

Introduction

Hi! I'm Amina Kudrati-Plummer, a U3 student in International Development & Geography. I have extensive experience with finances and interpersonal communications from working at a U.S. government office. Through my work as a SSMU employee and SSMU Services volunteer, I also have insight into SSMU's internal processes.

As your VP Finance, I would improve SSMU's financial transparency and students' access to financial resources by developing a finances website, creating cost-saving programs for students like textbook exchanges, and overseeing equitable and sustainable funding initiatives. I look forward to the possibility of working for, and with, you all.

Land Acknowledgement and Resources

Before beginning, it is incredibly important to recognize that McGill University (Tiohtiá:ke/Montreal) is situated on the traditional territory of the Kanien'kehà:ka, a place which has long served as a site of meeting and exchange amongst many First Nations including the Kanien'kehà:ka of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, Huron/Wendat, Abenaki, and Anishinaabeg. We recognize and respect the Kanien'kehà:ka as the traditional custodians of the lands and waters on which we meet today.

It is not enough to just recognize and respect the Kanien'kehà:ka, but also to support and uplift them in continued anti-colonial work and combat the continued violence faced by Indigenous groups throughout Canada. As an undergraduate student at McGill University, it is my responsibility to hold both McGill and SSMU accountable for their actions and their potential endangerment of

I would encourage you to consult the following resources for more information and resources:

- [Breakdown of Indigenous Groups in Montreal](#)
- [The Haudenosaunee Confederacy](#)
- [The Kanien'kehà:ka](#)
- [Organizations for Indigenous Peoples in Montreal](#)
- [McGill Resources for Indigenous Communities](#)

Relevant Experience

Overall, my work and volunteer experiences, as detailed below, have given me an insight into large-scale finances and communicating financial information in a simplified manner.

Additionally, my work with/for SSMU has provided me with insight into SSMU's internal processes and the financial support that clubs, services, and other SSMU departments need.

Finally, I have extensive experience in both equity and sustainability, which guarantees my commitment to ensuring both of these issues with SSMU's finances.

Finances/Governance

- US Government Internship

- Began work in the middle of the budget-making process, so finances and budgeting were frequent topics of consideration.
- Worked with the breakdown of the budget, which was greater than \$3.5 billion USD.
- Handled constituent communications which covered a variety of topics, from questions regarding the budget, to tax information, to requests for aid.
- Helped coordinate several large groups of community members studying local issues, of which finances were a crucial component (e.g, a lake dredging project).

SSMU

- SSMU Employee
 - Worked for Gerts for over a year, providing an understanding of financial issues facing SSMU.
 - Gained an understanding of the perspective of SSMU part-time employees and their needs and how to better support them.
- Union for Gender Empowerment (UGE) Staffer
 - The UGE is a SSMU Service that is funded in part by an opt-outable services fee.
 - Staffed for them for over a year and attended several collective meetings, which discussed SSMU funding processes, financial resources, and service needs.

Sustainability

- McGill Undergraduate Geography Society Sustainability Officer (current)
 - Ensure events are environmentally sustainable.
 - Plan events targeting the environment and sustainability.
- Solar on Our Schools Advocate (2020-2021)
 - Advocated at a state level for increased renewable energy within the school system, specifically switching to solar panels and electric buses.
- Environmental Student Leadership Initiative School Leader (2019-2020)
 - Led school meetings on environmentally conscious practices.
 - Created and ran bi-monthly workshops with elementary school students educating them on a variety of environmental topics and practices.

Equity

- Union for Gender Empowerment (UGE): already explained.
- Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network (GLSEN) National Student Council Member
 - Created and disseminated programming for teens and educators to promote safe and supportive schools for LGBTQ+ students and staff.
 - Met with policy makers, donors, and media to further this goal.
- Family Equality Council Intern
 - Worked with Family Equality staff and US congress members to develop and implement national online advocacy workshops for teens.
 - Topics included “Know Your Rights in Schools” and “Storytelling in Advocacy.”

Issues

Transparency

SSMU's financial transparency has been mixed in recent years, with inconsistent uploads of budgets and a lack of information regarding what is occurring internally. As VP Finance, I would introduce regular reports from the VP Finance that break down what the VP Finance has been working on and updated information on SSMU finances, while staying within SSMU confidentiality guidelines. While a similar system already exists with the Legislative Council reports, the degree of detail in reports from previous years has been limited and provides little information or context to students.

Additionally, I would provide students and clubs with regular office hours and ensure availability outside of those times as well to accommodate student schedules. This would guarantee that clubs, especially those who have faced delays due to the lack of a VP Finance, would be able to make up for that time as quickly as possible.

SSMU Finances Webpage

Consolidate the location of SSMU financial information, both budgets and finance/funding. Right now these resources are too spread out, resulting in two issues. Firstly, these documents are not consistently updated, with some resources dating back several years despite significant changes to SSMU's funding processes in recent years. Creating a separate webpage for funding much in the same vein as the VP External's webpage would ensure that documents are maintained regularly. Secondly, financial documents and information are currently spread over several different sections of the SSMU webpage, meaning you sometimes have to do quite a bit of digging to get where you want.

Cost-Savings Programs

As inflation rises and being a student becomes increasingly less affordable, it is important to offer programs that help students reduce their finances. McGill already has several programs that focus on this, but it is important to continue improving and adding to such initiatives.

Possible programs/initiatives include:

- A textbook exchange program: McGill used to have a textbook exchange program through Le James. During COVID, this program ended and has not been renewed yet. As VP Finance, I would work with McGill and the SSMU VP University Affairs to reintroduce this program, or, if McGill is unwilling, create a SSMU textbook exchange program to ensure McGill students have access to cheaper textbooks and textbooks also aren't discarded after a year of use.
- A reduced fee for food with reusable items: work with on campus dining to expand the use of the reusable OZZI containers or personal reusable containers to On Campus Retail Locations. This would help reduce the cost of food (which is already quite high) while also enforcing sustainability.

Depending on the interest levels, other programs suggested by students could also be initiated.

Equity & Sustainability

As established by my extensive experience working in both subject matters, I have a strong and personal commitment to ensuring that SSMU's investments, events, and actions are underscored by consideration of equity and sustainability. As VP Finance, this comes into consideration in two manners. Firstly, I would work to ensure SSMU's investments are both sustainable and equitable, and, where investments do not meet these standards, seriously consider divesting from such organizations. Secondly, I would work to ensure that the purposes for funding requests are both equitable and sustainable, as well as promoting the Sustainability Fund to increase the number of sustainability-focused events on campus.

Collaboration

I have already mentioned several initiatives that would require the collaboration between the VP Finance and other SSMU Executives. I believe it is incredibly important to ensure collaboration between Executives, especially with the role of VP Finance. As the position oversees distribution of finances, clear and consistent communication regarding funding is necessary, including approving funding as soon as possible or providing a detailed explanation of why funding was denied if that is the case. I sincerely want to improve SSMU's programming and resources, and the best way to do that is to be available and efficient.