



sheridan student union

MEMORANDUM

TO: Board of Directors, SSU
FROM: Ben LeBlanc, President, SSU
DATE: June 27th, 2019
RE: Strategic Plan Revision and Updates

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this report is to inform the SSU Board of the President's intent to seek approval to amend the previously approved strategic plan to reflect the major environmental changes within which the SSU operates. This report also seeks to clarify the process for which the President and Student Executive will revise the Strategic Plan moving forward, and to provide additional clarity surrounding the challenges that have been identified with the current Strategic Plan.

BACKGROUND:

In 2018/19, our Board of Directors and previous President, Enrique Ponce, realized the importance and potential of organizational planning for our future student leaders and undertook efforts to engage in a strategic planning process. Each year, a new group of passionate and committed students grow into leaders within the SSU, and the organization naturally experiences changes in student roles, naturally ebbing and flowing to the new students' voices. With this in mind, it was important for SSU to have solid strategic guidance to chart a path for the organization moving forward and provide our student leaders with the tools to best serve the needs of the Sheridan student body.

The intent of the strategic plan was provide guidance and direction while allowing future leadership teams the flexibility to meet the changing needs of students and evolving nature of the post-secondary environment. Since the Government of Ontario announced the Student Choice Initiative (SCI) in January 2019, SSU has briefed our student board, and participated in a number of meetings with senior Sheridan staff in order to understand the obligations the organization must meet to comply with these new policies. SSU patiently waited for the provincial policy framework for the SCI, which was received in early April. While completing the strategic plan, little consideration of the impacts of the SCI were taken into consideration, as there was little information available at the time to inform decision-making regarding strategic direction.

The current SSU strategic plan is available to the Board for review in the OneDrive and on SharePoint.

Since the completion of the previous President's term, the SSU has assembled fees in order to comply with the provincial policy, and while some elements of our operations maintain some base funding, there is great uncertainty surrounding how "non-essential" functions will continue to be funded, and whether or not students will choose to continue to support these services. Examples of non-essential services are our student governance infrastructure, food banks, clubs, food and beverage division and our programming and events division. This fiscal uncertainty has caused significant concern for management for the near and mid-term, and has resulted in some downsizing of the organization and our operational budget already, with potentially more adjustments to come. It is important that SSU transition through the significant shifts posed by the SCI, and that the organization retain the ability to

remain flexible and adaptable as an organization, which would be facilitated through the strategic plan implementation.

Since beginning the term as President, numerous consultations with departments internally following discussions of operational changes as a result of SCI have yielded some feedback that the current strategic plan does not account for the many changes that are being pursued by the organization as a means to maintain operations or develop a new fee structure. Further to this, several departments and managers have identified that the plan, while attempting to remain student focused and flexible, has been very constraining, and slotting their activities into the strategic plan is largely ineffective; as a plan that was meant to outline strategic direction for the organization, it fails to take into consideration the diverse range of activities, programs, and services that the SSU partakes in.

Further to this, three large areas were omitted from the strategic plan that are of great importance to the SSU Board and employees; Advocacy, Employee Value, and Transparency/Accountability. Conducting reviews of the plan with several Student Executive and Full-Time Staff members revealed that there were other gaps in the plan as well, highlighting the difficulty of utilizing the plan as intended to respond to the new environment of SCI.

Following the feedback and review of the strategic plan, the President and Student Executive spent roughly a week reviewing the plan and proposing changes, and proposed a series of changes to the way that it is structured and organized, as well as what is contained within it. The changes have been reviewed by several areas of the SSU, and are believed to be of great interest to the organization to pursue, and align much closer to both the goals of the Board, and the changes required within the SCI era.

PROPOSAL:

The President would like to propose several amendments, beginning with the organization's Vision and Mission Statements, which would become:

Vision: Be the catalyst to create change in our community

Mission: Creating an exceptional experience through student-focused programs, advocacy, and services

These amendments reflect the changes that have been made to the "Pillars of Success" for the organization, which are proposed to change to the following:

Pillars of Success:

Programs – "What we do" – The internal elements and successes that are experienced at SSU

Advocacy – "What we say" – The advocacy and representation of student voice here at Sheridan

Services – "What we provide" – The services and benefits that we as an organization provide

As you'll note, the Pillars are not as specific as the previous plan, as the President believes that more consultations are required with the Student Executive, the Board, and Managers to ensure that the plan is more aligned with the direction that the SSU is pursuing moving forward. The intent behind this proposal is to ensure that the Board is aware of the direction that the President is seeking to undertake, and that they are comfortable with this approach.

The President wishes to introduce a plan that is designed to ensure that the organization remains flexible throughout its operations, and is able to respond appropriately when pursuing future endeavours. Additionally, the newly revised plan would be shared with Sheridan once it is finalized and approved by the Board of Directors. The President would like to present the revised vision for the strategic plan at a Board meeting in August, ensuring that there is time for the necessary feedback.

RECOMMENDATION:

The SSU President respectfully requests the SSU Board to pass the following motion to enable President to undertake review and make amendments to the Strategic Plan of the SSU:

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the SSU Board RECOGNIZES the President's interest in revisiting and proposing an alternate direction for the SSU's 2024 Strategic Plan, AND THAT FURTHER, the President shall present the revised plan to the SSU Board of Directors when it is finalized for approval, AND THAT FURTHER, the President shall provide the Board with further information on how the new strategic plan will be aligned with Board goals at the time the plan is finalized.