

Hi! I'm Maheen and I'm a U3 student studying Political Science and Psychology. I'm currently working as the Arts Undergraduate Society Vice-President of Internal Affairs and as a Floor Fellow at La Citadelle. I'm running for SSMU VP Student Life this year because I believe the SSMU VP Student Life portfolio needs change and I'm the best person to make it happen.

My key goals for this year are to address needs in every facet of the portfolio - particularly issues with Clubs and Services, Mental Health, and Family Care. Additionally, as the University Centre is re-opening in Fall 2020, I want to take this opportunity to make changes to the building that will improve student life greatly. I also have two personal projects that I'd like to pursue - making SSMU employees Work Study eligible and improving the Scholarships and Student Aid Office.

1️⃣ University Centre/SSMU Building

Revitalize the University Centre

The University Centre is expected to re-open in Fall 2020! Whether it will truly be ready by then or not, I have a plan for optimizing space in the University Centre to best serve student needs.

🔹 Smooth transition of Clubs and Services back into the University Centre and in-depth consultation with SSMU groups regarding office space
🔹 Create student study spaces in the building, especially on the second floor cafeteria
🔹 24-hour access to SSMU groups in the University Centre and extend access after-hours/late night access to all students
🔹 Undertaking an 'accessibility audit' to work towards a more accessible building (washrooms that aren't gendered, baby changing stations in the bathroom, stalls accessible for mobility devices, etc.)

🔹 Re-negotiating vendor contracts to introduce new, affordable food options for the University Centre dependent on student demand (the dream: bubble tea in the place of Liquid Nutrition - consultation needed of course!)

2️⃣ Clubs and Services

SSMU Clubs and Services have been recently inundated with bureaucratic hurdles, including a $25 fee for samosa sales, barriers in getting sponsorships due to paperwork, and insurance struggles.To me, it appears that SSMU Clubs and Services have to amount to an immense standard to comply with SSMU regulations, often for no discernible reason. I hope to make substantive changes that will maintain accountability for clubs, but ease their large burden.

More Support for Clubs and Services

🔹 Creating an equipment library for SSMU groups (and potentially all students) that feature common equipment needs like microphones, speakers, projectors, etc.
🔹 Following through with the creation of a Clubs Portal
🔹 Feedback/complaint mechanism for SSMU staff (i.e. General Manager, Operations department, etc.) that is also promptly addressed by VP Student Life
🔹 Developing a more active, student-centred social media presence for Student Life and SSMU more generally
🔹 Working with the SSMUnion to ensure SSMU staff have their needs and demands met
🔹 1-hour per week office hours for Clubs Coordinator and/or SSMU Clubs and Services Representative(s)

Reducing Bureaucracy for Clubs and Services

🔹 Amending Internal Regulations (IRs) to allow for less stringent/less punishing consequences for IR violations
🔹 Amending IRs to make it easier for SSMU Clubs to receive official status - reducing the amount of time clubs are left in “interim status”
🔹 Eliminating the $25 fee for samosa sales
🔹 Reducing (and eventually eliminating) the use of the Event Declaration Form for common/non-sports events
🔹 Creating an online module for Clubs in the place of (or in addition to) Clubs workshops, through Google Classroom, continuing work done by the incumbent VP Finance and VP Student Life
🔹 Developing an informed sponsorship policy for Clubs and Services wherein in-kind sponsorships and donations will no longer require a contract
🔹 Creating a ‘one-pager’ or short document of most important rules/guidelines for SSMU Clubs in accessible language, in both English and French

Better Club and Service Promotion

🔹 Improving follow-up with students post-Activities Night - sending a dedicated email to all students after Activities Night informing them of opportunities to get involved, better connecting them with Clubs
🔹 Creating a “Club/Service of the Week” section in the SSMU listserv to highlight club activity and upcoming events
🔹 Increasing awareness of Activities Night through collaboration with frosh (faculty and non-faculty)
🔹 Working with residence/SHHS community to spread greater knowledge of the full range of available SSMU services to incoming students - Floor Fellow training presentation by SSMU VP Student Life, providing residence community directly with promotional materials (inserts, pamphlets)

3️⃣ **Mental Health**

I want to better consolidate efforts across the university to improve the Wellness Hub by expanding and institutionalizing the Mental Health Roundtable. As well, my greater goal is to work collaboratively, but persistently with Wellness Hub administrators (as well as the VP University Affairs of SSMU) to reduce wait times for students accessing mental healthcare and improve quality of care at large.

Advocacy with the Wellness Hub

🔹 Collect large-scale survey data on McGill student concerns, especially to see student interest around services like long-term counselling, to better advocate student needs
🔹 Increasing student representation in periodic Hub leadership meetings
🔹 Involving students in Wellness Hub communications strategy
🔹 Institutionalize and expand the Mental Health Roundtable to include a greater variety of on-campus mental health advocates

Increasing Accessibility to Mental Healthcare

🔹 Developing a better Wellness Hub feedback mechanism - optional and anonymous completion of an e-form post-appointment; ensuring follow-ups on feedback
🔹 Making the Eating Disorder Resource and Support Centre an official SSMU service and expanding its range of services
🔹 Bridging the gap between academics and mental health in conjunction with VP UA and other relevant actors
🔹 Expanding the McGill Psychoeducational and Counselling Clinic training clinic
🔹 Increase student awareness of resources both outside of McGill and within McGill for care
🔹 Better connecting the Wellness Hub with a variety of outside mental health clinics (also identifying those that are specifically English-speaking, trans-positive, survivor-centric, have PoC counsellors) until the Wellness Hub is able to handle demand

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4️⃣ Family Care/Daycare

This year, SSMU has faced challenges with Daycare governance, in addition to the issue of wait times for parents that has always plagued this service. I have a plan of action to address both of these issues and more!

Improving the SSMU Daycare

- 🔹 Working towards an ultimate goal of reducing wait times for student parents - collaborate with PGSS to develop an improved model of daycare and expand the program
- 🔹 Collecting better data on undergraduate students who have dependents and need childcare
- 🔹 Increasing awareness to student parents about non-profit, affordable CPEs (i.e. sending an email to all parents who register for SSMU daycare about Quebec CPE opportunities)
- 🔹 Acting as liaison between parents and board members - advocating for parent representation on the SSMU Daycare Board from Parent Committee
- 🔹 Ensuring that there is at least one SSMU daycare board member that is trained in childcare

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5️⃣ Personal Projects

Additionally, I have two “personal projects” that I am also looking to achieve during my time as VP Student Life:

1. Making SSMU employment Work Study eligible

Especially with the new creation of the SSMUnion, an effort to unionize SSMU employees, it will be more important than ever for SSMU to develop a plan to pay workers adequately and fairly. My idea is to follow the example of AUS and register SSMU as a Work-Study employer, which would give SSMU a subsidy from McGill for the wage they pay to their staff.

2. Working with the Scholarships and Student Aid Office to develop better financial aid allocation criteria and push for more scholarship opportunities

Many students on this campus are in need of student aid, but are ineligible for student aid due to not receiving aid from their nation, state or province’s government. I think this is a crucial issue with the way the SSAO runs and allocates their funding. Additionally, the major entrance scholarship renewal system is enormously flawed. I’d like to take an in-depth look into the issues plaguing the SSAO and student experiences with it, to spark a conversation around this essential Student Service.

~ Experience ~

I have a wealth of experience to put my plans into action, from working with the residence community to the Arts community.

- AUS VP Internal (2019-20)

Arguably my most relevant experience for this position is my work this year with the AUS! In my capacity as VP Internal, I supported 34 AUS departmental associations with obtaining room bookings and liquor permits. This role also involved organizing various events like the Departmental Orientation, AUS Holiday Party and AUS Awards gala. Finally, I oversaw two committees, the First-Year Committee (FEARC) and the AUS Environment Committee, and sat on AUS Legislative Council.

- Floor Fellow at La Citadelle (2019-20)
- McGill International Experience Awards Advisory Board (2 meetings, 2019-20)
- Communications and Microfinance Intern with CAMFED (Summer 2019)
- AUS Equity Co-Commissioner (2018-19)
- Residence Life Facilitator (2018-19)
- Human Resources Intern with The Synergos Institute (Summer 2018)
- Inter-Residence Council VP Equity (2017-18)
- Community Engagement and Equity Committee (2017-18)

Voting period is from Tuesday, February 25th to Friday, February 28th and the debate will be held on February 24th at 7:30pm in the New Residence Hall ballroom.

For any questions or comments, please feel free to post in this event or email me at maheen.akter@mail.mcgill.ca!