

***The Transformative Factor: A Policy Paper on the  
Broader Learning Environment from the Alma  
Mater Society***

Unanimously ratified by AMS Assembly April 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2014



AMS Council  
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## Executive Summary

*This document is constructed on the basis of a series of Principles, Concerns, and Recommendations relating back to the four core pillars, namely: The Broader Learning Environment: A Distinguishing Factor of Queen's University; Student Autonomy and Responsibility; Administrative Structures; and Student Life Space. Within this framework, the AMS has endeavoured to outline the many considerations that would productively contribute to the continued development of the broader learning environment at Queen's.*

This Policy Paper's key recommendations for the University, divided by fundamental area of focus, are as follows:

### The Broader Learning Environment: A Distinguishing Factor of Queen's University

- Include the Broader Learning Environment as a component of its Strategic Framework;
- Ensure extra- and co-curricular opportunities available on campus receive official recognition from the University as venues for experiential learning and student engagement;
- Investigate the possibility of developing courses that attribute academic credit to extra-curricular experiences.

### Student Responsibility and Autonomy

- Work in conjunction with the Queen's University Faculty Association to revise the definition of University Service in the Collective Bargaining Agreement to include involvement in select student organizations;
- Encourage the Audit and Risk Committee of the Board of Trustees to make decisions in recognition of the institutional risk associated with compromising the broader learning environment, to be accounted for in the risk assessment process weighted against other risks identified by the Board;
- Officially affirm a commitment to student autonomy in the offering of certain programming and services through the creation of a Memorandum of Understanding with the AMS and any other relevant student group;
- Endeavor to offer services that do not directly compete with those offered by students;
- Encourage the Audit and Risk Committee of the Board of Trustees to recognize the relationship between the management of risk to student health and safety and the adoption of a philosophy of harm reduction.

## Administrative Structures

- Remove the Office of the Vice-Provost and Dean of Student Affairs from the portfolio of the Provost and elevate it to the position of Vice-Principal Student Experience;
- Establish appropriate accountability mechanisms to ensure students have adequate recourse in evaluating the performance of the Office of Student Affairs;
- Increase student representation on committees and Boards student representation on committees and Boards in recognition of the large investment students make into the cost of their education;
- Ensure the Office of Advancement seeks out opportunities to establish partnerships with student groups in recognition of the essential role that the broader learning environment plays in developing a relationship between the University and its future alumni.

## Student Life Space

- Establish the revitalization of the John Deutsch University Centre as a priority in the Initiative Campaign;
- Work with students to develop a Student Life Space Master Plan with the aim of providing a framework to guide the evolution of dedicated student life space on campus;
- Develop agreements with students groups surrounding the provision of designated student life space on campus, articulating details surrounding cost of space, timeframe for occupation, and a process for removal;
- Charge rent to student service space in the Student Life Centre at a different rate than commercial and university exclusive ancillary space in recognition of the difference in mandate.

# The Broader Learning Environment: A Distinguishing Factor of Queen's University

## *Principles*

**Principle One: The Queen's experience is substantially enriched by affording students opportunities for engagement within an active and diverse broader learning environment.**

The Queen's experience is defined by the diversity of opportunities available to each student, serving as building blocks for the active and engaged community that is at the heart of our institutional identity. This unique feature manifests itself in the thriving co-curricular environment, present through leadership roles in clubs, student governments, athletic teams, and student-run services. Many of these opportunities provide additional avenues for students to interact with the broader Queen's community, and are the creative platform for transformative initiatives and new ideas.

As stated by Principal Emeritus David Smith, "Students find their experiences with student government and student enterprises and clubs among the most exciting and rewarding of their undergraduate years. An amazing range of these activities exists at Queen's – a list too long to consider here... All these activities add to the sense of community and help create a productive learning environment."<sup>1</sup> The benefits of these opportunities are numerous, and have been, "positively related to persistence and... other outcomes such as interpersonal skills, self-confidence, and leadership."<sup>2</sup>

The diversity of opportunities for students to engage beyond the classroom form the constituent components of the broader learning environment, and collectively contribute to the profound sense of community present at our institution. The AMS believes that the broader learning environment is at the heart of the Queen's experience. As direct beneficiaries of its many contributions to student life and learning, students are implicitly invested in its prosperity.

**Principle Two: The broader learning environment provides a variety of avenues for experiential learning, adding value to a Queen's degree.**

Queen's defines itself as, "the Canadian research-intensive university with a transformative student learning experience"<sup>3</sup>. It is true that learning takes place across the entirety of campus, inhabiting every lab, library, and classroom with different opportunities to

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<sup>1</sup> Smith, David. *Planning Issues for Queen's*. (Kingston: Queen's, 1987).

<sup>2</sup> Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance. *Student Success*. (Toronto: OUSA 2013).

<sup>3</sup> Queen's University. *Institutional Vision, Proposed Statement and Priority Objectives*. (Kingston: Queen's 2012).

become academically involved. What makes the educational experience truly exceptional, though, is that learning is as present outside the confines of the classroom as it is within it.

As stated by Principal Leggett in his speech at the 2003 welcome ceremony for new students, "Classroom learning is imperative but a defining feature of Queen's is the opportunity for education that occurs beyond the four walls. This 'beyond-the-walls learning' defines Queen's graduates. They are articulate, involved leaders." This statement emphasizes the transformative impact of the out-of-classroom experience in enhancing the outcomes of a Queen's education, underlining the unique value of the broader learning environment in preparing our students for life after graduation.

As stated by Principal Woolf in *The Third Juncture*, "Student experience, as we know, is acquired both inside and outside the classroom. When classes end for the day, our students do not for the most part commute home and leave the campus empty. To the contrary, they continue their learning in clubs, in student government, in volunteer activities, and on sports teams. They mature as adults as much in the Queen's Centre and residence corridors as they do in seminar rooms and lecture theatres."<sup>4</sup> All told, Queen's is home to 260+ clubs, 25+ student-run services, 10+ student governments, and 30+ varsity athletic teams and clubs. Across the AMS and its ten member societies, there are 3800+ volunteer, 700+ part-time, and approximately 140 salaried positions. Together this means that there are opportunities for approximately 30% of AMS members, giving them the ability to engage in personal and skills development, contributing to experiential learning as a forum for the active application of knowledge. Students believe that the broader learning environment is a key component of the educational experience at Queen's, and will be an important contributor to the success of our graduates in a job market that places a particular focus on skills and active experience.

**Principle Three: Queen's unique broader learning environment constitutes a competitive advantage for the University.**

The AMS believes that Queen's broader learning environment constitutes a significant competitive advantage for the University, contributing to its success from the early days of student recruitment and culminating in the achievements of graduates long after they've left the institution. Principal Woolf references this in his visioning document, *The Third Juncture*, stating, "...the student experience lies at the heart of Queen's identity; along with research, it is the major driver of our reputation. It is that reputation which continues to attract extraordinary young people to our campuses."<sup>5</sup>

As employers and graduate schools place a growing emphasis on extra- and co-curricular involvement, Queen's is ideally positioned to graduate students who are best prepared to enter the next stage of their lives. The University has afforded an exceptional degree of autonomy and responsibility upon its student body, allowing opportunities for engagement

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<sup>4</sup> Daniel Woolf. *The Third Juncture*. (Kingston: Queen's, 2012).

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

in self-governance and the provision of the campus experience. Examples of this include the orchestration of the non-academic discipline system, orientation week, the clubs system<sup>6</sup>, and an array of student services. While these initiatives are provided by the administration or non-student staff at most other universities in the nation, Queen's students remain the managers and operators of their own services, ultimately enriching the educational experience through active and meaningful engagement with the broader community.

This large degree of responsibility extends throughout campus to University governance. Within the schools of the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance<sup>7</sup>, Queen's has the highest proportion of student senators<sup>8</sup> and is third in terms of proportion of student trustees<sup>9</sup>. Other bodies throughout the University, such as Faculty Boards, School Councils, and other university committees, reflect a similar philosophy of student participation in their terms of reference.

These many components of the broader learning environment invariably cultivate a strong reputation for producing high quality graduates. In allowing students to assume roles involving tangible experience and genuine responsibility, they have the opportunity to engage in experiential learning that is uniquely impactful. In turn, this helps to produce graduates with developed skills, equipping them to excel in the labour market or in the attainment of further credentials. The AMS believes that Queen's unique broader learning environment is instrumental in preparing our students for life following graduation. It has contributed to our reputation and success up to this point, and will only gain further relevance in a climate that demands tangible skills and cultivated experience.

### *Concerns*

**Concern One: The University does not provide adequate recognition of the importance of the broader learning environment and the initiatives that support it.**

While the University's recruitment tools, visioning documents, and marketing materials consistently herald the fundamental importance of the out-of-classroom experience at Queen's, the University has not explicitly incorporated the broader learning environment into its planning tools, operational structure, or current system of institutional recognition. The recently released Strategic Framework, which will set parameters for the evolution of the institution over the next 5 years, lists the student experience as a key strategic driver. That being said, the associated metrics do not assess the quality of the co- and extra-

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<sup>6</sup> Queen's is host to over 250 officially recognized clubs, boasting more clubs per capita than any North American school aside from Harvard.

<sup>7</sup> The member schools of OUSA include: Queen's University, Western University, Brock University, Trent University Oshawa, McMaster University, the University of Waterloo, and Wilfred Laurier University.

<sup>8</sup> 17 of 68 Senators are Queen's students, or 25% of the Senate membership.

<sup>9</sup> 3 of 25 Trustees are Queen's students (including the Rector), or 12% of the Board membership.

curricular environment, missing an opportunity to decisively integrate the broader learning environment into the institutional planning process.

Further, while the Division of Student Affairs is responsive to student needs in the arena of service provision, it does not operate as a strong advocate for the student experience at the highest level of University decision-making, failing to reflect the particular importance of this element of the Queen's community<sup>10</sup>. Finally, few avenues for academic credit or formal recognition for out-of-classroom contributions currently exist, creating an opportunity cost that divides extra-curricular engagement and academic excellence. This phenomenon is further outlined in the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance's policy paper on student success, citing, "...students are considerably more likely to receive recognition in the form of institutional awards or scholarships for their academic pursuits than for their work in the community, which sends the message that these extra-curricular learning experiences are of lesser importance."<sup>11</sup>

While Queen's consistently cites its commitment to the prosperity of the broader learning environment, students are concerned that institutional operations are not currently aligned to reflect or support this objective. Moving forward, students are concerned that the University is not creating a conducive environment for out-of-classroom learning to thrive.

**Concern Two: The University could do more to empower student-run initiatives and services that contribute to the opportunities and programming available to students.**

Student-run initiatives and services are ubiquitous across campus, enhancing student life through the creation of opportunities and the provision of services and programming. Since the University's inception, student-led initiatives have been allowed to thrive, with the Queen's administration consistently affording students genuine responsibility and autonomy in the arenas of student self-governance, the creation of extra-curricular programming, peer-to-peer service provision, and representation on University bodies.

That being said, while the administration has created space for student life at Queen's, they could do more to provide specific tools that would enable it to thrive. Particularly in a climate that sees more administrative oversight and competition with student-run initiatives, and given the strain placed upon student organizations in providing service to a growing and diverse student body, students are concerned that the University environment is becoming increasingly counterproductive to the prosperity of the broader learning environment.

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<sup>10</sup> This area of concern will see further elaboration in the *Administrative Structures* section of the paper.

<sup>11</sup> Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance. *Student Success*. (Toronto: OUSA 2013).

**Concern Three: Despite the University's stated goal to enhance the availability of experiential and entrepreneurial learning moving forward, few avenues exist to attribute academic credit to existing experiential learning opportunities.**

The AMS is supportive of the University's desire to enhance the availability of experiential learning opportunities within the curriculum, particularly given the many benefits already afforded through active engagement with the broader learning environment. That being said, students are concerned by the current shortage of formal opportunities to undertake experiential learning in an academic setting, with few courses that explicitly link curricular learning outcomes to active engagement in an experiential environment.

This concern is substantiated by the results of the 2013 Exit Poll, which shows a deficiency in academic courses built around the philosophy of experiential education. The analysis of the poll's results stated, "A theme that arises from this section of the survey suggests a need in most Faculties to incorporate more practice-based learning into the curriculum."<sup>12</sup> This is further underlined by the relatively low number of students who reported that their program contained sufficient opportunities for practice-based<sup>13</sup> or experiential<sup>14</sup> learning. Particularly given the importance of skill development and demonstrated experience in the current job market, students are concerned by the under-availability of formal avenues for experiential education across the curriculum.

**Concern Four: The competitive advantage associated with Queen's unique broader learning environment is not maximally leveraged in the context of an increasingly uncertain provincial environment.**

The external context in which we operate is in a period of rapid evolution, with the traditional university-aged demographic declining, increased competition for students between institutions, and a provincial emphasis being placed upon practical skills and opportunities for active engagement. As the University works to sustain its institutional excellence in this competitive environment, a renewed emphasis on the elements of the student experience that uniquely prepare our graduates for life after Queen's will be imperative.

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<sup>12</sup> Queen's University. *Undergraduate and Professional Students' Learning Experiences at Queen's University*. (Kingston: Queen's, 2013).

<sup>13</sup> Page 36 of the 2013 Exit Poll, which asks students whether their program offered an appropriate amount of practice-based learning, sees between 41% (Arts and Science) and 78% (Education) agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statement. The average response was 60.5%, dropping to 58% if the Faculty of Education (which is largely made up of practice-based learning) is excluded from the results.

<sup>14</sup> Page 39 of the 2013 Exit Poll, which asks students whether their program offered an appropriate amount of experiential learning, sees between 34% (Arts and Science) and 87% (Law School) agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statement. The average response was 61.6%, dropping to 55.3% if the faculties of Law and Education (whose curriculums centre around experiential learning through practicums and articling positions) are excluded from the results.



In the Ministry for Training, Colleges, and Universities' recent Differentiation Framework, opportunities for experiential learning are outlined as a priority area for the sector. The document aims to promote, "institutional strengths in program delivery methods that expand learning options for students and improve their learning experience and career preparedness. This may include... experiential, entrepreneurial, [and] work-integrated... learning."<sup>15</sup> Corresponding to this priority are a variety of metrics to assess the relative performance of Ontario institutions in offering these learning opportunities, to be followed by the eventual alignment of policy and funding levers to drive the development of experiential educational initiatives.

Currently, Queen's is home to an unsurpassed complement of opportunities for experiential engagement. That being said, the University could do more to promote this area of institutional strength to prospective students and the Province, and to ensure it continues to be a key component of our identity moving forward. Students are concerned that the University is not optimally leveraging this competitive advantage to distinguish itself from other institutions; while it is consistently recognized as a key component of the Queen's experience, this could be better translated into a purposeful and directed competitive strategy. Until an emphasis is placed upon the extra- and co-curricular experience in recruitment documents and submissions to the province, and the alignment of institutional structures, goals, and operations to ensure future prosperity of the broader learning environment, Queen's will fall short in ensuring it is leveraging its existing competitive advantage to adjust to a changing climate.

**Concern Five: An increasing administrative focus on risk and liability has compromised the integrity of the broader learning environment.**

To ensure the long-term sustainability of the University, Queen's must manage the risks and liabilities that threaten the integrity of the institution. In instances of both legal and reputational liability, the University has responded by attributing a heightened importance to the assessment and mitigation of risk.

Principal Woolf elaborates on the fragility of reputations in *The Third Juncture*, commenting, "As our reputation goes, so goes the value of our degrees to the students who get them, especially early in their careers; and so goes our ability to attract international students, the very students we need to enhance our global profile. Reputations are fragile things, and while they frequently outlive reality, they don't outlive it indefinitely."<sup>16</sup>

In a litigious society that has placed a heightened level of public scrutiny on Queen's and its peer institutions, Queen's has understandably taken measures to ensure its risk management strategies are attune to the modern context in which it exists. That being said, a more risk-conscious institution will carry an inherent aversion to many elements that lie beyond its control, inclusive of those found within the broader learning environment.

<sup>15</sup> Ontario Ministry for Training, Colleges, and Universities. *Ontario's Differentiation Policy Framework for Postsecondary Education*. (Toronto: Ministry for Training, Colleges, and Universities, 2013).

<sup>16</sup> Daniel Woolf. *The Third Juncture*. (Kingston: Queen's, 2012).

Students are concerned that, without setting mutually agreeable parameters for discussion or clear expectations of one another, challenges to student groups' autonomy over existing areas of service provision will create the impression of invasiveness or a devaluation of the benefit they provide. Ultimately, this may have a damaging effect on the relationship between students and their University.

Furthermore, a reduction in the ability of students to engage with their campus poses an inherent threat to the broader learning environment, risking an element of the Queen's experience that has shaped the University's reputation for decades. While a large component of the institution's risk-consciousness has understandably centred around student health and wellness, students are concerned that the institution has fixated its decision making process on an unrealistic desire to eliminate risk in this arena<sup>17</sup>. Such an approach may serve to manage some institutional risks, but it also increases the potential for others; namely, students are concerned that any unnecessary reduction in student autonomy and involvement may reduce the unique elements of the educational experience that drive Queen's reputation and shape its identity.

**Concern Six: The University has recently advanced several positions that would have infringed upon student self-governance and student-run service, restricting the benefits they provide along with student opportunity and autonomy.**

The past few years have seen the University advancing a number of positions incongruent with the campus culture of student self-governance and student-run service. Such positions have included significant and detrimental amendments to Campus Alcohol Policy, the operations of the Non-Academic Discipline system, and the oversight of Orientation Week. Such positions, if they had come to fruition, would have undermined the benefits that these systems already offer to the campus experience, and would have restricted student opportunity and autonomy.

In 2012, a full review of the Campus Alcohol Policy was undertaken that would have significantly limited the way in which on-campus licensed establishments could operate. The University advanced the position that limitations such as closing at midnight should be imposed, which would have hindered these establishments' ability to serve students. Student-run pubs and clubs are already among the safest in the city, and already take many proactive measures to keep patrons safe: they are in close proximity to services such as Walkhome and Queen's First Aid, security is guaranteed by Student Constables, and all staff are trained extensively to ensure that patrons are not being intoxicated. Given the important role that these student-run pubs already play in fostering a safe drinking culture on campus, limiting their operations would have been counter-intuitive to student health and wellness. Students would, instead, opt to drink in downtown establishments that do not take these proactive safety measures into account. Also, as businesses, these

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<sup>17</sup> Elimination of risk is an unsuccessful strategy in perpetuating student health, wellness, and safety in some cases. Instead, students suggest a harm reductive approach be adopted in areas such as campus drinking culture, as outlined further in *Principle 6*.

establishments would have been forced to cut student employment and experiential learning opportunities, undermining the skills development and inhibiting students' ability to pay for their living and education.

Paralleling this review was one done of the Non-Academic Discipline system. The University was advancing a position that would have established a centralized University Conduct Office: a front end to receive and categorize all non-academic misconduct complaints, sending major cases away from a purely peer-administered judiciary. Once again, this position would have undermined the peer-administered benefits brought about by the current operations of the Non-Academic Discipline system. Students are uniquely equipped to recognize the full magnitude of consequences on our community and impose proportional sanctions; students have a greater acceptance of the judgments and assignments of sanctions from their peers; finally, a student-administered system ensures clear political separation of judicial proceedings from institutional administration, ensuring that judgments are not influenced or perceived as biased by reputational considerations or inter-administrative pressures. By introducing a University-administered front end and categorization, many of these benefits to the campus community would have been obscured, along with an undermining of the principle of students holding each other accountable.

Finally, this year, the Senate Orientation Activities Review Board (SOARB) compiled an orientation week policy manual, which outlines and describes the policies, procedures, and practices governing orientation week planning. Administrative members of SOARB advanced the position that Faculty/School Deans or their designates should have final authority on the operations and planning of the various orientation weeks.

Understandably, there should exist some mechanisms to prevent risk to student health and wellness or to the institution, but mechanisms already exist to accomplish this. While Faculty/School Deans should not be excluded wholesale from the orientation week event approval process, the elevation of Deans' authority in all Orientation decision-making processes would undermine the role students play in providing a welcoming transition for their peers.

Given the importance of these issues and the invasive approach that the University has taken, students are concerned with the approach that the University takes with several major cornerstones of the broader learning environment.

### ***Recommendations***

**Recommendation One: The University should include the Broader Learning Environment as a component of its Strategic Framework.**

Queen's Strategic Framework will constitute an important tool in shaping the evolution of the University, applied through the lens of four key strategic drivers that encompass our institutional mandate. Students welcome the high level of planning and consistency this

framework provides, and are supportive of the inclusion of the co-curricular environment in several areas of the document.

The strategic driver surrounding the student learning experience touches on the benefits of the out-of-classroom experience and the role of experiential learning in skill development and student engagement. That being said, the broader learning environment is never explicitly mentioned as a key contributor to the student experience, despite the role it plays in many of the associated metrics, including National Survey on Student Engagement scores and post-graduation outcomes. Given its fundamental relationship to Queen's "transformative student experience"<sup>18</sup>, students believe the broader learning environment should be integrated into the framework in a purposeful manner.

The AMS recommends that the stated university-wide objectives associated with Student Engagement explicitly reflect the role of the University's unique broader learning environment in student success. Further, students recommend that additional metrics be added that directly assess the health of the broader learning environment to ensure it benefits from the same level of institutional planning and consistency afforded to the other components of the framework. In recognizing the important role the broader learning environment plays in fulfilling our unique mandate, its explicit integration into the framework will ensure it can continue to contribute to institutional success moving forward.

**Recommendation Two: The extra- and co-curricular opportunities available on campus should receive official recognition from the University as venues for experiential learning and student engagement.**

The AMS is supportive of the focus the University has placed upon expanding experiential learning at Queen's. Following the inclusion of experiential and entrepreneurial learning in the University's Proposed Mandate Statement to the Province, students look forward to the development of new opportunities that allow them to apply and reflect upon the learning outcomes obtained in the classroom.

This objective places a direct focus on an area of the Queen's experience that is already present in many corners of campus. Students are afforded the opportunity to apply classroom learning in numerous jobs; volunteer opportunities; design teams; and many other avenues that make up the broader learning environment.

As experiential learning becomes an official focus for the University, the AMS recommends that the multitude of current opportunities be accounted for and incorporated into future programming. The University would be advantaged in highlighting the work that is already being done as a component of new course development, metrics, visioning documents, and recruiting materials. While we may be expanding experiential learning and

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<sup>18</sup> Queen's University. *Strategic Framework: 2014-2019*. (Kingston: Queen's, 2013).

placing a more purposeful focus on its ties to classroom learning, it has already been a productive contributor to the educational experience for many years.

**Recommendation Three: The University should investigate the possibility of developing courses that attribute academic credit to extra-curricular experiences. These courses should provide an avenue for students to critically reflect on their experiences outside the classroom and the relevant learning outcomes obtained therein.**

As stated in the Academic Plan, "We must ... continue to foster the spirit of student service and extra-curricular activities on campus, and in particular, increase our efforts to link these to learning."<sup>19</sup> This passage speaks to the importance of tying classroom learning outcomes to active and hands-on engagement. Opportunities for students to gain this valuable experience are already present in many places across campus, including student government, clubs, student-run services, and student publications. In fact, this robust complement of opportunities is a fundamental element of the institution's tradition of active student participation.

While there is no deficiency of avenues for active engagement at Queen's, these must be explicitly and purposefully linked to classroom learning to constitute a legitimate and productive experiential learning opportunity. As outlined in the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance's paper on Student Success, "Research demonstrates that active opportunities, when linked to a student's academic program of study, contribute to improved academic performance, support experiential learning, and enhance the overall student experience."<sup>20</sup> An appetite for this is increasingly present at Queen's, as indicated in the 2013 Exit Poll report.

Despite the availability of formal opportunities for experiential learning in several areas of the curriculum and the existence of forums for informal engagement across the entirety of campus, Queen's could do more to explicitly link the two. As the University progresses towards its strategic objective of expanding avenues for experiential learning, opportunities to build curricula around existing initiatives should be at the forefront of this transformation. In doing so, Queen's will effectively leverage an existing area of institutional excellence, using it as a jumping-off point for the development of further experiential courses and programs. This ultimately will allow more students to get involved in the broader learning environment by reducing the opportunity cost that currently divides out-of-classroom engagement and academic excellence, and will also substantially enrich curricular learning outcomes.

In supporting the institutional tradition of uniquely preparing graduates through co-curricular engagement, the AMS recommends that the University actively seek out opportunities to attribute academic credit to existing initiatives, formally incorporating

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<sup>19</sup> Academic Planning Task Force. *The Academic Plan*. (Kingston: Queen's, 2011).

<sup>20</sup> Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance. *Student Success*. (Toronto: OUSA 2013).

elements of the broader learning environment into the development of an experiential curriculum. This will not only allow the University to excel in providing programming that has seen increasing demand across the higher education sector, but will allow us to do so in a way that is uniquely Queen's.

**Recommendation Four: The University, in conjunction with the Queen's University Faculty Association, should look to revise the definition of University Service in the Collective Bargaining Agreement to include involvement in select student organizations.**

In the traditional model for faculty appointments, a professor's time is divided into three main areas of focus. Namely, their work consists of 40% teaching, 40% research, and 20% university service. Though the smallest of the three, university service allows the faculty member to contribute to the institution beyond their specific area of expertise. It is through these hours that Queen's fills faculty Senate and committee seats, and ensures the broader Queen's community is able to thrive.

Given the important role the broader learning environment plays in the comprehensive Queen's experience, the AMS recommends that the definition of university service be expanded further to include involvement with select groups and organizations that provide substantial opportunities for experiential learning, but do not necessarily fall under the direct provision of the University. These may include activities such as sitting on the Board of Directors for a student society, operating as a mentor for a Queen's start-up, or sitting on an Editorial Board for a student publication. Further, this would create an avenue for student-faculty interaction, an area of particular importance given the impact of increasing student-faculty ratios across the University. Regardless of the form, the AMS believes that faculty are able to offer transformative contributions to many initiatives across campus, and a change to the definition of University service would assist in incentivizing and supporting faculty involvement in a critically important area of the Queen's experience outside of the classroom.

**Recommendation Five: The Audit and Risk Committee of the Board of Trustees should endeavour to make balanced decisions in recognition of the institutional risk associated with compromising the broader learning environment. This should be accounted for in the risk assessment process, and should be weighted against other risks identified by the Board.**

As Queen's navigates an increasingly uncertain post-secondary landscape, it will become more important than ever to ensure the long-term sustainability of areas of competitive advantage and institutional excellence. Currently, the Audit and Risk Committee of the Board of Trustees assesses a variety of institutional risks and liabilities, allowing the Board to make decisions informed by a holistic view of potential threats to the institution. Given the important role the broader learning environment plays in recruitment, student success, and the fulfillment of our institution's unique mandate, the AMS recommends that

the long-term health of the out-of-classroom experience should be considered as a component of the risk assessment process.

Moving forward, the Audit and Risk Committee should formally recognize the broader learning environment as a key component of Queen's reputation. Consequently, any threats to its prosperity should constitute a form of reputational liability. In doing so, Queen's would ensure that an integral element of our competitive advantage remains intact as we enter a climate that will place increasing importance on institutional mandate and excellence.

# Student Autonomy and Responsibility

## *Principles*

**Principle Four: The level of autonomy and responsibility afforded to Queen's students in the offering of services and programming is an essential component of the broader learning environment.**

In his document *Planning Issues for Queen's*, Principal Emeritus David Smith identifies student autonomy and responsibility as a cornerstone of the Queen's experience. In particular, he elucidates, "Queen's offers an atmosphere of support for student activities. Queen's students think of Queen's as *their* university and want to take an active part in its development and governance... For more than a century the initial responsibility for matters of non-academic discipline has been delegated by the Senate to the students through the Judicial Committee of the AMS. The Queen's student constables are another example of the delegation of authority to students. A number of student services are sponsored by the AMS. The students retain responsibility – these are services managed by students for students."<sup>21</sup>

These words are a testament to the unique role Queen's students play in shaping the institution and enhancing the experience of their peers. Beyond the historical implications of this tradition, though, student responsibility and autonomy is an important component of Queen's current and future prosperity. It is through these transformative opportunities that the University is able to uniquely prepare its pupils for life after graduation: the broader learning environment offers an avenue to enhance in-classroom learning outcomes; foster student and alumni engagement; and ensure that students' unique perspective is employed in the governance and improvement of the University.

While Ontario institutions are placing a renewed emphasis on expanded opportunities for student engagement, the high level of responsibility afforded to student leaders at Queen's remains a unique feature of our broader learning environment. The genuine student autonomy present in many areas across campus constitutes an explicit contribution to the student experience, benefitting students as a learning opportunity but as also a mechanism to ensure campus services and governance are uniquely sensitive to student needs. This is epitomized through the examples listed by Principal Emeritus Smith, but also arises in venues such as orientation week, campus bars and clubs, peer support services, and many others.

The AMS believes this culture of student autonomy continues to be a driving force behind the success of Queen's and its graduates, and must remain a fundamental element of our identity moving forward. In a provincial environment that is turning its eye towards experienced and skilled graduates, this element of the institution may be more important than ever.

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<sup>21</sup>Smith, David. *Planning Issues for Queen's*. (Kingston: Queen's, 1987).



**Principle Five: Certain student-oriented programs and services are more effective in meeting the needs of students if they are student-run.**

The AMS believes that students are uniquely capable of providing service and support to their peers, informed by an intrinsic understanding of the diversity of issues and pressures that persist across the student body. While students recognize the necessity of administering a range of professional services through traditional University channels, there are a number of services that are better equipped to fulfill their mandate in a peer-to-peer environment.

The Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance articulates this concept in its policy paper entitled *Student Success*, specifying, "Students, and particularly student associations, are uniquely well positioned to deliver experiences and services. In instances where universities adopt the activities or expected outcomes of student delivered programs, there is often a marked decline in participation and effectiveness. This speaks to the strengths of student associations in having students engage with their peers in an environment that intimately understands their needs and is well positioned to reach, and hear from, students."<sup>22</sup> Whether it is through a food service staffed by students or through the unique support offered by a peer in times of stress, the AMS believes that students play a fundamental role in providing services that resonate with its constituency. Together with their professional counterparts administered by the University, student-run services contribute to a holistic spectrum of supports available on campus.

**Principle Six: Harm reduction is central to the mandate of many student-run services and initiatives.**

The AMS makes a conscious effort to integrate a philosophy of harm reduction into a number of student-run services and programs. The Non-Academic Discipline System is restorative in nature, endeavouring to make reparations for harm done and reduce the likelihood of future infractions through reflective and educational components of its sanctions. Further, student-run campus bars are among the safest in Kingston: they are in close proximity to services such as Walkhome and Queen's First Aid, have a diligent security service in the form of Student Constables, and all staff are trained extensively to ensure that patrons are not dangerously over consuming. The NAD system and campus bars are united in their recognition of the challenges associated with non-academic conduct and University drinking culture. A philosophy of harm reduction is fundamental to the success of these services in fulfilling their mandate to improve the student experience, and is the most effective approach in mitigating the potential for harm to the University community the students that inhabit it.

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<sup>22</sup> Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance. *Student Success*. (Toronto: OUSA 2013).

## *Concerns*

**Concern Seven: There have been several instances where student-run programs and services have been duplicated by the University, forcing competition between University- and student-run initiatives.**

The AMS believes in a healthy complement of University- and student-run programs to ensure a holistic slate of services are available on campus. That being said, students are concerned by several instances of direct competition between student and University initiatives, resulting in the diversion of resources away from student-driven programming.

The installation of new Tim Horton's and Starbucks coffee shops across campus also duplicates services offered by the student-run Common Ground coffee shop and Tea Room. While students recognize the large market for coffee houses at Queen's, the addition of a second Tim Horton's in direct proximity to three existing coffee outlets creating competition where there was already abundant supply. Further, this development violated the spirit of the Management and Operations Agreement governing the Student Life Centre, which stipulates that the AMS and the University should endeavor to offer complementary ancillary services.

Further, the displacement of the Solar Design Team and Science Quest from their residency to house a maker space for the University-administered Queen's Innovation Connector constitutes the direct transfer of resources from a student-administered innovation initiative to a University unit with a similar mandate. Particularly given the lack of notice or alternative provisions provided to these student groups, the AMS is concerned by the precedent set by this abrupt and damaging displacement.

**Concern Eight: Liability and risk management are prioritized over harm reduction in some cases at the University level, compromising an essential function of many student-run services and increasing potential for harm to students.**

The AMS and the University are united in a common desire to promote student health, wellness, and safety. In many cases this creates avenues for productive collaboration and joint initiatives. That being said, while both parties are working towards a common objective, students and the University may aim to achieve this end through different mechanisms. More specifically, students endeavor to adopt a harm-reductive approach as a key component of many student-run services, whereas the University may strive towards the elimination of risk or liability.

Students understand and respect this difference in approach, but remain concerned by the potential for liability reduction and attempted risk elimination to result in perverse outcomes that may be counterproductive to the promotion of student well being. Namely, in cases where it is not reasonable to assume that risk elimination is an achievable objective, a harm-reductive philosophy has the potential to minimize risk to students when

initiatives aimed at harm elimination may actually increase it. Further, there are situations in which attempts to reduce liability may be fundamentally opposed to the reduction of harm. In many cases, the AMS or the University may actually take on increased liability to promote the safety and well-being of Queen's students.

Several years ago, negotiations surrounding campus alcohol policy provided an example of these divided principles, with the University looking to significantly restrict the late operating hours of campus bars and greatly limit their ability to serve alcohol to student patrons. This occurred as a component of wider strategy aimed at eliminating an unhealthy campus drinking culture in recognition of numerous incidents of alcohol abuse at Queen's.

Students recognize the need to promote a safe drinking culture amongst the student body. That being said, the AMS fundamentally disagrees with the notion that restricting hours or greatly limiting service will move the Queen's community towards a solution. Under current policies, student-run bars provide among the safest drinking spaces in Kingston; any large-scale limitations in the service provision of these establishments would be ineffective in reducing unsafe drinking practices amongst students; instead, it would only increase the proportion of students drinking off campus, away from the safety services embedded in student-run establishments.

The notion that drastic changes to alcohol policy would contribute to a decline in drinking culture is predicated upon the false assumption that limiting drinking in on-campus establishments will reduce unsafe consumption. In fact, it may do the opposite, increasing drinking in uncontrolled environments. Students recognize that, in providing this safe drinking space, the AMS and the University take on additional liability, and are understanding of the University's desire to reduce it. That being said, while the existence of popular campus bars and clubs is not liability-reducing, it performs an important role in decreasing risk to student health.

A second example of this disjoint in perspectives can be articulated through the conversations surrounding large-scale homecoming programming that occurred in the summer of 2013. In response to the absence of formalized opportunities for students and alumni to connect and in recognition of the risks associated with unsanctioned street activity during homecoming, students proposed the creation of an on-campus festival on the Saturday night. In part, this presented the opportunity to offer an alternative to the characteristic parties in the near-campus community. This proposal met opposition from the University, largely rooted in the liability associated with a sanctioned event of this scale. Although the AMS recognizes that the proposal posed challenges from a logistical and financial perspective as well, this event presented the possibility of incorporating safety measures that could not be present at an unsanctioned gathering, while still promoting alumni and student engagement over homecoming. While students recognize the need to mitigate liability, the University's reluctance to engage with this idea - or propose any compelling alternatives - is incongruent with the philosophy of harm reduction.

Students are concerned that, in some cases, the University's philosophy of liability reduction or risk elimination may increase the potential for harm to students. As a result,

where the University's actions are at odds with a harm-reductive philosophy, the AMS is concerned that student health, wellness, and safety may be compromised as a result.

### *Recommendations*

**Recommendation Six: The University should officially affirm its commitment to student autonomy in the offering of certain programming and services through the creation of a Memorandum of Understanding with the AMS and any other relevant student group.**

The AMS and the University are united in a common mandate to support and foster student success. In recognizing the important role the administration plays in programming and service provision, the AMS is supportive of initiatives that enjoy shared oversight between students and the University. However, while the joint administration of initiatives can foster productive collaboration, it is important that the individual roles of students and the University be expressly differentiated to ensure both parties are able to contribute productively towards their shared goal.

In 2012, the AMS and the University signed a Memorandum of Understanding that delineated each group's specific rights and responsibilities with regards to Non-Academic Discipline. This document provided clarity and transparency regarding the oversight of the NAD system, and ensured students and administrators were able to operate with a collective understanding of their unique roles.

Moving forward, the AMS recommends that the University work with students to identify other areas of joint oversight that could benefit from a similar process. These areas may include, but are not limited to: orientation week, residence life, and the provision of on-campus licensed establishments. In expressly delineating the avenues through which students and the administration are best equipped to engage, these integral elements of the Queen's experience will be more efficacious in supporting and enhancing student life.

**Recommendation Seven: The University should endeavor to offer services that are not in direct competition with those offered by students.**

Student-run services constitute a fundamental element of the broader learning environment. They contribute to the campus experience as avenues for experiential learning, and create opportunities for employment to offset the costs of education and living. In certain cases, they also provide service that is better oriented towards a student customer base through the benefits of the peer-to-peer environment. Further, these services operate under a social bottom line, entrenching the creation of value for students as an intrinsic component of their collective mandate. In many cases, this objective is

prioritized above revenue generation or efficiency of operations, and provides an added layer of difficulty in ensuring long-term sustainability.

Given the importance of these initiatives and the challenges associated with their inability to generate structural profits, the AMS believes that the University should endeavor to offer services that do not directly compete with those offered by students. At the same time, students recognize the fundamental need for University-run services on campus. Specifically, wherever professional expertise is required, students may be inadequately equipped to meet demand in an effective manner.

To ensure the availability of a holistic slate of services at Queen's, the University must support the existence of student-run initiatives while also ensuring all students have access to the professional assistance they require. This objective could be met through the offering of services that are differentiated but complementary to those provided by students. An example of this is the relationship that exists between the Peer Support Centre and Health, Counselling, and Disability Services: the former offers peer-based support and referrals for personal issues that are ideally serviced by empathetic student volunteers, while the latter provides professional counselling services to address student wellbeing through the expertise of medical professionals. In this case, both services are benefitted by the relationship, and together they offer a spectrum of service that efficiently addresses a diversity of demands for mental health support.

The primary differentiation between services that are optimally offered by students and those that should remain in the hands of the University should be based off of the associated skill-level requirements. Student-run services operate a no experience required model that experiences yearly turnover, meaning the range of services that can be offered is limited to those that do not strictly rely on professional expertise. Conversely, university-run services are more costly to run but can offer services staffed with personnel that do not turnover and are equipped to bring professional experience to the table. Together, both models can efficiently service a spectrum of demands while also leveraging the advantages offered by having student involvement.

Moving forward, the AMS recommends that the University endeavor to avoid the offering of services that directly compete with those offered by students. Instead, students and the University should proactively seek opportunities to offer complementary services that would collectively contribute to a comprehensive slate of programs across campus.

**Recommendation Eight: The Audit and Risk Committee of the Board of Trustees should recognize the relationship between the management of risk to student health and safety and the adoption of a philosophy of harm reduction.**

As the highest authority with explicit discretion over student health, wellness, and safety, the Audit and Risk Committee of the Board of Trustees plays an integral role in promoting student wellbeing across the entirety of the university. The AMS believes the risk management framework employed by the Audit and Risk Committee should reflect

practices aimed at minimizing the potential for harm to students. Given the proven efficacy of harm-reductive policy, students recommend the Committee formally incorporate harm reduction as a component of its risk assessment process. Further, all groups on campus with direct discretion over student health, wellness, and safety should actively seek out opportunities to integrate harm reductive measures into their decision-making process and operations. Together, these initiatives will contribute to Queen's goal of fostering a campus culture that is wholly conducive to student success.

## Administrative Structures

### *Principles*

**Principle Seven: The University's administrative structure should reflect and support the principle of student autonomy and engagement at Queen's.**

Given that the broader learning environment constitutes a core element of the educational experience, the AMS believes that the University's operations should be appropriately aligned with supporting out-of-classroom engagement. In particular, Queen's would benefit from ensuring its administrative structure, and the financial and operational leavers therein, is reflective of the stated strategic driver surrounding student experience. This would constitute an alignment of process to support the strategic direction charted by the University, enhancing the ease and efficiency with which Queen's could operationalize its stated goals. Students believe that, in ensuring the University is functionally positioned to be a leader in student life, it will be ideally equipped to fulfill its mandate of graduating exceptional students.

**Principle Eight: The Division of Student Affairs should include the preservation and development of the broader learning environment as a primary component of its mandate.**

Students believe the preservation and development of the broader learning environment should constitute a primary focus and responsibility of the Dean of Student Affairs (DSA) or any subsequent incarnation of this office. Ideally, this administrator should present a strong extra- and co-curricular vision for a Queen's education, demonstrating a capability to promote inspiring and engaging experiences within student life. To this end, the AMS believes that the Dean of Student Affairs should act to further engage and enfranchise students in the administration of the broader learning environment in recognition of the importance of genuine student involvement at Queen's.

Additionally, students are of the opinion that the Division of Student Affairs would greatly benefit from leadership that exhibits a pedagogical approach to the entirety of the portfolio. This would maximize the potential of the Student Affairs units to fulfill learning outcomes in the interest of enhancing experiential education, serving to entrench the relationship between educational outcomes and out-of-classroom engagement.

Finally, students believe that the Dean of Student Affairs has an essential advocacy responsibility in promoting the broader learning environment and its institutional importance. This should be demonstrated in the Office's interactions with upper-level administrators and University decision-making bodies, but should also be conveyed through a genuine effort to collaborate with students and student leaders as partners. These features would collectively enable the DSA to collaborate with campus stakeholders

in the pioneering of new initiatives to sustain and enhance the out-of-classroom experience that makes Queen's unique.

**Principle Nine: The Office of Advancement should have a vested interest in the student experience in recognizing the positive impact this will have on alumni engagement upon graduation.**

As stated in the Queen's Academic Writing Team's report *Imagining the Future*, "The residential nature of Queen's provides the opportunity to foster a close-knit community among its students, post-doctoral fellows, staff and faculty. The typical Queen's student has the potential to be highly engaged. Students invest themselves on campus (in clubs, departmental activities, residence activities, [and] social gatherings, ...) and beyond the campus (in service learning projects, volunteer activities, [and] work, ...). Even when students graduate, they stay engaged. Alumni value their association with the university long after they leave and are part of Queen's extended virtual community."<sup>23</sup>

This passage speaks to the role the broader learning environment plays in building student engagement, building a connection that translates into alumni engagement following graduation. Opportunities for involvement outside of the classroom allow students to become immersed in the Queen's community, establishing a firm connection that persists long after they have left the institution. This indirect contribution to alumni engagement serves to not only build and shape the global Queen's community, but also constitutes a significant driver of the University's fundraising success. Given these important contributions, the AMS believes that the Office of Advancement should have an intrinsic interest in ensuring that the broader learning environment is maintained and enhanced.

Students are, by definition, future alumni. Upon graduation, they retain the connections they have developed over the course of their tenure as students, and their commitment to the University is a direct result of the quality of their student experience. Having the chance to become involved in the close-knit Queen's community through athletics, clubs, student government, and volunteer or work opportunities helps to build that connection with the institution, and pays itself back through contributions down the road. As of the 2013-2014 year, two-thirds of the University Council membership is comprised of alumni with self-reported experiences in student governments, clubs, services, or athletic teams. Of the 17 members of the Board of Trustees who self-identify as Queen's graduates, almost half of them have reported the same.

Given the importance of the broader learning environment in fostering student and alumni engagement, the AMS believes that the Office of Advancement should recognize its integral contribution to the fundraising mission of the University. Further, the Office of Advancement has an implicit role as an advocate for the broader learning environment; in ensuring the broader learning environment is able to thrive, it could enhance alumni

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<sup>23</sup> Adams, Michael A. *et al. Imagining the Future: Towards an Academic Plan for Queen's University*. (Kingston: Queen's, 2010).



engagement in future years through the experience of Queen's students today.

### **Concerns**

**Concern Nine: The Division of Student Affairs has failed to meet the needs of students in several areas and has compromised the integrity of the broader learning environment.**

The AMS is cognizant of the implicit relationship that associates the Division of Student Affairs with student life and the prosperity of the broader learning environment. Students receive immense benefit from the many subsidiary components of the Office of Student Affairs, which provide a diversity of essential services that support student life and learning. Cumulatively, these services have been dynamic in responding to the needs of the Queen's community, and lay the groundwork for a student body that is able to achieve success over the course of its tenure on campus. The Office of Student Affairs also provides an important avenue for advocacy surrounding the improvement of the student experience at governance and decision-making bodies across the University. This balance of service provision and facilitative advocacy place the Office of Student Affairs at the helm of the broader learning environment.

That being said, students believe discrepancies currently exist between the ideal operation of the Student Affairs Office and its performance in meeting the needs of students and enhancing the Queen's experience. This has manifested itself through explicit instances of infringement on student autonomy or competition with student-run services<sup>24</sup>; in concert, these issues point to a consistent mismatch between the priorities of student affairs and of the best interests the students it supports.

Beyond these specific problems, though, there is a general lack of advocacy or initiative aimed at the improvement of the broader learning environment. While this position should serve as an advocate for a transformative student experience, the Office has done little beyond service provision to enhance the quality of life beyond the classroom. Combined with the specific issues experienced between the DSA and student groups over the past several years, students are concerned that a strategic misalignment exists between Student Affairs and AMS members. This is counterproductive to a thriving broader learning environment, and has led to a fundamental inability of the Office of Student Affairs to serve and represent the best interests of Queen's students in certain areas.

**Concern Ten: In a structural sense, the Division of Student Affairs is poorly equipped to advocate on behalf of students.**

Beyond its role in service provision, the Division of Student Affairs should operate as an advocate for student life at all levels of University decision-making and planning. At present

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<sup>24</sup> For more information, see the concerns outlined in the *Student Responsibility and Autonomy* section.

time, the Student Affairs portfolio falls under the purview of the Office of the Provost, meaning it is represented indirectly at the senior administrative level alongside campus planning, budgeting, and academics. Further, the Provost's Office is not explicitly assigned responsibility for student life beyond the classroom, creating a misalignment between Student Affairs and the portfolio in which it is housed.

Students are concerned that the Division of Student Affairs is structurally disadvantaged in representing the interests of students given its divergent mandate from the portfolio at the Provost and its lack of direct representation on senior administrative bodies. At present time, the Provost's portfolio is incredibly extensive, spanning the entirety of the budgeting process, the academic mission of the university, and the growing activities of Student Affairs. When the non-academic needs of students are housed alongside University-wide planning, budgeting, and academics, it is impossible to fully represent them to bodies such as the Principal & Vice-Principals group or the Board of Trustees. Additionally, in recognizing that the Provost does not have a direct mandate to oversee the non-academic elements of the student experience, the chain of command surrounding issues of student health, wellness, and safety is broken, creating a disjoint between the Board of Trustees and on-the-ground service provision by the inclusion of the Provost in the reporting structure.

All told, students believe the Division of Student Affairs is structurally disadvantaged in advocating for the student experience. This represents a threat to the health of the broader learning environment by creating barriers to the prioritization of student life at Queen's.

**Concern Eleven: The broader learning environment and student services are disadvantaged through the current budgeting process.**

Under a Provostial model, the Provost operates as the Chief Budgeting Officer for the University, undertaking the responsibility for shaping the budgeting process and constructing the consolidated budget for the institution each year. Under Queen's current budgeting practice, the Shared Services<sup>25</sup> have the opportunity to construct a budget for their respective units, to be presented to a committee consisting of the Provost and Deans for approval.

In most cases, these units operate independently from the Office of the Provost, with their budgets being received by individuals with an external relationship to their operations and finances. This important feature of the budgeting process is not applied to the Division of Student Affairs, which is located within the Provost's portfolio. As such, the Chief Budgeting Officer has direct oversight over this subsection of the University's shared services. Students are concerned that this may confuse the objectivity inherent in the budgeting process for the rest of the Shared Services, placing the Division of Student Affairs at a unique disadvantage in existing beneath, rather than parallel to, the Provost. Ultimately,

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<sup>25</sup> These are the central services for which the Revenue-Generating Units (Faculties and Schools) pay through a transfer from their individual operating budgets.

student services may be disadvantaged in securing the funding required to prosper, an eventuality that would have a profound impact on service provision across the University.

### *Recommendations*

**Recommendation Nine: The Office of the Vice-Provost and Dean of Student Affairs should be removed from the portfolio of the Provost and should be elevated to the position of Vice-Principal Student Experience.**

The AMS believes that the Division of Student Affairs should be converted into an Office for the Vice-Principal Student Experience. This would elevate the position to reflect the unique emphasis placed upon student life at Queen's, and would also move it outside of the portfolio of the Provost and Vice-Principal Academic in recognition of its divergent mandate.

Given the stipulated importance of the student experience as an institutional driver under the Strategic Framework and the role of the broader learning environment in providing competitive advantage for the University, it is imperative that Queen's align its administrative structures to effectively leverage these institutional priorities. In installing a top-level administrator to champion the student experience, Queen's would create the infrastructure required to drive the growth and evolution of this component of the campus culture, ultimately ensuring it remains a core element of our institutional mandate as we enter into an increasingly challenging provincial climate.

Further benefits are introduced by moving this portfolio out of the direct purview of the Office of the Provost. Creating a separate entity with oversight of the broader student experience would ensure proper representation at bodies such as the Principal & Vice-Principals, and would ensure the chain of command surrounding issues of student health, wellness, and safety is congruous from the level of the Board of Trustees down to on-the-ground service provision. This shift would also enable services and initiatives contributing to student life to be appropriately represented in the budgeting cycle, ensuring the Vice-Principal Student Experience is able to engage with the process from an arms-length perspective rather than as a direct report to the Chief Budgeting Officer.

Many examples of this Vice-Principal structure already exist at comparable institutions across Canada, namely the University of British Columbia, Dalhousie University, the University of Calgary, York University, and Wilfred Laurier University. In the United States, this structure is even more common, with numerous institutions having operated under this structure for an extended period of time. Commonly cited as a driver for these positions is the special recognition that these institutions place on the student experience, much like Queen's has done through its strategic framework.

For example, in Wilfred Laurier University's recent announcement of the creation of a Vice-President Student Affairs position, the move was recognized as a key component of, "the university's strategy to strengthen its integrated approach to student learning, development, and engagement ... [as] part of a larger strategic plan to enhance Laurier's

innovative approach to student-centred education... all with a view to enhancing student engagement and success.”<sup>26</sup> Dalhousie University further defines their position of Vice-President Student Services as responsible for, “[making] the overall student experience at Dalhousie reflect the same high quality as the university’s outstanding academic student experience”<sup>27</sup>, creating an implicit equality between the academic and non-academic elements of a student’s education. Given that Queen’s has purported to be a leader in the offering a “transformative learning experience”, the development of a similar position could prove instrumental in ensuring we continue to be an example for other institutions in this arena.

Moving forward, the AMS recommends that the University transition the Office of the Vice-Provost and Dean of Student Affairs to the position of Vice-Principal Student Experience, as outlined above. In doing so, it would ensure this fundamental area of the University mission has an equal voice at the level of the senior administration, and would institutionalize a core element of the Queen’s experience. Once implemented, this change would equip the University with the tools necessary to meet our competitors in emphasizing this area of institutional excellence and strategic priority.

**Recommendation Ten: Appropriate accountability mechanisms should be established to ensure that students have adequate recourse in evaluating the performance of the Office of Student Affairs or any subsequent iteration.**

The Student Affairs portfolio is firmly linked to the student experience through service provision and programming, and also operates as a steward for the broader learning environment and its pivotal role on campus. As an ambassador between students and the administration, the AMS believes the Division of Student Affairs should operate in tandem with the needs of these members. Further, in recognizing the transformative role the broader learning environment plays in enhancing student life at Queen’s, this Office should serve as an advocate for the improvement and enhancement of the extra- and co-curricular landscape in any decision making process or strategic planning exercise.

Given the importance of the Office in representing the interests of students, the AMS believes accountability mechanisms should exist that would enable the student body to engage with, and evaluate the performance of, the Division of Student Affairs. Specifically, the AMS recommends that a year-end report detailing the state of the relationship between students and the Division of Student Affairs be received and acted upon by the Board of Trustees each year, to be ratified by AMS Assembly prior to the May meeting of the Board. Further, hiring and renewal committees for senior appointments in the Division of Student

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<sup>26</sup> Wilfrid Laurier University (n.d.). Laurier appoints David McMurray to new post of Vice-President, Student Affairs. In *Laurier Student Affairs*. Retrieved April 10, 2014, from <http://waterloo.mylaurier.ca/vp/info/vpsa.htm>.

<sup>27</sup> Dalhousie University. (n.d.). VP Student Services. In *Dalhousie University: Inspiring Minds*. Retrieved April 10, 2014, from <http://www.dal.ca/dept/senior-administration/vice-presidents/vp-student-services.html>.

Affairs should hold a student majority to ensure student input in selection and reappointment decisions, to be informed by the year-end reports drafted by the AMS over the length of an incumbent's term. Through these mechanisms, Student Affairs and the University can ensure that the office is operating to the best of its ability in fulfilling its mandate to support students and enhance student life.

**Recommendation Eleven: There should be an increase in student representation on committees and Boards with a financial or budgetary mandate in recognition of the large investment students make into the cost of their education.**

In recognizing the unprecedented contribution of tuition and ancillary fees in financing the cost of higher education, the AMS believes that students should benefit from strong representation on bodies with discretion over the allocation of student dollars. Particularly given that students now contribute the majority<sup>28</sup> of the university's Operating Budget, their current membership on bodies such as the Board of Trustees<sup>29</sup> or the Provost's Advisory Committee on the Budget<sup>30</sup> is not indicative of the institutional impact of their financial contribution.

Further, as the primary beneficiaries of the decisions being made by these bodies, students offer a useful perspective in the decision-making process. Ultimately, the quality of education is intrinsically linked to the allocation of resources; given the unprecedented level of student contribution to the University's resource base, it should follow that their participation in the oversight of these funds would merit expansion.

Queen's prides itself in its strong commitment to student governance. As stated by Principal emeritus David Smith, "Students play an integral role in decision-making at Queen's. They are closely involved in the consultative process of policy development through representation on committees and key decision-making bodies, as well as through normal, informal liaison with members of the administration at the university-wide and faculty levels."<sup>31</sup> While this tradition is apparent across groups such as the Senate and its committees<sup>32</sup>, it has yet to be extended to financial and budgetary decision-making bodies.

The AMS recommends that, moving forward, the University endeavor to create avenues for students to engage on decision-making bodies with oversight over the allocation and spending of student fees. The unique perspective offered by students will be an asset in

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<sup>28</sup> 51% of the Operating Budget is funded through fees assessed to students.

<sup>29</sup> Queen's students constitute about 12% of the membership of the university's Board of Trustees, falling above the 8% Ontario average. It is worth noting, though, that a higher proportion of the Operating Budget is funded by Queen's students as compared to most other Ontario institutions.

<sup>30</sup> There is currently no student representation on the Provost's Advisory Committee on the Budget.

<sup>31</sup> Smith, David. *Queen's Learning Environment*. (Kingston: Queen's, 1990).

<sup>32</sup> Queen's students comprise 25% of Senate membership, constituting the highest proportion of student Senators in Ontario.

deliberations, and will provide another mechanism for accountability in the use of operating funding across the institution.

**Recommendation Twelve: The Office of Advancement should seek out opportunities to establish partnerships with student groups in recognition of the essential role that the broader learning environment plays in developing a relationship between the University and its future alumni.**

An inherent connection exists between student and alumni engagement, with student involvement being linked to strong alumni connection in future years. As Thomas E. Miller states it in *Advancement in Student Affairs: The Challenges and Strategies*, “When a campus functions as a closely knit community, those who pass through it feel a connection and a sense of family and shared values. That culture is a powerful ally to a development effort, and it is often unique to smaller institutions with distinct missions and purpose.”<sup>33</sup> This passage underlines the importance of uniting the University’s advancement mission with the creation of meaningful opportunities for student involvement, specifically citing the positive correlation between emotional connection and successful development initiatives.

Given that the broader learning environment plays a fundamental role in enriching the student experience, the AMS believes that the Office of Advancement should carry out its mandate in recognition of the role this plays in establishing a connection between students and the University. Currently, the Office of Advancement works with the Division of Student Affairs to support the provision of student services<sup>34</sup>, but does not collaborate extensively with student governments or student groups. Given that these organizations act as stewards for the broader learning environment, it would be in Advancement’s best interests to extend some level of support to student groups such as the Alma Mater Society in order to indirectly cultivate the alumni engagement that better the University’s fundraising success.

Moving forward, the AMS recommends that the Office of Advancement enter into a partnership with the AMS and other relevant student groups in order to help resource student initiatives and enhance the quality of Queen’s unique broader learning environment.

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<sup>33</sup> Miller, Thomas E. *Advancement in Student Affairs: The Challenges and Strategies*. (Wiley: Toronto, 2010).

<sup>34</sup> This is apparent in initiatives such as the embedded counsellors recently installed across several University units.

## Student Life Space

### *Principles*

**Principle Ten: The Broader Learning Environment requires sufficient dedicated space in order to thrive.**

Student life space operates as the platform for the many activities and groups that comprise the broader learning environment. Services, student governments, clubs, and other student-run initiatives all require physical infrastructure to support them in carrying out their mandates, utilizing everything from office and meeting rooms to storage space and service stations. All told, student life space is the physical manifestation of the broader learning environment. Without sufficient space, these student-driven initiatives enter into direct competition for fundamental resources, disadvantaging many in the offering of unique opportunities that enrich the learning experience. In order to possess a thriving broader learning environment, students believe that sufficient dedicated space is a basic requirement.

**Principle Eleven: Student life space should be recognized as providing benefit to the University and should be prioritized accordingly.**

Given the importance of the broader learning environment in fulfilling the University's mandate, students believe that the availability of sufficient and appropriate student life space should constitute an area of institutional focus for Queen's. Particularly given the unavailability of provincial funding for the construction of non-academic space, institutional resources should be leveraged to further respond to this area of need.

Following many years of discussion, the Board of Trustees formally approved the development of the Queen's Centre Project in the early 2000s in an effort to revitalize the complement of student life space on campus. Despite that project's termination, the AMS continues to believe that the University should be proactive in addressing the unmet student life space needs identified during its inception. Particularly as the student body grows, this will ensure Queen's has the physical infrastructure to support the broader learning environment and the many benefits it provides to the institution as a whole.

**Principle Twelve: Student-run services are fundamentally different in mandate and impact than services designed to generate a profit or dividend through their operations.**

Student-run services are a fundamental component of the broader learning environment, providing a variety of experiential learning opportunities to students while also being tailored specifically to a student customer base. Further, student-run services intentionally focus their expenditures on wages and cost savings for students, collectively budgeting for

zero surplus to ensure students are receiving optimal value for their money. As a non-profit corporation, AMS Inc.'s biggest expenditure is salaries and wages, with the intention of putting money back into student pockets to contribute to the costs of education and living.

Conversely, University-run services do not provide employment opportunities for students, and are intended to collectively generate a dividend through their profits to subsidize other non-academic programming across the University. While they may provide similar services, they do so with the intention of generating optimal revenue, and do not provide opportunities for student employment or pass cost savings onto student customers. As such, the AMS believes that the double bottom line under which all student-run services exist is a key differentiator that separates their mandate and operations from their University-run counterparts.

### *Concerns*

**Concern Twelve: Enrolment growth and expanded student programming have placed considerable pressure on student life space at Queen's, rendering the current complement of space inadequate.**

The Queen's Centre Project was originally envisioned in the context of the impending influx of new students precipitated by the double cohort entering the post-secondary system in 2003. Over the course of the ensuing decade, Queen's expanded enrolment by almost 2000 students in excess of this initial increase, and two phases of the Queen's Centre were not completed. Combined, these factors have resulted in a considerable pressure on the quantity of student life space that exists today. Particularly given the increase in admissions scheduled for 2015-16, students are concerned the current complement of space places restrictions on the prosperity of the broader learning environment.

The recently completed Campus Master Plan alludes to this reality in Chapter 2.3, where it stipulates: "The University currently lacks appropriate instructional and research laboratory space, classroom facilities, and study space, as well as social spaces that support Queen's role as a predominantly residential campus."<sup>35</sup> Within the Student Life Centre, clubs and other student organizations are forced to compete for limited physical infrastructure of varying quality, a large complement of which may be poorly tailored to meet their needs. Office space for these groups is particularly scarce, with many full-time student staff sharing an office with other full-time employees and several active committees or clubs. Exclusive club space and bookable spaces are also in high demand, and spaces for large events are lacking at certain times of year.

Beyond the Student Life Centre, there are pockets of campus that have been identified as having a shortage of integrated space support for student life. The Campus Master Plan provides a recommendation that states, "Areas illustrated...as lacking Student Life Space should be considered priority areas for additional social infrastructure. Social

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<sup>35</sup> Urban Strategies Inc. *Queen's University Campus Master Plan*. (Kingston: Queen's, 2013).



infrastructure includes all space and informal environments that facilitate student and faculty interaction, sustaining or enhancing programming that supports a more holistic Queen's out-of-classroom experience."<sup>36</sup>

All told, the AMS is concerned with the current stock of student life space across campus. Particularly given the essential role physical infrastructure plays in providing student services and initiatives, the broader learning environment has become increasingly burdened by the limited space available to support its mandate.

**Concern Thirteen: Much of the student life space that is currently available is low quality or is not appropriate for its current use.**

Deferred maintenance of campus facilities currently afflicts the majority of the Ontario university system, with Queen's shouldering a deferred maintenance backlog of nearly \$300 million across its many buildings. Further detail surrounding the condition of Queen's physical infrastructure was made available last year when Campus Planning undertook a University-wide building condition assessment using the Facilities Condition Index: a ratio between the size of a building's deferred maintenance and its current replacement value in today's dollars. This metric stipulated four categories of building conditions: good, fair, poor, and critical.

Of the four buildings of the Student Life Centre, two of them were earmarked as being in poor<sup>37</sup> or critical<sup>38</sup> condition. In both cases, the best practice of annually investing 1.5% of the current replacement value<sup>39</sup> of a building into its yearly maintenance has not been adhered to. In particular, the JDUC has been under-maintained as a result of the Queen's Centre Project, expediting its deterioration and rendering its condition particularly concerning.

Further, the space available across the Student Life Centre is not appropriately tailored to meet the needs of certain student groups. The noise separation between the JDUC residence floors and other sections of the building is poor, and there are no meeting spaces that are wholly appropriate for larger committee meetings such as the AMS Assembly. Further, while MacGillivray-Brown Hall contributes a considerable amount of square footage to the SLC, it is incapable of accommodating many student groups as a result of its configuration and multitude of uses.

Given the importance of student life space in support the activities of the broader learning environment, the AMS is concerned that much of the available student life space is of low quality and inappropriate for its current use. Moving forward, this will inhibit certain

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<sup>36</sup> Urban Strategies Inc. *Queen's University Campus Master Plan*. (Kingston: Queen's, 2013).

<sup>37</sup> The JDUC was assessed as being of 'poor' condition.

<sup>38</sup> MacGillivray-Brown Hall was assessed as being in 'critical' condition.

<sup>39</sup> This 1.5% per year is in excess of the total backlog of deferred maintenance the buildings.

student groups from carrying out their work, and will limit the evolution of the co-curricular experience at Queen's.

**Concern Fourteen: In many parts of the University, there is no agreement in place to protect the long-term availability or upkeep of current student life space.**

In recognizing the importance of dependable space in ensuring the sustainable operation of many student initiatives, the AMS is concerned that a large number of clubs, student-run services, and other student groups currently operate with no assurance or transparency surrounding the terms of their space occupation. This lack of information is inhibitory to the long-term planning process, and in several cases has resulted in student groups being displaced from their residence with little notice and no contingency plan. Students are concerned that the current lack of transparency surrounding the terms and conditions of student life space occupation in many areas of campus may stunt the long-term development of the broader learning environment. This is further outlined by the direct damage incurred in cases where groups experience the sudden loss of their operating space, revoking a fundamental resource required to carry out their mandate.

**Concern Fifteen: The rent assessed to student service space is not differentiated from profit-generating space at present time.**

In the Management & Operations Agreement that established the Student Life Centre in 2011, the term 'AMS Exclusive Ancillary space' was used to denote the areas of the SLC occupied by AMS student-run services, and the term 'University Exclusive Ancillary space' was applied to areas housing University-run services such as *Khao*, *Tim Horton's*, and *Quizno's*. As a component of the rent assessment process for each party, a multiplier of 1.8 was applied to the per-unit rent of these exclusive ancillary spaces in recognition of their revenue generating nature.

While both generate revenue, though, the mandates and operations of the services that occupy AMS Exclusive Ancillary space diverge significantly from those that operate in University Exclusive Ancillary space. Namely, the former is not-for-profit and hires exclusively students, whereas the latter is intended to generate a dividend for the University and does not hire students. Consequently the AMS is concerned that the current Management & Operations Agreement fails to differentiate the two in a meaningful way, assessing the same rent of both parties despite the important contribution made by student-run services to the broader learning environment. Students believe this practice places undue pressure on student-run services, ultimately restricting them in providing opportunities and cost saving to the student body.

## *Recommendations*

### **Recommendation Thirteen: The University should establish the revitalization of the John Deutsch University Centre as a priority in the Initiative Campaign.**

The JDUC operated as the central hub for student life for nearly half a century. Since the termination of the Queen's Centre Project, though, conversations surrounding the major revitalization of this space have ceased, and student life activity in the building is markedly diminished. Because the intention for many years was to demolish or radically refurbish the structure's constituent parts, investment of time and money into JDUC maintenance was minimized, leaving much of the building tired and poorly maintained.

In lieu of the completion of Queen's Centre Phases 2 and 3, student groups and the University should chart a path forward with the objective of modernizing the complement of student life spaces on campus. Campus planning attitudes have shifted away from construction of new buildings towards revitalization and reconfiguration of existing space, and students are enthusiastic to review the JDUC through this new lens. Given that the University is looking to revitalize and reopen more of the nearby Physical Education Centre, and that the AMS and University have committed to the development of a 5-10 year plan for the JDUC's revitalization, students would like to explore funding strategies in order to bring the buildings into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Two years remain in the University's Initiative Campaign, with few priorities addressing student life space. The JDUC brings with it significant historical and emotional connections through its lifetime of playing home to student-run initiatives and traditions. This, in tandem with a long-term plan, makes it a well-suited candidate for donor support. Consequently, the AMS recommends that the JDUC be established as a priority for the remainder of the Initiative Campaign.

### **Recommendation Fourteen: The University should work with students to develop a Student Life Space Master Plan with the aim of providing a framework to guide the evolution of dedicated student life space on campus.**

Since the Queen's Centre Project's formal termination, few initiatives have been undertaken to address the outstanding demand that continues to exist for quality student life space on campus. The completion of Queen's Centre Phase 1 and the early stages of the revitalization of the JDUC and the PEC represent an opportunity to address this long-standing deficiency. That being said, the scope of this project would be hindered without a comprehensive and holistic plan to coordinate this development.

The AMS believes the long-term vision for the JDUC should form the first stage of a comprehensive Student Life Space Master Plan (SLSMP), which would provide a framework and a series of recommendations for the reconfiguration and revitalization of all student life spaces across the University. This would be similar to the mandate of the Library and Archives Master Plan, which delineated a long-term plan for library and archive space in

the context of the broader evolution of the Queen's campus. The proposed plan should be rooted in an updated student life space needs assessment, produced in consultation with a wide variety of students and student groups. The development of the plan should be overseen by a group modeled after the steering committees of the Campus Master Plan and the Library & Archives Master Plan, with significant student representation in recognition of the student-oriented subject matter.

The SLSMP would also serve to provide added clarity surrounding the recommendations for student life space reconfiguration and revitalization already provided in part by the Campus Master Plan. Among other things, this includes planning for added student life space in areas of campus where it is currently lacking, with the option of incorporating a portion of the space relinquished by University departments in the wake of the new budget model's assignment of space costs. Further, a reconfiguration of student life space should occur in tandem with a review of spaces under the Student Life Centre's purview, and represents a promising opportunity to add significantly more spaces to its current stock.

By engaging with students in the development of a comprehensive Student Life Space Master Plan, the University would ensure that the broader learning environment continues to have a platform on which to thrive.

**Recommendation Fifteen: The University and Faculties should develop agreements with students groups surrounding the provision of designated student life space on campus. These agreements should articulate details surrounding cost of space, timeframe for occupation, and a process for removal.**

Student space is integral to the success of many student-run initiatives, and provides a platform for interaction, collaboration, and growth. Despite this, many designated student spaces are not governed by any formal agreement surrounding their current occupancy or designation for student life.

In order to ensure the long-term viability of student groups and services on campus, it is important that they be equipped with the necessary planning tools to delineate a strategy for future years. As such, clear understanding of the status and terms of their space occupation constitutes an important component of the planning process, and would ensure these groups are not hindered by a lack of certainty or the sudden loss of their residence.

In recognizing the benefits of this foresight, the AMS recommends that the University and Faculties endeavor to articulate agreements surrounding current and future student life space. These agreements should specify terms such as cost, timeframe for occupation, and a process for removal. This will confer additional planning capacity to student groups, and will also ensure there is a broader understanding of the current and future availability of student life space across campus.

**Recommendation Sixteen: Student service space in the Student Life Centre should be charged rent at a lower rate than commercial and university exclusive ancillary space in recognition of the difference in mandate.**

Given the divergent mandates and operations of student-run and University-run services, the AMS believes space costs should be assessed differently for both parties. In the current Student Life Centre Management and Operations Agreement, the same multiplier of 1.8 is applied to the square footage designated as AMS Exclusive Ancillary Space and University Exclusive Ancillary Space, obscuring the differences between the two categories of services and resulting in the same per- unit rent being assessed to both units.

In recognition of the fundamental differences between AMS- and University-run services, the AMS recommends that the modifier applied to student-run services be adjusted to lower their yearly space costs. In turn, these cost savings will be passed along to students, serving to further enhance the broader learning environment.

## Policy Statement

**WHEREAS** the Queen's experience is substantially enriched by affording students opportunities for engagement with an active and diverse broader learning environment.

**WHEREAS** the broader learning environment provides a variety of avenues for experiential learning, adding value to a Queen's degree.

**WHEREAS** Queen's unique broader learning environment constitutes a competitive advantage for the University.

**WHEREAS** the level of autonomy and responsibility afforded to Queen's students in the offering of services and programming is an essential component of the broader learning environment.

**WHEREAS** certain student-oriented programming and services are often more effective in meeting the needs of students if they are student-run.

**WHEREAS** harm reduction is central to the mandate of many student-run services and initiatives.

**WHEREAS** the University's administrative structure should reflect and support the principle of student autonomy and engagement at Queen's.

**WHEREAS** the Office of Advancement should have a vested interest in the student experience in recognizing the positive impact this will have on alumni engagement upon graduation.

**WHEREAS** the Broader Learning Environment requires sufficient dedicated space in order to thrive.

**WHEREAS** student life space should be recognized as providing benefit to the University and accordingly should be further prioritized.

**WHEREAS** student-run services are fundamentally different in mandate and impact than services designed to generate a profit or dividend through their operations.

**BIFRT** the University should include the Broader Learning Environment as a component of its Strategic Framework.

**BIFRT** the extra- and co-curricular opportunities available on campus should receive official recognition from the University as venues for experiential learning and student engagement.

**BIFRT** the University should investigate the possibility of developing courses that attribute academic credit to extra-curricular experiences.

**BIFRT** the University, in conjunction with the Queen's University Faculty Association, should look to revise the definition of University Service in the Collective Bargaining Agreement to include involvement in select student organizations.

**BIFRT** the Audit and Risk Committee of the Board of Trustees should endeavour to make decisions in recognition of the institutional risk associated with compromising the broader learning environment, to be accounted for in the risk assessment process weighted against other risks identified by the Board.

**BIFRT** the University should officially affirm its commitment to student autonomy in the offering of certain programming and services through the creation of a Memorandum of Understanding with the AMS and any other relevant student group.

**BIFRT** the University should endeavor to offer services that do not directly compete with those offered by students.

**BIFRT** the Audit and Risk Committee of the Board of Trustees should recognize the relationship between the management of risk to student health and safety and the adoption of a philosophy of harm reduction.

**BIFRT** the Office of the Vice-Provost and Dean of Student Affairs should be removed from the portfolio of the Provost and should be elevated to the position of Vice-Principal Student Experience.

**BIFRT** appropriate accountability mechanisms should be established to ensure that students have adequate recourse in evaluating the performance of the Office of Student Affairs or any subsequent iteration.

**BIFRT** there should be an increase in student representation on committees and Boards in recognition of the large investment students make into the cost of their education.

**BIFRT** the Office of Advancement should seek out opportunities to establish partnerships with student groups in recognition of the essential role that the broader learning environment plays in developing a relationship between the University and its future alumni.

**BIFRT** the University should establish the revitalization of the John Deutsch University Centre as a priority in the Initiative Campaign.

**BIFRT** the University should work with students to develop a Student Life Space Master Plan with the aim of providing a framework to guide the evolution of dedicated student life space on campus.

**BIFRT** the University and Faculties should develop agreements with students groups surrounding the provision of designated student life space on campus, articulating details surrounding cost of space, timeframe for occupation, and a process for removal.

**BIFRT** student service space in the Student Life Centre should be charged rent at a different rate than commercial and university exclusive ancillary space in recognition of the difference in mandate.