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Executive Review

Fall Term 2021

Presented to Council: January 24, 2022

Table of Contents

<i>Committee and Executive Membership</i>	2
Oversight Committee	2
Executive Officers of the DSU	2
<i>Review Timeline</i>	3
<i>Recommendations</i>	6
<i>Appendices</i>	8
Appendix A: Executive Performance Evaluation Template	9
Appendix B: Executive Goal Plans	17

Committee and Executive Membership

Oversight Committee

Committee Chair: Stephen Abbott

Faculty Representatives: Stephen Abbott

Community Representatives: Victoria Slipp; Micha Davis-Cole

General Members: Daria Oanes

Executive Officers of the DSU

President: Madeleine Stinson

Vice President, Internal: Truelee Love

Vice President, Finance and Operations: Mohab Brisha

Vice President, Academic and External:

Vice President, Student Life: Mazen Brisha

Chair of Council: Jamie Samson

Review Timeline

- **December 10th, 2021 @ 9 AM:** Initial planning meeting and review of available documents. Initial questions and notes formulated.
- **January 7th, 2022 @ 2:30 PM: Interview with President**
- **January 7th, 2022 @ 3:30 PM: Interview with VP Student Life**
- **January 12th, 2022 @ 5:30 PM: Interview with VP Internal**
- **January 12th, 2022 @ 6:15 PM: Interview with VP Finance and Operations**
- **January 14th, 2022 @ 12:00 PM:** Work session to finalize report.
- **January 17th, 2022:** Final report is circulated to executive committee.
- **January 24th, 2022:** Final report is presented to council.

Performance Evaluations Summary Report

In completing the review, the committee examined several sources of information to ascertain a full picture of the executive committee's performance. From that, we formulated questions to clarify areas of concern or unclear information. Those questions were posed to each member of the executive committee. Using the information from the interviews, DSU governing documents, along with other information submitted to the committee by Director of Policy and Governance, the Executive Review template was completed by the committee.

The following is a summary of each executive's review.

President

Overall, the Committee did not identify any serious of concern that it would recommend council to act on. In addition, the committee strongly commends the President for her response to Homecoming and her willingness to discuss with the committee how both the DSU and University could improve their response in the future. The Committee was also impressed with her overall leadership abilities so far in the term. Areas of concern that were addressed by the committee with the President include her lack of attendance at Senate meetings (as a result of a mandatory class conflict) and the lack of progress on the Governance Review (due to issues with the contracted lawyer). We were impressed with her responses to our concerns and believe she has so far followed the duties laid out in the bylaws.

Vice President, Internal

The Committee recognizes the worthwhile goals of the VPI to restart Collaborative+, although she found it to be more difficult than initially expected. We also applaud her efforts to introduce more students to the DSU in a tangible way. More work is needed to restart the Collaborative+ effort, which she acknowledged to the Committee. We are concerned that some of her portfolio is being worked on by other members of the executive team, and we encourage the VPI to maintain control of her portfolio to the best of her ability. In addition, we commend her work on the society expo. By all accounts, the society expo was extremely well-run and well-attended. Moreover, she ratified a significant number of societies. We do take issue with the frequency of meeting of the Student Accessibility Fund Committee, which stopped meeting near the end of the term. The VPI acknowledged that the committee work fell behind, which is concerning considering the importance of the fund to many students.

Vice President, Student Life

The Committee is concerned about several issues regarding the conduct of the VPSL this term. Firstly, it is unclear what exactly his mental health initiatives have accomplished and the purpose of his meetings with Healthy Minds NS is also unclear. He also did not engage the Disabled Students Representative as he worked on these initiatives. His other main area of work this semester was on food insecurity, but it quickly became clear to the committee that exactly what he accomplished needs to be scrutinized. Action is needed by council (see recommendations) to determine if he misled union members as to the work he undertook on this issue. Far more transparency is needed on the work he allegedly completed.

There are also concerns regarding his lack of attendance at executive committee meetings. According to accounts discussed by Oversight, O-Week appeared to be run successfully.

Vice President, Finance and Operations

Generally, there are no serious concerns regarding the work of the VPFO that is required of him as the VPFO, except for some confusion regarding specific audit procedures of union services. However, there are extremely serious concerns regarding the attendance of the VPFO. He missed more meetings than any other executives. This requires scrutiny and we recommend council acts (see recommendations). Our main concern regarding the VPFO is his work on areas outside of his portfolio. He presented us many plans for society engagement, an area that is not under his purview. He did complete an update of the society audit process, however. But overall, the work of the VPFO needs to be refocused.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: There was a noted lack of engagement with some executives and policy changes. **The Committee recommends that all executives take a more active role in policy development.**

Recommendation 2: The overarching theme of the review undertaken was that there is significant overlapping of work done by executives. **The Committee recommends that the executives focus solely on work directly related to the guidelines set out by the bylaws.** To ensure compliance, the Committee recommends the adoption of a template for executive reports to council that require executives to directly relate their work to the bylaws, so that the executive committee members are working on their portfolio.

Recommendation 3: Resulting from review of documents from this term and the conversation with Oversight Committee, more information and transparency is required regarding the actions of Vice President Student Life with respect to their work on mental health and wellness this term. **The Committee recommends that council adopts a motion to request a complete report from the Vice President Student Life regarding the contents of meetings with Healthy Minds NS and a detailed overview of their plan to work on mental health and wellness, with specific goals and outcomes.**

Recommendation 4: Following committee discussions, **The Committee recommends council request a report on the nature of accessibility in DSU programming.** The committee is specifically interested on activities that could be exclusionary towards people with physical disabilities. There is a concern that adequate efforts have not been made to engage in accessible programming, including in beginning of this year programming for example. Efforts should be made to increase accessibility in a systemic manner, which should first commence with an analysis, which is why we recommend council requests a report.

Recommendation 5: Overall, there were serious concerns regarding the content of meetings held between executives and various organizations. **The Committee recommends more reporting on the nature of meetings held with external organizations, so union members can better understand what is being advocated for.** This could be accomplished through a standardized reporting process to council (in executive reports, for example) on the contents of meetings.

Recommendation 6: Also, a significant area of concern is the work allegedly completed regarding food insecurity among students by the Vice President Student Life. It features prominently in their year-long goal report, but after an interview it is unclear as to exactly what work was done and whether their description accurately describes their work. **The Committee recommends council request all documents and work related to food insecurity to determine what work the VPSL accomplished.**

Recommendation 7: **Following concerns regarding exactly who completed the work on restarting the bike center, the Committee recommends not only instituting recommendation 2, but requesting a report from both the Vice President Internal and the Vice President Finance and Operations to understand who worked to restart the bike center.** The Committee is concerned this issue of multiple executives taking credit for a project speaks to a wider cultural issue among the executives. The reports should be scrutinised by council to determine if an executive intentionally misled the council in any of their reports regarding the work they completed.

Recommendation 8: The Committee notes serious issues with attendance among some executives. **The Committee recommends council take a more active role in monitoring the attendance of executives at their committee meetings.**

Appendices

The following must be submitted along with this report as appendices:

- Performance Evaluation Sheets for all Executive Officers
- Executive Goal Plans

Appendix A: Executive Performance Evaluation Template

Oversight Committee

Date: **14/01/2022**

Name of Executive Officer: **Madeleine Stinson**

Position of Executive Officer: **President**

Date of Meeting Between Oversight Committee and Executive Officer: **January 7th, 2022**

To develop the content included in this performance evaluation, Oversight Committee has met with the Executive Officer and has thoroughly reviewed the following:

- The Executive Goal Plan for the year
- Fulfillment of duties as outlined in the Bylaws and Policies of the Union
- The Officer's attendance at Council and Union Committees
- The Officer's attendance at University committees of which they are a member

Adopted Goal Plan's Clearly Defined Outcomes and Timelines

The president's plan for the summer was to work on the union's governance review. The President was forthcoming with explaining the delay and her plan to continue work on the review. Working with the bylaw and policy review committee was also noted in her summer goals. Oversight notes that there was a limited amount of work done by the bylaw and policy and review committee. Issue was raised regarding lack of suggestions for bylaw and policy suggestions by executive committee. Oversight recommends increased engagement with executive and council regarding bylaw and policy updates and changes (see recommendation 1).

Bylaw and Policy Compliance

Compliance with bylaws and policies of the Union was assessed and the President was deemed to be compliant. Oversight Committee specifically noted the President's actions regarding unsanctioned off-campus events on 'Homecoming' weekend. The Committee commends the President's response and follow-through as the official spokesperson of the Union. Her response demonstrated excellent leadership abilities, which she spoke to during her meeting with the Committee. In addition, she addressed several opportunities for improvement with regards to both the University's and Union's response to 'Homecoming'.

Meeting Attendance

Oversight commends the President for stellar attendance. No issues were noted with the President's attendance and no issues were raised regarding the availability of the President. The President was

unable to attend the majority of Senate meetings due to a class conflict. However, she did make efforts to attend when necessary to advocate for student issues, but Oversight notes the importance of executives to attend and advocate for students on University committees/boards.

Reporting Obligations

No issues were noted with the President's reports to council. The reports reviewed by Oversight were thorough and clear.

Oversight Committee

Date: **14/01/2022**

Name of Executive Officer: **Trulee Love**

Position of Executive Officer: **Vice President, Internal**

Date of Meeting Between Oversight Committee and Executive Officer: **January 14^h, 2022**

To develop the content included in this performance evaluation, Oversight Committee has met with the Executive Officer and has thoroughly reviewed the following:

- The Executive Goal Plan for the year
- Fulfillment of duties as outlined in the Bylaws and Policies of the Union
- The Officer's attendance at Council and Union Committees
- The Officer's attendance at University committees of which they are a member

Adopted Goal Plan's Clearly Defined Outcomes and Timelines

The Committee notes the Vice President Internal's main goals was to work to restart the Collaborative+ Initiative. However, the Committee found limited work completed, but Vice President Internal addressed concerns appropriately and did have a plan to address issues, along with continuing to work on the project. One of her main summer goals was to create a pamphlet to introduce new students to the DSU, which was carried out successfully and given to all O-week attendees. Goals were specific and clear, but work should be continued on the Collaborative+

Bylaw and Policy Compliance

No significant issues were noted with bylaw and policy compliance. Oversight notes that the Vice President Internal made efforts to follow through on bylaws with their goals, despite some lack of completion. We also note as a general theme (see recommendation 2) that there is a significant issue regarding portfolio of each executive. Situations were identified where certain executives worked on projects not directly related to their portfolio, in many cases working on projects that should be assigned to the Vice President Internal. The Vice President Internal should be the main executive working on society-related projects and serve as the "main liaison between the Union and Societies." The Vice President Internal should be sure to continue to maintain control of their portfolio.

The VPI is also to assist societies with coordinating their activities. We note her significant work on the bike center. From one of her reports to council,

"Organized and chaired the Bike Centre Annual General Meeting on August 10th in order to elect a new executive who can continue operations and the ratification process for the Bike Centre Society."

(Taken out of VPI's report at the Council Meeting on August 18th)

We commend the VPI for a significant number of societies ratified.

In addition, the Committee notes the excellent work of the VPI on the Society Expo. The expo was incredibly well-organized and well-attended, especially during the pandemic. The committee notes her “phenomenal job” on the expo.

Finally, the Committee notes her work with ResLife on Residence Councils.

Meeting Attendance

No significant issues were noted with attendance of executive committee meetings. There were issues raised regarding the meeting of the Student Accessibility Fund Committee. The committee did not meet often in the fall term, and VPI admitted that she fell behind in her work by the end of the term. Work should be done to improve the frequency and efficiency of the committee’s work.

Reporting Obligations

Reports to council were clear and contained pertinent information.

Oversight Committee

Date: **14/01/2022**

Name of Executive Officer: **Mazen Brisha**

Position of Executive Officer: **Vice President, Student Life**

Date of Meeting Between Oversight Committee and Executive Officer: **January 7^h, 2022**

To develop the content included in this performance evaluation, Oversight Committee has met with the Executive Officer and has thoroughly reviewed the following:

- The Executive Goal Plan for the year
- Fulfillment of duties as outlined in the Bylaws and Policies of the Union
- The Officer's attendance at Council and Union Committees
- The Officer's attendance at University committees of which they are a member

Adopted Goal Plan's Clearly Defined Outcomes and Timelines

The goals of the Vice President Student Life centered mainly on issues relating to mental health/wellness. In the Summer, the VPSL stated they would work on creating a mental health committee, a mental health forum, and hosting a health and wellness campaign. We note that a mental health campaign was created, and forums were held. However, the committee found several, serious issues in relation to the wellness initiatives. Firstly, the Disabled Students Representative was not involved in any of these initiatives. A significant issue, considering these issues' implications on disabled students. We also note a general vague-ness regarding all of these initiatives. There was a significant lack of clear outcomes and goals. Oversight recommends more transparency on the mental health work completed by VPSL (see recommendation 3). Oversight committee also noted a significant issue regarding accessibility to student life programming, despite claims by the VPSL to Oversight that there were accessible options to student life programming (see recommendation 4).

Bylaw and Policy Compliance

As noted in the evaluation of the VPI, Oversight Committee found issues regarding the overlapping of work done by executives, which extends to the projects worked on by the VPSL.

We note the success of the O-Week event, despite the complications because of the pandemic.

He was also involved with Dalhousie athletics, as prescribed in the bylaws.

He stated that he was involved with Residence Life, working to mitigate risk factors of drinking, sexualized violence, and COVID-19. However, it is unclear to the committee exactly the work completed or advocate for after our interview. More clarity is required to understand if these projects follow the bylaw (see recommendation 5). Oversight Committee also notes that he did not include off-campus

students in his work to reduce the risk factors of binge-drinking, sexualized violence, and COVID-19, which excludes a large portion of the student body at Dalhousie.

Also appearing to not follow the bylaw guidelines for the VPSL, was the supposed significant work done on food insecurity. The Oversight Committee is concerned there is no, or limited, evidence of actual follow-through on this project. Meetings that were stated to have occurred are in question as to their legitimacy and relevance. This is a very serious area of concern for Oversight Committee requiring further action by council (see recommendation 6).

Meeting Attendance

Oversight Committee noted serious issues regarding the attendance of VPSL. The VPSL did not attend several executive committee meetings (5), most without regrets. He was also late for two meetings. He was absent from one council meeting, with regrets.

Reporting Obligations

Oversight Committee noted no serious issues regarding the VPSL's reports. We do note that many reports say he attended meetings with Healthy Minds NS. However, our review raises concerns about what exactly occurred in those meetings. Further transparency is required regarding the specific purpose of those meetings (see recommendation 3).

Oversight Committee

Date: **14/01/2022**

Name of Executive Officer: **Mohab Brisha**

Position of Executive Officer: **Vice President, Finance and Operations**

Date of Meeting Between Oversight Committee and Executive Officer: **January 14^h, 2022**

To develop the content included in this performance evaluation, Oversight Committee has met with the Executive Officer and has thoroughly reviewed the following:

- The Executive Goal Plan for the year
- Fulfillment of duties as outlined in the Bylaws and Policies of the Union
- The Officer's attendance at Council and Union Committees
- The Officer's attendance at University committees of which they are a member

Adopted Goal Plan's Clearly Defined Outcomes and Timelines

The summer goal for the VPFO was to complete a student engagement plan to be implemented. Oversight Committee viewed a draft of the engagement plan, and it raises some questions regarding portfolio overlapping (which are addressed below and in the recommendations). However, it does not appear that this engagement plan has been followed through on. The fall goal for the VPFO was to advocate for more student representation and lower tuition fees. They acknowledge in their report to the AGM that work has not begun on this, and it does not appear to Oversight Committee that there have been significant developments on behalf of the VPFO with respect to those advocacy issues.

While not stated in their goals, much of their work this term appears to have focused on improving society audit processes. Descriptions provided to the committee appear to show significant improvements and work on society-related finance projects seem to have been worthwhile.

Bylaw and Policy Compliance

As already noted, there is a large concern over the overlapping of portfolios, specifically related to this position. We note that the bylaws state the VPFO should focus on budgetary issues, however, there appears to be a general theme where executives work on issues not necessarily related to their portfolios (see recommendation 2).

The VPFO stated in their interview and goal plans that they worked/planned to work on society engagement. This includes idea for a forum of societies. The engagement plan submitted to the Committee concerned work that is not specifically related to the role of the VPFO.

In addition, we have concerns regarding exactly who completed work on restarting the bike center, as claims made by VPFO were echoed the work that the VPI stated they completed (see recommendation 7).

Besides issues regarding overlapping portfolios, there were no issues raised by the Committee regarding performance related to bylaws regarding budgetary proceedings. Although there is some concern regarding the VPFO's understanding of society and services and their audit responsibilities as they appeared to be unsure of the status of services such as Loaded Ladle.

Meeting Attendance

There are serious concerns regarding the attendance of VPFO to executive committee meetings. He did not attend nine of meetings of the executive committee (see recommendation 8). That is around one third of all meetings of the executive committee. He also missed a council meeting.

Reporting Obligations

No serious issues were noted in their reports to council.

Appendix B: Executive Goal Plans