

# BELLE SULLIVAN

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My name is Belle Sullivan and it's with great excitement that I'm running to be SSMU's next VP Student Life! I have exciting plans to bring back SAMOSAS, and make it easier to start and run clubs. Over my three years at McGill, I have had the pleasure to commit myself to campus life through all sorts of activism. I have experience making campus more accessible as a collective member of the Union for Gender empowerment and as the SSMU Eating Disorder Campaign Coordinator. As an organizer of the SSMUnion, the union for SSMU employees, I have helped expand student-employee rights while learning the ins and outs of SSMU. My experience has taught me how frustrating SSMU can be for those seeking to do good work, especially activism. As VP Student Life, I would be an ally within SSMU to students committed to making a difference.

## EXPERIENCE

**The SSMUnion:** With the SSMUnion, the labor union representing employees of the SSMU, I organized employees of the organization, across every service and portfolio, in order to get myself and my coworkers dignified and fair working conditions. As VP Student Life, I want to help create the same fair and dignified conditions for service execs and volunteers, club execs, and the student body at large in ways that I couldn't do through the union. Furthermore, in the process of organizing, which involved intensive research about the SSMU in order to compile a complete staff list and develop a deep understanding of its hierarchies, both formal and informal, I have developed a detailed understanding of organization. This knowledge will allow me to operate as effectively as a SSMU exec as I did as a union organizer.

**Services:** I am the first and only candidate for this position to have served as the executive of a SSMU service, the Union for Gender Empowerment. As a collective member at the UGE during a period of time when we allocated tasks on an ad hoc basis, I have had a hand in every operational aspect of a service, from administration and finance to event planning to outreach and advocacy. I knows what services need and how they operate. SSMU touts its "Highest Priority Policy", but services rarely see it enacted; as VP Student Life, services really would be my highest priority.

**Clubs:** I serve on the exec of multiple clubs, running events, booking space, and handling sanctions issues. I've seen firsthand what's running well at the VP Student Life office and been directly impacted by what's running poorly. I understand that for clubs, dealing with SSMU takes up time that could be devoted to the clubs' purpose, and am committed to reducing that time.

**Mental Health:** As the Eating Disorder Campaign Coordinator, I have worked directly with the current VP Student Life in the mental health section of the portfolio. I will foster greater collaboration between the several mental health working groups and the services that address mental health on campus, and I am excited to act as an advocate for mental health as a higher priority at SSMU and at McGill.

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## ACCESSIBILITY

As VP Student Life, I will enact a coherent and realistic plan to make sure that club and service executives no longer have to deal with the difficult-to-navigate bureaucracy currently in place, and can focus on the smooth running of their clubs and provision of their services. As the main point of contact between clubs, services, and SSMU, I will be accomodating and clear about every process and piece of paperwork anyone needs to handle.

I will **Re-think Clubs Workshops** by conducting a reevaluation of all the clubs workshops to make sure that they are fewer in number, more efficient, and present all necessary information rather than just certain bits and pieces. Right now the workshops are set up to make life easier for presenters, and I want to reorient them to be easier for the club executives who are giving up their time in order to learn.

While working jointly with the VP Finance, we will merge the *audit workshop* and the *finance workshop* into a shorter and easier workshop accessible to all club treasurers and VPs finance. There is no need to spend two hours in two different workshops to learn such directly related material.

The hour-long *sustainability workshop* covers approximately twenty to thirty minutes of content. I will replace it with a new *Events Workshop* incorporating the sustainability content but also including information on space booking, contract forms, and event declaration forms to make sure clubs can hold sustainable and successful events without any problems, while efficiently using the whole hour of time allotted for training.

The *Equity and GSVP workshops* were created according to the wishes of the commissioners for those respective portfolios. I respect the knowledge, authority, and autonomy of those commissioners and believe that these workshops are essential and well-run.

**I will also be reforming the Services Summit.** Currently, the *services summit* happens twice a year in a workshop-style meeting. I will hold these summits four times yearly and hold them with plenty of advanced notice in a consultation-like setting. I have experience organizing service meetings to discuss the difficulties faced by services during my time at the Union for Gender Empowerment. The inter-service meetings that I organized while at the UGE are in the process of becoming a subcommittee of Legislative Council, in order to provide Leg Council with better information to use when making decisions that impact services. As VP Student Life, I want to make regular consultation with service executives central to my daily operations because I know that service execs are the most knowledgeable people regarding how their services, and services in general, work.

I will **Completely Change the Sanctions Process** for clubs, which is currently confusing and leaves clubs open to unnecessary sanctions. Regardless of anyone's experience navigating the SSMU system, every club executive deserves the chance to learn what they have done wrong without facing an automatic sanction. I plan to create a *traffic light* system where certain violations lead to automatic sanctions, but other smaller violations would need to be numerous before a sanction would be imposed on a club. These smaller violations would lead to *strikes*.

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Currently, some sanctionable offenses are much more serious than others. Equity or GSVP violations, hosting a party with club-sanctioned illicit drug use, or other violations placing students in unsafe situations are treated the same as submitting late paperwork, making an honest mistake in a contract, or missing a workshop. I will implement a yellow-light, red-light program that seeks to punish deliberately reckless, grossly negligent, and unethical action while allowing for leniency in procedural violations. These large breaches of trust and regulations would be a red-light, immediate sanction, while other issues would simply result in a yellow-light warning. Three “yellow-light” procedural violations will result in a sanction, allowing clubs the opportunity to understand what my office needs from them in terms of paperwork, while still allowing me to ensure that every club is in compliance with the SSMU constitution and the inclusive, safe environment we all seek to create.

I firmly believe that conversations with SSMU executives should not be a place to be surprised. That means that when you are sanctioned or warned, or even if you want to discuss a potential problem, I will make sure that club executives, service executives, and any student has *access to simple, plain language explanations* of SSMU requirements and regulations so that everyone enters every conversation prepared.

Even with an easy-to-understand reformation, sanctions may be issued unjustly, requiring an appeal. Unfortunately, the current *appeals process* is unnecessarily lengthy and involves too many actors for the process to be done efficiently. However, under the strike system, rather than review in committee, the VP Student Life, the Clubs and/or Services Coordinator, and the VP Finance would review a first strike appeal and render a decision. In the case of a second or third strike or a full sanction, the appeals process involving the Student Group Administration Committee that is currently in place would take effect. This would create a more efficient process with a more comprehensive timeline for anyone who wishes to appeal or contest strikes for their first minor violation.

The move back into the SSMU building has the potential to be a stressful time for services and SSMU employees. As VP Student Life, **I will ensure a smooth transition back into the SSMU building** for services, including following up consistently throughout the summer to make sure that any lost or broken items are located or replaced.

My commitment to accessibility also includes a commitment to personal accessibility. **I will hold a greater amount of office hours** to allow for more face time with clubs and club executives, rather than resolve issues that arise via email exclusively, which is notoriously confusing, ineffective, and clunky.

In all my communications with students, clubs, and services, **I will maintain complete honesty**, including *honesty about what I don't know or can't say*. I will also ensure that all communications from the VP Student Life office, in person, via listserv and email, on social media, and otherwise are *calm, completely factual, and easy to understand*. SSMU in general, and the student life office specifically, should be able to pass a vibe check at any time.

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## ENGAGEMENT

Clubs and Services are nothing without the student body. As VP Student Life, I will be committed to ensuring every student on campus can easily participate in campus life. That means making it easier to join clubs, easier to start clubs, and easier to access everything SSMU has to offer, from the essential services students need to the cool extracurriculars you never knew you were interested in.

I will **revive the immensely popular Mini-Courses series**, allowing students to teach students about any topic under the sun, from a new language to a new skill. These easily accessible courses have historically been a valuable way to introduce students to new passions or interests. The Mini-Course offerings have declined significantly while the SSMU Building has been closed, and I am committed to ensure that they increase back to previous levels with its reopening.

Every single student at McGill has the right to be active on campus while using their preferred name and pronouns. Working with the VP Finance, **I will ensure all SSMU employees, especially HR, are trained in and knowledgeable about using the correct name for anyone** with legal names that don't match their preferred name to ensure that nobody feels uncomfortable as a SSMU employee, in the process of applying for SSMU jobs, and attending SSMU events because they are called by the wrong name or addressed the wrong way.

Mature students face different obstacles to getting involved on campus than younger undergraduates do. To ensure that mature students are an active part of campus life, **I will implement initiatives that reduce the barriers to their inclusion** as a part of McGill. This includes having childcare available at events hosted by SSMU such as Activities Night, making it easier for mature undergraduate students to have the same social opportunities as younger students.

SSMU's activities night is one of the main events for students looking to get involved on campus. Unfortunately, at recent events the clubs and services that students are interested in or need have been hidden behind sponsored content. Placing SSMU's sponsors in the middle of Activities Night and letting them flaunt the sign-size rules imposed on student groups serves only to cut students off from one another and make clubs and services' flagship event difficult to navigate and inaccessible. I will **make sure that Clubs and Services are centered at Activities Night**, are not boxed out by paid content, and can introduce and present themselves to everyone.

Extracurricular engagement is a valuable source of experiential learning, and everything students do to help our campus outside of the classroom should be recognized. As VP Student Life, I will help clubs and services navigate the process of getting executive and volunteer positions with their group fully listed and acknowledged on McGill's *Co-Curricular Records*. Co-Curricular Records are official documents issued by McGill that recognize students' contributions to the community and learning outside the classroom. **Students deserve this formal documentation of the work they have put in** to help create an engaging and active campus.

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Participating in events on campus should be easy. As VP Student Life, I will use the SSMU platforms to **promote club events through a weekly events listserv**. When a club submits an event declaration form, they will have the option to check a box to be included in this listserv. I will also collaborate with the VP Internal to make the *Campus Calendar* more widely circulated and easier to get your event added to. For students looking to volunteer, I will make a point of promoting and boosting volunteer opportunities, both one-off and long-term, so that it is easy to find ways to stay engaged and give back.

## SAMOSAS

It is my firm belief that every club and every service should have the opportunity to conduct its business independently, and that includes the ability to fundraise. As VP Student Life, I will make sure that Clubs and Services can easily access their accounts, know what they need to do to hold fundraisers, and can live without the constant threat of city officials. Yes, that means I'm bringing samosas back.

**Samosa sales** and other food sales are an important way that clubs and services fundraise. The recent controversy and crackdown by the City of Montreal has left samosa sales and food sales completely unprofitable, difficult to conduct, and left clubs worried about city officials. Not only that, it has left campus without one of its most iconic cultural markers. I'm bringing samosas back. As VP Student Life **I will re-run a referendum on the club fee increase**, where the money will be used to pay every single application fee for food sale fundraisers. Once this increase is passed, clubs will never need to pay out-of-pocket again for applications or fines related to their food sales or fundraising activities.

Services currently have an unnecessarily difficult time with financial matters in their own right, despite raising money through fee levies. Under the current system, in order to make any purchase over 100\$, services must fill out a form, wait for approval of that form from SSMU's accountants, from the VP Finance, and from the General Manager. Once they have those three approvals, they then need to make an appointment with the SSMU VP Finance to place their order on the executive credit card, a process that can stretch a purchase that could have taken twenty minutes at Canadian Tire into a weeks-long rigamarole. That's enough paperwork and enough nonsense for any executive. **I will advocate for services, including volunteer-run services, to have access to their own credit cards** to make their own purchases. This is currently being piloted, and I am committed to pushing for a roll-out to all services as quickly as possible. The services these groups provide are essential and there should be as few administrative barriers in place as possible in order for them to do their work.