



Mid-Semester Report

350 Student Union

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Spring 2023

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By the students, for the students

INTRODUCTION

It has been 11 months since we got elected. Thank you all for trusting us with the job of representing you. There have been a lot of ups and downs, many great lessons learnt, and I can personally and truthfully state that the amount of growth I have attained is something I could not have predicted. There has been a lot of laughter, anger, sadness, and certainly tears, but overall, it has been fun, truly. There was so much to learn at the start and there still is a lot, but I enjoyed every moment and will continue to do so.

Our E-Board inherited a lot of issues, think of a ball of twine. To unravel it, you must understand to some level how it all links.



We have spent quite a lot of time, months in some cases, unraveling the root cause of issues with the intent of making a ton of the hoops, runarounds, and confusion disappear. Prior to typing up this document, I was staring at the white board in my office looking at all that's left to do, and I felt sad because we only have a guaranteed month left and there is still a lot to do. I have spent the last week grappling with the fact that if I were told that my time as President was over, I would be highly disappointed in myself.

The reason for the disappointment would be that I don't feel confident that I will be leaving SA way better than I met it, some might disagree, some might agree, and some mightn't care but regardless, the facts below have shown me that we have done way more and are in the process of doing even more than I initially realized. It is nice to type up these recaps not just for transparency and the students but for myself too, so I can identify the growth I would otherwise have been unable to.

Anyway, enough personal reflections.

This document is a long one and I truly hope you take the time to read it because it does provide information that would not be found elsewhere. When Sammi and I ran last year, none of our preparations made us ready for leading SA but we have grown and done our very best to stay true to the platform on which we were elected: *for the students*.

As always, feel free to shoot me an email for any reason you can conceive. It could be to criticize this document, provide feedback, let me know of your situation, vent, or just saying hi. Whatever it be, my inbox would always be open.

I wish you all the best as we navigate this thing called life. 😊

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Becky Paul Odionhin'.

Sincerely,

Becky Paul Odionhin

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE *(Not in Chronological order)*

ADVOCATED FOR THE ADDITION OF A FALL BREAK

We worked with the University to advocate for the addition of a fall break and succeeded. This break will allow for all students to have additional rest time during the fall semester. SA had sent out a survey regarding it and supported the break as 93% of students voted in favor. The break is to occur during Indigenous Peoples' Day.

MANDATORY STUDENT ACTIVITY FEE

The bi-annual Undergraduate Student Activity Fee vote occurred and ended with 72.52% of students voting in favor of the fee being Mandatory.

CHANGED POLICIES AND PRACTICES USING FEEDBACK FROM STUDENTS

- We came into office with some policies that were passed by the past E-Board. We familiarized ourselves with the policies, had meetings about them, and identified which ones needed necessary changes. The only policy that was changed earlier was the Ticketing and Merchandise Policy. It was changed after speaking with the different clubs affected through focus groups, taking a survey to get feedback from the students, and of course the LASA protest. Some of the policy changes were minor grammar issues. Some were changed to provide avenues for less rigidity and more leniency like violations were taken out of individual policies and put into one policy generally leaving most of the actions taken after a violation has occurred to the determination of the Vice President majorly as opposed to it explicitly stating next steps in the policies.
- The By-Laws were also changed to remove redundant powers like the ability of the President to veto the decisions made at the senate meeting. This power was removed because it had not been utilized for years and just led to a lot of extra paperwork and time expended that could be spent elsewhere plus the President sits on the Senate anyway.

APPOINTED COORDINATORS

At the start of the academic year, a lot of the club councils did not have coordinators and were unable to utilize the services provided to clubs by the coordinators. Services like access to supplemental funding and direct representation on the SA Senate. We appointed all seven coordinators including the replacement for the coordinators that had to step down or were removed.

CREATED CHANNELS FOR INCREASED INTERACTIONS/COMMUNICATION OF INFORMATION WITH CLUBS AND STUDENTS

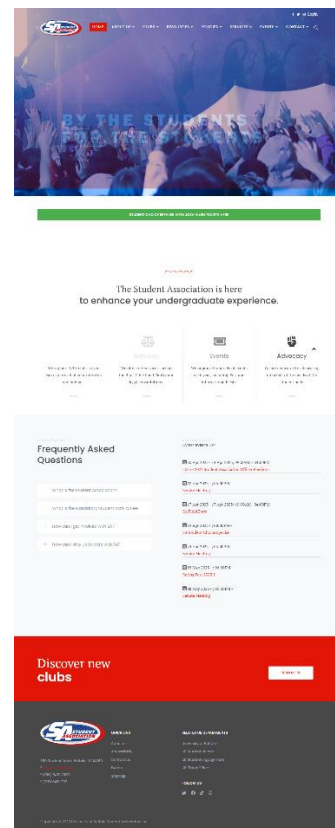
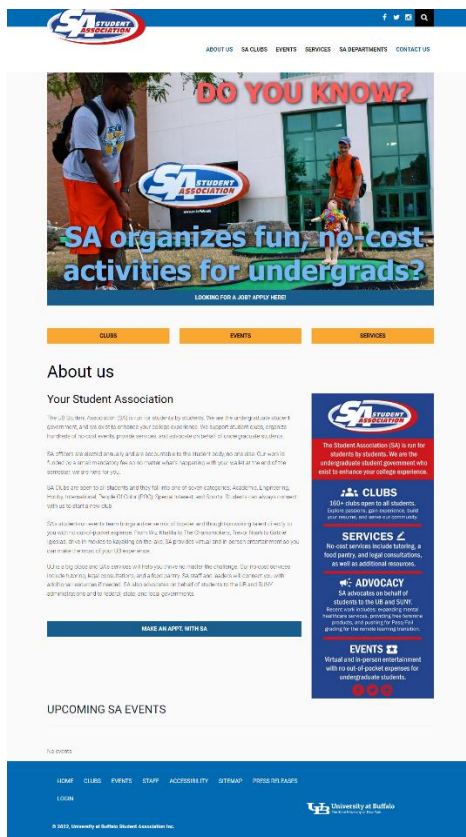
Communication can always be made better, and we started working toward making it better utilizing various means. We have also taken some steps to increase our interaction with students and clubs. Here are a few:

1. Establishment of SA E-Board Townhalls and these Mid-Semester Reports for the dissemination of information.
2. Sending out surveys for clubs and students to be able to send us their concerns and provide feedback anonymously.
3. Creation and Establishment of the Discord channel for clubs to interact with one another and be able to ask questions for quicker responses.
4. Creation of the SA Outreach TikTok.

5. Mandating Administrative SA presence at 2 club events each week through our outreach coordinators.
6. Reaching out to clubs when they have issues or are in tough situations to understand their issues better and determine the best ways to help them out.
7. Showing up to club or council meetings when they request our presence and ensuring every club knows that they can request us to show up to answer their questions as we are their representatives.
8. Actually going to club events to have fun with the members and as students.

INTERNAL ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGES

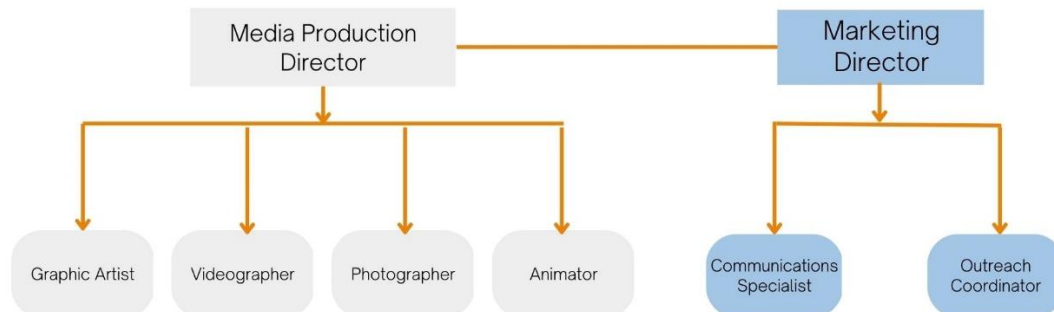
- At the start of the academic year, every SA employee was provided name tags with their desired pronouns to ensure that when they work events they were accurately identified and to help the E-Board and other staff members accurately gender them.
- At the start of the academic year, the Procurement sub-department was set up with the help of FSA’s Mike Grela. This reduced the amount of work that the general finance department had and centralized the location for clubs to send and pick up their packages.
- At the start of the academic year, the Executive Board hired a new Professional Staff Member for our biggest department, Media and Marketing. The arrival of the new Pro-Staff, Kayleigh Young, enabled SA to accomplish more things in a faster timeframe like the modification of the SA Website.



- In the Entertainment Department, we shifted individuals from their position as Event Mangers to two other positions: **Hospitality Manger** and **Volunteer Coordinator**. Having the Hospitality Manger position allows for SA major events that involve the arrival of external guests (i.e., Fest Artists) run smoother as this individual takes care of most things that need to be purchased or provided for the guests. The addition of the Volunteer Coordinator allows for clubs members to

have a smoother process when volunteering for events to fundraise for their clubs. It also provides them with a point person to go to with their various needs.

- Some positional requirements have been reworked to ensure we can provide more support for clubs and students. There has been modification of all the Pro-Staff roles and the creation of a new Pro-Staff role. The goal of all of these is to help clubs, students, and SA out in the long run. One of the new positions, **Program Coordinator**, will have a *Pro-Staff member that deals with majorly small events* and would be able to provide clubs with consistent information that they need to be able to carry out the events that they desire. This would be extremely beneficial for the new clubs hoping to host events. This new Pro-Staff should be available by the start of the next academic year. There has also been the creation of a **Procurement Coordinator** who would help our current Procurement sub-department and would also be able to interact with vendors on behalf of clubs. The **Administrative Director** role would also be more closely focused on helping out our sport clubs, there will be more specifics on that once we are done meeting with all the Sport Clubs to get more information on what they need to function better.
- We split the Media and Marketing department to have separate Directors: **Director of Marketing** and **Director of Media Production**. This was because the department was getting bigger and too much for one part-time student Director to handle. We also created the position of **Communication Specialist** as the arrival of the new Pro-Staff member also had us caring more about our analytics. This role would have students who manage our social media platforms (Instagram, Twitter, Facebook) by responding to messages, making posts, reporting, and analyzing engagement. The role would have two individuals in the position whose office times are different to ensure that we can maximize the amount of time that our social media had a dedicated manager. With the creation of these three new roles, the roles of *Assistant Director of Communications*, *Assistant Director of Media production* and *Assistant Director for Campus Engagement* got dissolved.



- The Club Services department also got a new role added, **Director of Club Services**. Prior to the creation of this role, the Vice President had been acting as both the VP and the Director of Club Services which was tough to manage. This role was added to ensure that the department is able to have its needs better catered to.

LATE NIGHT AT UB

Something that has been a big hit this academic year are the Late Night at UB shows which are a collaboration with the Residential Hall Association (RHA). These are typically held in the Student Union Theatre and involve the presence of different SA clubs like LASA, FASA, UB Musicians, UB Stand-up and Laugh, and many more.

INTERNATIONAL FIESTA (IF)

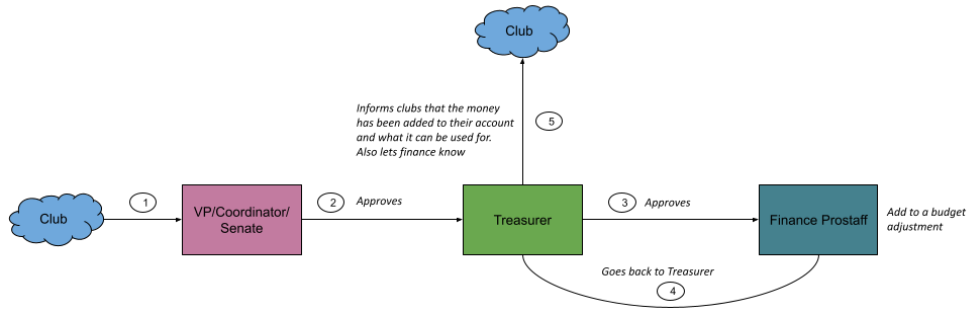
This was a huge success. There were a couple hiccups (majorly technological wise) but everyone enjoyed themselves whether they were participating in the different dances or in the audience voting for their favorite performance. The event was planned by Vice President Sammi Pang, International Council

Coordinator Jessica “Jess” Ellis, and the SA then Media and Marketing Director Joel Marcellus. They worked hard for months with the CFA and the different clubs partaking to put on a show worthy of an award. Most of the feedback on the event from all was positive though the entire planning and execution process were a lot of work which has led one of our future initiatives, an International Fiesta Committee.

OTHER MINOR CHANGES TO MAKE THE ORG WORK BETTER

This is a category for changes that have been made which are not lengthy enough for their own paragraphs.

- Establishment of an internal clubs’ channel for E-Board members to be aware of what is going on with the various clubs on different levels.
- Establishment of work flows like that of supplemental funding.



- Creation of the various Senate Committees

EVENTS, EVENTS, EVENTS

There were a lot of events. More information can be found on them on UBLinked. *I initially had them listed but they caused the already long document to be longer.*

WHAT'S CURRENTLY BEING WORKED ON

CLUB APPRECIATION

SA has a lot of clubs which we do brag about, but we also want to get better at showing the clubs that we appreciate all the work that they do. Our current Director of Club Services, Gracie McDowell, is working on various ways that we can show our appreciation better. There are a lot of our clubs who are doing great things by engaging campus week after week with fun activities and events, clubs who are doing great thing by constantly winning championships and bringing UB Pride to different inter-collegiate competition stages, clubs who are serving the Buffalo community, and many more. We want to thank them for all they do in better ways. There are currently various floating ideas like spotlighting. We should have a general idea of a plan for this by the end of this academic year to be implemented in the next academic year.

SOFTWARE CHANGES

A constant issue that clubs have when interacted with is the length of time that their *POs take to be processed. Unbeknownst to some, the bulk of the issues stem from the software that SA must use during processing. The software that we use to gain signatures (total of 4) which are needed for all POs to be processed recently had an error which led to a lot of POs disappearance and a lot of frustrated clubs. There is also the issue of the fact that the SAFE system and this signature system are not integrated meaning that every SAFE request must be copied over to this signature system for signatures to be gotten and then copied back to SAFE after signatures are gotten for clubs to receive the PO Ready message. There is currently research being done to obtain a new software that may be able to integrate the two shortening the processing time as the copying would not have to be done.

SA E-BOARD TRAINING AND SUPPORT

It is highly ridiculous that as SA currently functions, the E-Board members are elected and gain so much power from the election but are not trained on ways that power can be utilized and how the organization functions. SA E-Board members typically learn as the semesters progress which should not be the case considering the fact that they are making highly impactful decisions during the time that they are still "in training." Currently, what we are working on with the knowledge we have gained through that semester-long learning process is a training plan that provides E-Board members most of the information that they need during the summer before they even start making any of those impactful decisions. The goal is to have the training be all expenses paid to not create a barrier for those who may not be able to afford to stay in the location necessary for the training. The training will also be made mandatory with a change to the by-laws to ensure that everyone who wins is required to go through it. Regardless of one's reason for running, the moment they win, they take on a responsibility to the students and it is essential that they are provided with the tools necessary to succeed in performing that action. A mandated training with provision of resources will enable that to occur. Here are some of things training would be provided on:

- What SA is and how it functions (including all departments, their specific functions, policies, and many more)
- What SUNY Guidelines are and why they are important
- SA and University relations
- SA and Club relations
- What each positional power can do
- What past E-Board members have worked on
- Fiscal Agent
- COAL – Council of Advocacy and Leadership

- Leadership
- Conflict Resolution (too many historical tales of E-Board members not getting along with one another)
- Customer service
- Inclusivity
- Communication
- Accountability
- First Aid Training etc.

CLUB TRAINING AND SUPPORT

Clubs might recall the training that SA has provided over the years which usually involved sitting in a room for upwards of 4 hours learning a ton of stuff about SA that is most likely forgotten in the hour after the meeting ends. We would like for club training to be more flexible and able to be revisited which is why we are currently working on structuring it to be in a virtual manner most likely to utilize UBLearns and be provided in shorter video format for those aspects with videos. The good thing is that more information on the “magic” of SA can be provided. Magic is a term that was utilized for a club member to refer to what happens when requests go to SA and disappear from the club’s knowledge. This would be greatly helpful in terms of transparency as we would also be able to provide the why of things like W-9s are needed for tax purposes and a correlation between the UBLinked event and the SAFE request is needed for accounting purposes. Having virtual training will also allow for clubs to have an easier time getting early budget access.

Currently, we are working on identifying various ways that clubs E-Board members can be helped with transitioning. One is the creation of a club archive to provide them access to historical club information.

STAFF TRAINING

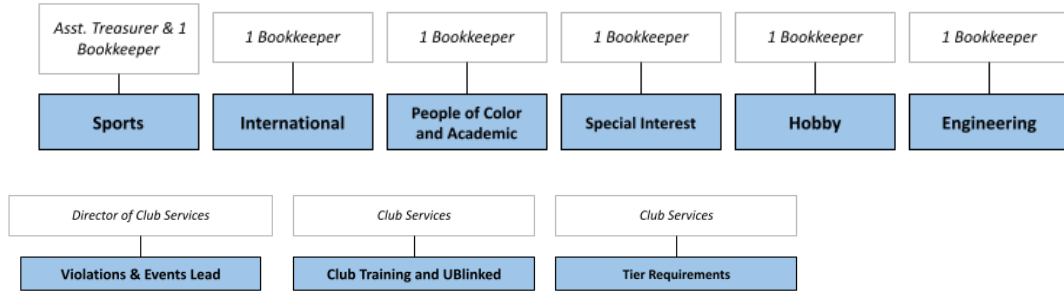
Currently SA staff are also heavily trained on the go depending on the role that they have. There are some aspects that can be standardized and some that can just be made into a general onboarding video (i.e., timesheet change requests). A currently being explored thought is the idea of an SA first week downtime for all staff in person training as there are some tasks that require that.

TRAINING AND VIRTUAL COURSES

All training that can be provided virtually would also be readily available to anyone who wants to learn more about SA. Virtual SA “courses” are also an idea being toyed with to provide accurate information to those interested in learning more about SA.

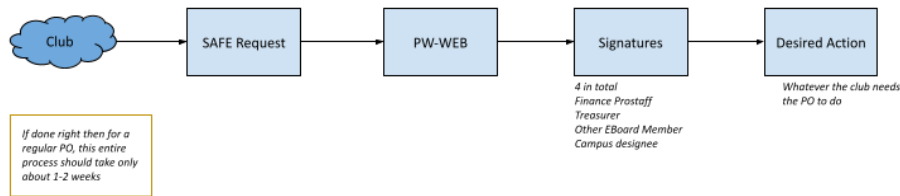
INTERNAL ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGES

- Better interdepartmental communication. Currently this is made difficult by the fact that SA is majorly run by students with different course schedules each semester. The dilemma is ways to get everyone on the same page without exponentially increasing the amount of work that needs to be done after each taken action.
- We are currently in the process of searching for a Financial Coordinator to help with Vendor interactions and hopefully make the process easier for clubs.
- We are also working on ways to specialize certain staff to make certain information flow better and reduce the amount of conflicting information that clubs at times receive. *These have not been finalized and are subject to change.*

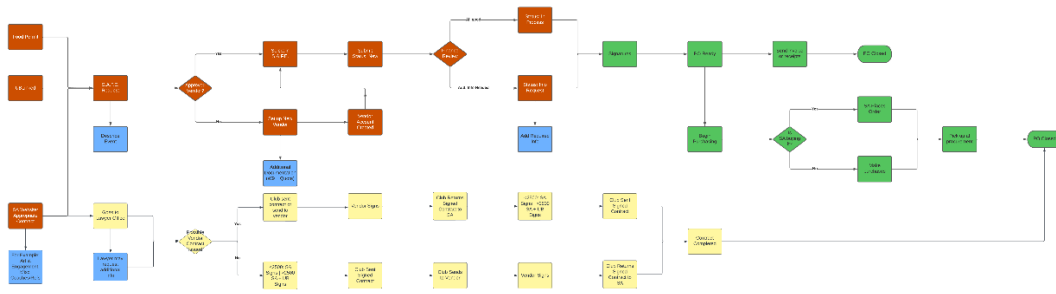


- Standardization and visualization of processes and timelines with checklists. Below are some examples of already created ones. *Do not attempt to utilize the examples as they has not been officially approved.*

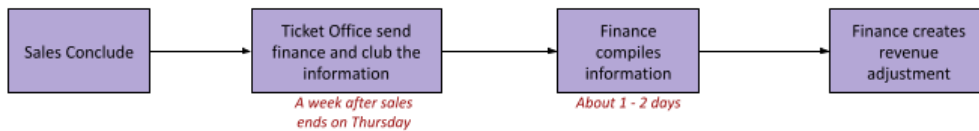
General PO Flow



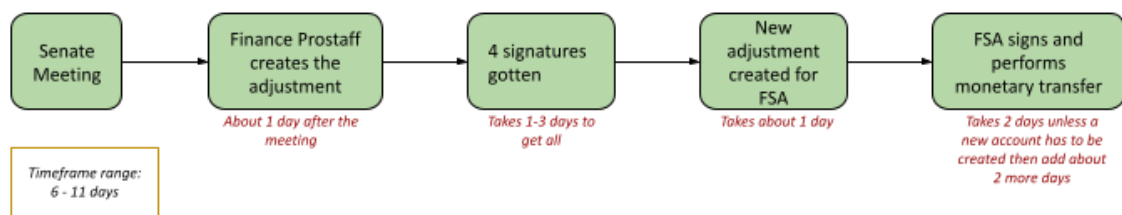
Purchases Involving Contracts



General Ticket Sales flow



General Budget Adjustment flow



CREDIT CARD

We lost Amazon as a vendor earlier in the year and since then clubs have had to purchase from Amazon using reimbursements which has increased their processing time even more. It also shouldn't be expected for students to be able to front most of the bills that they have for their clubs. We are currently working on ways to get the organization a credit card. We have researched various other colleges with credit cards to determine ways it can be done and we have even drafted up a proposal for our Fiscal Agent. Having a credit card would not only give way for clubs to use Amazon again and reduce processing time but would also give way to other provisions like EZ passes, and Gas cards.

COUNCIL COORDINATORS

As stated earlier, most of the council coordinators this academic year were appointed by me (Becky) in my capacity as President which should not be the case. Council Coordinators should be elected but recently there has been a huge decline in club participation in the activities of their council including elections. We recently attempted to have an election for the Special Interest Council Coordinator but that was not possible as there wasn't enough people present to have an election. Even when I emailed the council for people to reach out if they would like to be appointed, there was only one response.

There are some issues with the current way Council Coordinators function including the possibility for lack of accountability. As Council Coordinators are very important for clubs and are needed earlier than the current provision period for appointment by the President in the event of an absence, different ways are currently being researched to address the issues.

MENSTRUAL PRODUCTS

This is one of our major advocacy efforts for this semester. Some may be familiar with the bathrooms across campus that have devices for dispensing menstrual products but no menstrual products. We are currently working on identifying ways to provide more products and ensure the provision lasts. We will be working with the University to ensure continuity.

DEGENERALIZATION OF CERTAIN PROCESSES

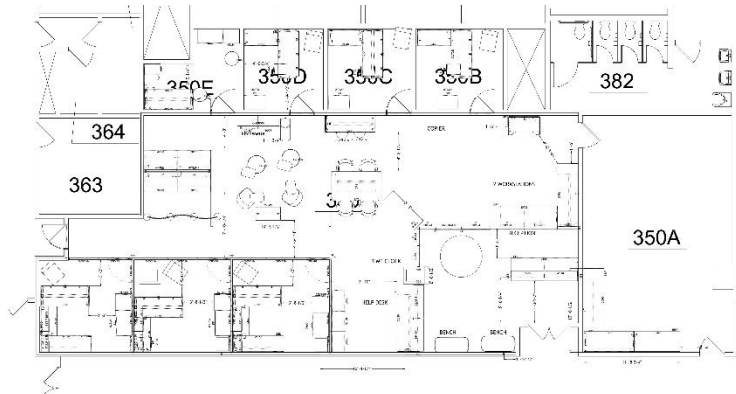
A negative impact of the short term nature of the SA E-Board position is that a lot of past E-Board members made changes in a patchwork format or tried to generalize a lot of processes and procedures to cater to all which made it harder for certain clubs to execute their function. A lot of the clubs affected belong in the sports council and although part of that reason stems from the fact that SA is not designed for sport clubs, there is more that can be done for them that has not been. Currently sports clubs are being met with to ensure that their opinions are gotten on the specificity of the issues that they are facing, and changes can be made accordingly. After sports clubs are met with, engineering clubs would most likely be next as they at times have very niche specific desires and purchases. The goal is to help make things easier for clubs even though a few things on SA's end might get slightly more complicated.

DEFINING SA RELATIONSHIPS WITH VARIOUS UB DEPARTMENTS

SA cannot function on its own as there are a lot of resources that we actually cannot provide. We are therefore working on identifying and establishing defined relationships with UB departments that can provide those resources. We function very closely already with Student Life and Student Unions, we would like to expand that to Athletics, Sustainability, IDC, Trademarks, and many more.

OFFICE LAYOUT CHANGE

We are working on changing the SA Office physical space. This would most likely be implemented in the summer. Here is a picture of the proposed change:



FLOOR PLAN



WELLINGTON LOCKWOOD
3301 GENESEE STREET
SUITE 300
BUFFALO, NY 14225
WWW.WELLINGTONLOCKWOOD.COM

Interior Miller

CLIENT/OWNER
UNIVERSITY AT BUFFALO
PROJECT NO.
DATE
SCALE
PROJECT LOCATION



University at Buffalo
Student Union - North
Campus
Suite 330 Layout

DATE
BY
CHECKED BY
DATE
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SHEET 01

SPRING FEST

Still working on it as we were 7 months ago. We have 3/3 artists confirmed and we are currently working on contracts. Spring Fest is on the 5th of May.

WHAT WE HOPE TO WORK ON IN THE FUTURE

SAFE CHANGES

- Creating an approved vendor list that drops down in SAFE to show clubs possible vendors based on the service they desire.
- Addition of a way for clubs to link their contracts to their SAFE request or for SA to do the same. We haven't yet decided how this change will be.
- Addition of a need-by date so we can sort faster through requests.

ADVOCACY RELATED

- Safe Space for Neurodivergent people
- Accessibility Initiatives
- Plan B provision
- WEPA Printing Money *where do they go?*
- Composting on campus *provision of more ways*
- Market shuttles *run on more days*

GENERAL SA RELATED

- At the end of the semester, coordinators will work with VP to reassign clubs to councils as some of them are in the wrong council for their function.
- Automation of the club's requirement tracker so it doesn't have to be done by a person or only a part of it needs to be. A current reason why the budgets for clubs are taking a while is because we have actual individuals compiling the information.
- Better Election system This includes making an actual debate, ability for candidates to be asked questions by the present students and many more.
- Committee creations: Fest and IF
- Better empowerment of staff for their roles and provision of relevant experiences for their future goals
- Ways for clubs and students to evaluate the E-Board
- Provision of more community service opportunities and ways for students to connect with the Buffalo Community

IDEAS/CHANGES THAT GOT KILLED

50% EVERYTHING FOR CLUBS

This would have required clubs to have every piece of clothing/item they would like to purchase (be it uniforms or merchandise) be sold for 50% subsidized. It stemmed from an inventory and identification of personal item issue. It was killed because it was too punitive for no good reason. We shouldn't intentionally give more avoidable costs to club members.

TRAVEL LINE

This was the idea that SA itself would have one line for which clubs can make all their traveling requests and purchases from. The current COAL Grant mess has shown us that our current systems and software are too limited in function to have this done properly.

ANOTHER E-BOARD POSITION

This was killed because SA employee roles can be modified and properly trained to accomplish tasks.

NETWORK ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

This was a plan to restructure SA from its current hierarchical version to a more network like structure. It was killed because the structure became too convoluted and that convolution became worse once we took in the part time nature of jobs.

FINANCES

For information on this, visit the [General Ledger](#) on the SA website.

CONCLUSION

This report covers a lot of information but certainly not all that has been done, is currently being done, or will be done. There are certainly things that have been unintentionally omitted but this exists to serve as a way for all students to know what their current E-Board and SA has been, is, and will be up to. I hope it provided much needed information and some transparency on SA.