



Students' Union of St.Thomas University
Enhancing the Student Experience: Strategic Plan
May 2016- May 2019

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Table of Contents

Student Safety & Wellness

Introduction.....4

Physical Health.....5

- i) New Sports
- ii) Mandatory Gym Orientation
- iii) Beginner Gym Hours
- iv) Skate Share

Mental Health.....5

- i) Increase number to counsellors to fit 1:400 rati.
- ii) Development of a Campus Wide Mental Health Strategy
- iii) Peer Support Network

Safety.....6

- i) Saferide Review
- ii) Trail Safety
- iii) Emergency Phones
- iv) Regular Trail Inspection

Food.....6

- i) Food Bank Success
- ii) Community Food Smart
- iii) Cooking Classes
- iv) Food Education

Student Engagement

Promotion & Communication.....7

- i) Online Presence
- ii) Campus Presence
- iii) Open Houses

Creating Opportunity.....	7
i) Clubs and Societies	
ii) Volunteer Opportunities	

Effective Advocacy Through Strong Relationships

Academic Growth Through Opportunity.....	8
i) Improved Academic Support	
ii) Internships and Experience Learning	

Active Communication and Relationships.....	8
i) Faculty, Staff & Administration	
ii) Relationship with Government	
iii) Other Organizations & Interest Groups	
iv) Creation of Communication Network	

Active Policy Creation.....	9
------------------------------------	----------

External Partner Review.....	9
-------------------------------------	----------

Governance

Foundations.....	10
i) Constitution & Bylaws	
ii) Policy Review	
iii) Committee Review	

Board Management.....	10
i) Council Evaluation	
ii) Bridging Day	
iii) Involvement of Councillors	
iv) Accountability	

Effective Communication.....	11
i) Transparency	
ii) Minutes	

Introduction

As an organization with an incredibly high turnover rate, institutional memory is difficult to achieve. Student leaders work hard to maintain services, and rarely have time for long term vision planning. This plan aims to improve this.

This plan was developed using a multi-step brainstorming process, in consultation with counselors and students. After being passed through the 2015-2016 SRC, it is our hope that the plan will serve as a guide for future council and executive teams as they work on behalf of students. It is our hope also that in the Fall of 2018, the development of a new three-year strategic plan will take place.

Best,

Megan Thomson
President

Student Safety and Wellness

Wellness and safety are an integral part of student life and directly contribute to the overall student experience. There is often overlap and collaboration between the SU services and the University services that are offered. The SU is committed to adapting services to fit the needs of current students.

Physical Health

- i) **New Sports:** Surveys distributed through VP EX's so members of their house can say what sports they would like to see during intramural seasons. This could also be done with outgoing and incoming house committees on bridging day. Once sports have been identified, we will examine what JB O'Keefe has the means to do.
- ii) **Mandatory Gym Orientation:** The best course of action is to simply plan mandatory hour with the welcome week chair, welcome week coordinator and Jen Burry. It can become one of the mandatory events which residences have to work into their schedule for welcome week including off campus.
- iii) **Beginner Gym Hours:** In the summer, meet with people from the gym to determine what times of the day would be the best for beginners, ideally when the fewest people are there. Once those have been determined, implement them in the month of August as a trial run before the school year begins.
- vi) **Skate Share:** We need to take stock of any skates that we have already collected, and make a list of skate sizes and types that are still needed. Once the weather gets warmer and skates go on sale, we go out and purchase them in order to have a full stock for next Winter.

Mental Health

- i) **Increase number to counsellors to fit 1:400 ratio-**3 years. This will include advocacy to the university and provincial government to increase funding.

ii) **Development of a Campus Wide Mental Health Strategy-** Campus wide working group will develop a mental health framework to address the growing gaps between the needs of students and the current services. There will be two students on the working group, one of which is a STUSU representative

iii) **Peer Support Network-** By working with the university resources, we will develop a network that allows students to seek help from other students in both a mental health and academic setting. We will offer training for students who want to become more confident in their ability to help friends and themselves.

Safety

i) **Saferide Review:** The contract is up in Summer 2017, so second semester next year is when a review needs to take place. This should include a survey of how many students use Saferide regularly, and if it has been a good experience. Information should be collected usage. Hosting a Town Hall regarding Saferide may be a good option..

ii) **Trail Safety:** Ongoing. This includes ensuring the trail is maintained, by remaining in contact with Campus Police and NB Power. It also includes ensuring the placement of functioning emergency phones. Another trail safety initiative is to name the trail.

Food

i) **Food Bank Success:** Steering Committee for the for the food bank should have two members of the STUSU to support the food bank. By doing regular inventory of the food bank, it will allow the Steering Committee to assess the need. The Committee will also be sending out a newsletter outlining specific needs that the food bank has, on a monthly basis.

ii) **Community Food Smart:** CFS can become more accessible by having a database of every member so they can say their name and pay and can receive a bag, as well as a receipt from the Help Desk. This database can also allow reminder emails to be sent for people to order bags before the deadline. The ability to pay for the entire year or semester should also be offered. The utilization of CFS between STU and UNB may also allow for a packing center on campus to make it more efficient and accessible.

iii) Cooking Classes: Assess need and cost. Collaboration with the Wabanaki Resource Centre and Aramark are critical to the success of cooking classes.

vi) Food Education: Basic food education can start by having the community food smart, food of the month sheets posted on the bulletin board of the help desk. This initiative could also be done in conjunction with cooking classes.

Student Engagement

Students who are active in campus life have a more positive university experience. By strategizing ways to engage all students in ways that best suit them, we can improve the student experience.

Promotion & Communication

i) Online Presence: Working with our Communications Coordinator, a social media strategy will be developed. Through research, we will decide how often our various online mediums should be posting, and we will follow through with each of those.

ii) Campus Presence: We should ensure that all posted materials are accurate and relevant. (Including, but not limited to, posters and Help Desk materials). The help desk itself will have all of its signage replaced with more professional and current materials.

iii) Open Houses: We will ensure that there will be a STUSU presence at each Open House hosted by Admissions, in addition to the tour guides who are also counselors .

Creating Opportunity

i) Clubs and Societies: Like STUSU, clubs and societies have a high turnover rate, collecting their most recent contact information will ensure that students are receiving accurate information each year. Additionally, the VP

Administration will follow through with the mandated meetings with the Presidents of all Clubs and Societies, in order to collect and provide feedback.

ii) **Volunteer Opportunities:** Working with Student Services, the Union will promote volunteer opportunities, such as STU Cares. These events will be promoted to council members who will encourage other students to attend. Relationships will be formed in the community to explore additional opportunities.

Effective Advocacy Through Strong Relationships

Advocating on behalf of students is one of the most important jobs that the SU has. By using relationship building as our primary means of advocacy, we can ensure respectful and productive dialogue in the discussion of our fact-based policies.

Academic Growth Through Opportunity

i) **Improved Academic support:** Increasing awareness of services offered and improving those services using student feedback. Though this initiative, for the most part, will take years to thoroughly complete, in the short term, some existing supports may be advertised better.

ii) **Internships and Experiential Learning:** The increased offering and search for more experiential learning efforts between the university and numerous external partners. Where the university has hired an experiential learning coordinator, this work may begin immediately.

Active Communication and Relationships

i) **Faculty, Staff, and Administration:** It is important that we continue our ongoing effort to strengthen relationships with the university administration, Faculty and Staff. This is something that can be achieved through frequent meetings with the administration, ongoing consultation, and active participation on the university Senate and BOG.

ii) **Government:** It is crucial that we continue to maintain good relationships with government through our external advocacy groups, the NBSA and CASA. STUSU will strive for leadership roles in both of these organizations. In addition to meetings affiliated with external partners making

efforts to have regular meetings with MLA's, MP', and City Councillors is crucial to our lobbying success.

iii) Other Organizations and Interest Groups: It is also important that we work to foster relationships with other student organizations, external organizations, stakeholders, and media.

iv) Creation of Communication Network: To help achieve the initiatives mentioned above we must create a communication network of external advocacy partners. This should include names, contact information, and any other relevant information pertaining to the individual/group. This document should be continuously updated by the President and Vice President Education to ensure it is always relevant.

Active Policy Creation

i) Policy Creation: We are continuing to create external policy that reflect the goals and mission of the SU. It is important to continue to expand our policy and to create a yearly advocacy document. Reviewing existing policy is an essential ongoing process to ensure relevance and that it aligns with our stances.

External Partner Evaluation

i) Evaluation: A formal evaluation every two years and an informal evaluations every year to ensure the value of external partners are an adequate return on investment and they are meeting the goals and needs of our students

Governance

Our governing documents are essential to the functioning of our organization. By ensuring they are kept updated and we are abiding by them, our organization is strengthened.

Foundations

- i) **Bylaws & Constitution:** As the founding documents of the organization, the Constitution and Bylaws are of the utmost importance, but are to remain relatively unchanged during the life of an organization. This means that the review of the Constitution and Bylaws need not be done often, every 5 years is recommended. The review of the Constitution and Bylaws is not a process that should automatically trigger change, but should give an in depth visual as to what the organization is and what the overarching focus is. The Constitution and Bylaws are not a reflection of what the organization wants to achieve, however, the organization ought to be a reflection of what these documents are.
- ii) **Policy Review:** The Policies of the STUSU are steering documents that derive from the foundations of the ByLaws and Constitution. They provide direction for day to day operation and can be easily amended, created or retracted. Given the often short term liquidity of priorities of the STUSU it is important that these policies be reviewed often to ensure that they remain relevant. The timeline for policy review shall be every 2 years.
- iii) **Committee Review:** See in Policy Review. The Committee have their own policy and can be reviewed during that process mentioned above

Board Management

- i) **Council Evaluation:** A small initiative that can provide an impactful result of information. Done at the end of each SRC term, evaluations will be comprised of general questions posed to every councillor, a self assessment, as well as a review of the executive. The details of this survey is open to be adjusted every year and won't follow and sort of template.

ii) Bridging Day: In an organization that has such a high rate of turnover, it is crucial that transition periods be thorough to ensure a smooth commencement for the incoming SRC & SEC with a minimal amount of lag. Bridging Days can vary in format, but should contain aspects of learning one's individual role, role in the collect group and the basic structuring of the STUSU. The best learning will come will practical application of each role, but a foundation is necessary. An initial way to apply the practical methods of one's role is to host a all Councillors/Execs elect to a SRC meeting in the latter part of second semester, giving them a glimpse of the operations.

iii) Involvement of Councillors: This process begins in the aforementioned Bridging day, but is addressed more directly during the Fall Council retreat, when councillors are fully introduced to every aspect of the STUSU, their roles, other's roles, the mechanics of the organization, services and anything else pertinent. The retreat allows for a more open casual environment for member to express ideas, ask questions, and ideally become more comfortable in their role. This is all without the structure of an SRC agenda, but is guided by many sessions and opportunities to bond.

iv) Accountability: A combination of evaluation, transition and active councillors, accountability will develop so long as that the prior three are done properly. The SEC is accountable to the SRC which is accountable to the Student body as a whole. The ability to be an effective and efficient organization, by way of the evaluating, seamlessly bridging and being involved, will make for a more transparent organization.

Effective Communication

i) Transparency: An easily obtainable, yet often disregarded, aspect of an organization; Transparency should be woven into the daily routines of the STUSU. It puts the authority in accountability, by opening all possible curtains to allow maximum insight into how effectively the students' are being served and where the money goes. Better transparency can be achieved by increasing communication of actions, policies and plans.

ii) Minutes: Having a better distribution of SRC minutes will lead to better accountability and transparency. Minutes can be more accessible by ensuring up to date copies are available at the Help Desk in JDH and uploaded to the Website.

