priorities. The Students' Union will continue to work collaboratively and support the goals and values of the St. Thomas Students' Reconciliation Committee and the Senate Committee on Reconciliation. Consultation is imperative in making informed policy and ensuring effective representation; therefore, the Union will continue to work closely with the St. Thomas Students' Reconciliation Committee.

Executive Leads: Stevie DeMerchant, President (su_president@stu.ca).

Decolonization Within the Students' Union

In the past years, the Students' Union has taken strides in how to effectively demonstrate their commitment to reconciliation, by working closely with the St. Thomas University Students' Reconciliation Committee, Senate Committee of Reconciliation, and the Wabanaki Student Center we hope to continue this relationship to ensure consultation is completed. Our goal for this initiative is to promote further equity and inclusion within the Student's Union.

Executive Lead: Stevie DeMerchant, President (su_president@stu.ca).

Encourage Participation and Collaboration in Reconciliation Activities on Campus

Reconciliation is about creating equity and equality, closing this gap, and building relationships to do this. To ensure our student body and representatives understand the importance of reconciliation, we will continue to work alongside the Indigenous communities at St. Thomas University. At the core of this initiative is clear and meaningful consultation, this will ensure our advocacy is informed and truly reflects the needs of our Indigenous students.

Executive Leads: Stevie DeMerchant, President (su_president@stu.ca),
Isabella Baralt, Vice President Student Life (su_vpsl@stu.ca).

PILLAR 2: STUDENT-DRIVEN ADVOCACY

Advocacy refers to the process by which the STUSU furthers its internal and external policy positions, strategies, and student concerns by choosing to engage with various stakeholders at various levels, such as the federal, provincial, and municipal governments, and the university administration. Through these various advocacy methods, the STUSU brings forward student issues and feedback, to work toward improvements where necessary to all levels of student life. The STUSU's internal advocacy often occurs through regular meetings with senior administration, through representation on the university's two main governing bodies: the Senate and the Board of Governors, and through representation on the university's various committees. External advocacy is largely accomplished through membership with the New Brunswick Student Alliance (NBSA) and Canadian Alliance of Student Associations (CASA), and when necessary, through meetings with Fredericton elected officials at all levels of government. Regardless of internal or external advocacy, all of the STUSU's policy positions are rooted in extensive research and stem from student experiences. All of STUSU's advocacy endeavours will remain strictly non-partisan and seek to evoke change through strong consensus-building among key stakeholders. The STUSU takes pride in maintaining existing positive relationships with our internal and external advocacy stakeholders.

Bring Advocacy Closer to Students

To bring advocacy closer to students and ensure the student body understands the NBSA and CASA, the Students Union will host multiple in-person advocacy and awareness campaigns. In the past year, the Students' Union has advanced the visibility of advocacy by advancing crucial policies and initiatives, we have seen this with the 'More Than Tuition' and 'Liberal Arts' campaign. When students see and understand what is affecting them it propels their involvement in advocacy, that said, it is important for students to see first-hand the advocacy work that their Representatives are pursuing both on and off campus and to be visible, our advocacy will be promoted on social media and displayed through in-person initiatives.

Executive Lead: Emily Boucher, Vice President Education (su_vped@stu.ca).

Advocate for Affordability Provincially

The quality of education stretches beyond affordable tuition, factors such as food security, and affordable and safe housing contribute directly to students' ability to pursue and complete a post-secondary education. In partnership with the New Brunswick Student Alliance (NBSA), the Union will highlight these issues affecting our student population while continuing to advocate for affordable housing, food, and tuition as a part of our commitment to providing quality post-secondary education.

Executive Lead: Emily Boucher, Vice President Education (su_vped@stu.ca).

PILLAR 3: ENHANCEMENT OF THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE & SUPPORTING STUDENT GROWTH

All of the STUSU's everyday activities and endeavours are geared towards enhancing the educational, social and cultural environment at St. Thomas University. This includes working towards enhancing the student experience in diverse and meaningful ways. Additionally, this includes ensuring any and all direction is taken following student feedback and consultation. This type of internal organization is necessary to allow the STUSU to then create a community

which regularly enhances the St. Thomas student experience. A key component of the STUSU's objectives is connecting students with opportunities for both personal and professional growth. This includes providing two student voices on the President's Advisory Committee on Experiential Learning, and collaborating with the University when possible, to host events and initiatives geared toward student growth.

Social Media Initiatives

Within the St Thomas University Students Union, there are multiple clubs and societies that play a fundamental role in the student experience of the STU Community. Thus, during the upcoming year, we will focus on increasing the spotlight of clubs and societies through social media initiatives to increase visibility and consequently students' engagement with the clubs and societies.

Executive Leads: Stevie DeMerchant, President (su_president@stu.ca),
Ahmik Burneo, Vice President Administration (su_vpadmin@stu.ca),
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Isabella Baralt, Vice President Student Life (su_vpsl@stu.ca),
Tina Iannarilli (iannarilli@stu.ca).

Food Insecurity

The St Thomas University Students Union will focus on guaranteeing access to nutritious and healthy meals for all students. The Students Union will advocate for an expanding food option in the university meal hall as well as increasing support for students with dietary restrictions. Furthermore, to combat food insecurity, the Vice President of Student Life will continue to provide services such as Community Food Smart. Lastly, The Students Union will collaborate with the STU Food Bank committee to develop specific programs to eradicate the stigma surrounding the use of food banks as well as provide recommendations for preparing food on a budget.

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Increase Support for Clubs and Societies

Clubs and Societies are fundamental to the student experience at St Thomas University. This is why the St Thomas University Students' Union will focus on increasing support to clubs and societies, by ensuring that all students have the opportunity of getting involved and feel like they belong at St. Thomas, by allowing them to join one of the university's many clubs or societies. To increase student engagement and participation in clubs and societies the Students Union will work to increase the opportunity for more student-led events and initiatives as well as work collaborative in joint events and programs.

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Increase Awareness of Mental Health Services

Without any doubt, there has been an undeniable increase in the need for mental health services for the student body. Furthermore, as many students are aware, mental health has a significant impact on student's experience. Because of this, the Vice President of Student Life will work collaboratively with students' services to increase mental health support for the students. Furthermore, it will develop events to break the stigma that exists about the use of mental health services and also increase the awareness of mental health services available on campus and in the community. Lastly, it will also increase knowledge of resources for International, LGBTQ2IA+, and Indigenous students on our campus to address unique mental-health concerns.

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PILLAR #4: TRANSPARENCY & ACCOUNTABILITY

As an organization comprised of students working for students, St. Thomas University's Students' Union must practice vital transparency and accountability. To keep students up to date with the activities and decisions of the Union, it is the responsibility of the STUSU to ensure that students have the information they need at any given time. Hence, they can best inform themselves about the operations and undertakings of the STUSU.

Complete the Redesign of the Students' Union Website

Along with our social media accounts, the Students' Union website is where most students obtain the information, they need about matters related to the Students' Union. STUSU's former President launched a redesign project of our website to address some of the shortcomings which prevented students to reach its full potential. We believe there is still some work to be done, particularly in terms of the visibility of services and funding available for students and student-led initiatives. We will ensure every funding opportunity is compiled in one page and we will keep track of how resources are being used through the use of pie charts that display the amount of funds available and used.

Executive Lead: Ahmik Burneo, Vice President Administration (su_vpadmin@stu.ca).

Enhance STUSU Visibility Through Social Media

Social media is one of the most effective ways to reach the student body and keep them informed on events, initiatives, and announcements. The importance of social media should never be overlooked. Following the same tactic as the past academic years, increasing the social media presence of the STUSU should include more insight into the day-to-day operations of the Student Union. This year, the plan is not only continuing with a day in the life, conference recaps, and executive takeovers, but a communications plan should be developed to bring weekly updates of the Student Representative Council (SRC) inviting students to meetings, the agenda items, and the schedule.

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Executive Office Hours

Fostering communication is indispensable for accomplishing our goal of improving transparency and continuing to build strong and meaningful connections with the student body. Following the lead of the previous team, the executive team, as well as our General Manager, will hold weekly office hours in the Students' Union Help Desk at James Dunn Hall. Students will be able to drop in as they please, raise any concerns and ask questions about the Students' Union, our activities, services, projects, and priorities. To better inform students about the times of our office hours, we aim to strengthen communications through the Students' Union's social media, our website, and other channels.

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Ensure Transparency of Clubs and Societies

The Student's Union is focused on ensuring the proper training and funding to assist Clubs and Societies. To ensure transparency and accountability with the resources of the Student's Union and its members, the Vice-President Administration plans to work collaboratively with executive boards of clubs and societies to strengthen their understanding of financial management, budgeting, and investment. In addition, the Vice-President Administration will review and conduct audits of each Club's and Societies' finances at the end of each semester and academic year. Our mission is to support Clubs and Societies with their funding applications so that their activities and/or fundraising events are successful. Likewise, our goal is to ensure the proper use of student resources.

Executive Leads: Ahmik Burneo, Vice President Administration (su_vpadmin@stu.ca),
Stevie DeMerchant, President (su_president@stu.ca).

Pillar 5: Sustainability

The STUSU recognizes the urgency of growing environmental concerns and embraces our responsibility as leaders to make a positive impact. Through collaborative efforts and innovative initiatives, we strive to create a culture of sustainability that permeates every aspect of student life.

Incorporating Sustainable Operations and Activities into STUSU

To address and reduce our environmental impact, STUSU is dedicated to promoting sustainability through our events and daily operations. We believe that every action, no matter how small, can contribute to a greener and more environmentally conscious campus. In our day-to-day operations, we will prioritize energy and resource conservation and strive to recycle merchandise and event materials. We are committed to promoting energy-saving practices and significantly reducing our single-use plastic, as well as ensuring purchased materials are sourced ethically.

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Isabella Baralt, Vice President Student Life (su_vpsl@stu.ca).

Collaborating with Sustainability Efforts on Campus

The Students' Union is committed to fostering a strong partnership with sustainability initiatives and events on campus. We recognize that collaboration is key to driving meaningful change and maximizing our collective impact. We will work collectively with the university to create a recycling plan for residence and work closely with Divest STU to amplify their concerns and advocate for a more sustainable campus. We will promote sustainability efforts on campus such as used book swaps and the bus pass, and work with Enactus STU to host more sustainability swaps.

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