



ADVOCACY
COMMUNITY
ENGAGEMENT
ENRICHMENT
INNOVATION

STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION OF MOUNT ROYAL UNIVERSITY

STRATEGIC PLAN
2010 - 2014



STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION OF MOUNT ROYAL UNIVERSITY

STRATEGIC PLAN

2010 - 2014

APPROVED BY STUDENTS' COUNCIL ON MARCH 15, 2010

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PURPOSE

This Strategic Plan was developed for the whole organization. It presents a "macro" or holistic view, and does not relate to specific areas within the organization. The intention behind the document is to provide high-level direction and focus for the organization.

There are three fundamental purposes to a strategic plan. The first purpose is to make sure that the organization knows the direction in which it is headed and agrees with that direction. The primary direction comes from the "vision" statement – where the organization plans to be in three or more years. There are also a series of guideposts to "map" how to reach that future: these guideposts take the form of the strategic priorities included in the plan. The second purpose of a strategic plan is to define how the organization will behave while it is pursuing its dream. This is achieved through the mission, beliefs and values statements. These statements help shape the worldview of the organization and need to be reviewed together. The third aspect of a strategic plan doesn't relate to the document at all: it refers to the process through which the document was created. The process, rather than the product, can have a profound and lasting effect on the morale and productivity of an organization. By including the plan implementers in the planning process, we hoped to create a higher degree of buy-in for the desired future and thereby achieve a higher degree of commitment to its realization.

BACKGROUND

SAMRU is committed to engaging in a number of strategic research and planning initiatives throughout each year. Regular broad scope planning activities include annual Executive Committee transitioning retreats, annual SAMRU Executive Committee/ Senior Management retreats and annual SAMRU planning retreats involving the Executive Committee and all full-time staff. Other ongoing strategic research and planning initiatives consist of development and planning for all SAMRU operations including service centres, retail operations, human resources, communications strategy, financial planning, and tenancies.

In addition to ongoing strategic planning, a tremendous amount of work has also taken place in the area of Wyckham House expansion. The bulk of this work is now complete and it represents a major milestone in the progress of SAMRU.

The situational framework preceding this strategic plan was influenced by:

- The need for strategic planning as part of ongoing and regular accountability initiatives.
- SAMRU's desire to re-focus its goals in an environment of continued financial health and completed expansion and renovation of Wyckham House Phase I.
- Improving relationships with MRU that represent new strategic growth opportunities.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- SAMRU's desire to encourage maximum participation and connection to a four-year plan from a Board that has turnover every one or two years.

PROCESS AND METHODOLOGY

With the previous strategic plan set to conclude in 2010, SAMRU embarked on a targeted Request for Proposal search for experienced neutral external facilitators and contacted five consultant organizations based on recommendations from Students' Council and staff members. Three organizations were interviewed and Centre Point was ultimately selected by the Executive Committee and key staff. Stakeholder input was gathered between November 2009 and January 2010 with interviews, focus groups and surveys. Five half-day planning sessions took place between November 2009 and February 2010. A SWOT analysis created at the June 2009 planning retreat and the Enrichment through Engagement summary of 2009 Students' Council retreat are also included in stakeholder input data. All of the participants were assured of confidentiality and all summaries have removed identifying content.

Six one-on-one interviews with MRU senior management

Seven focus groups with a total of 43 participants

Electronic survey of Students' Council, SAMRU staff, volunteers, and clubs members with 50 respondents

Random intercept survey of 284 students-at-large

Five half-day planning sessions with full-time staff, Executive Committee and seven Students' Council members

1.0

CORE ELEMENTS

MISSION, VISION, VALUES, BELIEFS

All of the key components were developed through group discussion in the planning meetings, break-away group brainstorming, and significant additional committee work. Several different versions were created for each statement and then re-worked based on feedback to the planning group as a whole. The final versions of these statements were accepted through a consensus process by SAMRU staff and councillors participating in the planning meetings. The results are as follows:

SAMRU MISSION

This is the essence of what we are trying to do. It is a broad, high-level statement that articulates our day-to-day work.

We are the collective voice of our members.
We create change through advocacy.
We inspire growth through engagement.
We serve students to help them succeed.

SAMRU VISION

This describes what we aspire to achieve in the future. It affirms our chosen destination and serves as a guiding image that speaks to our contribution to the community.

Where students discover themselves, build relationships, and make a difference in the world.

SAMRU VALUES & BELIEFS

These are the things that we hold important in the way we go about our activities. They are our touchstones, our guiding principles. They are the core, enduring beliefs that are our foundation. They endure across time, through difficulties, and remain meaningful.

WE BELIEVE...

- in a **COMMUNITY** built on individual relationships and shared resources.
- in every individual's potential and that **LEARNING** goes beyond the classroom.
- that our **INTEGRITY** requires accountability, openness, responsible stewardship, and ethical governance.
- that **DIVERSITY** makes our community stronger and more vibrant.
- that **FUN** is essential to creativity, engagement, and social development.
- that our **AUTONOMY** makes it possible to respond to the needs of our members.

1.0

CORE ELEMENTS
ESSENTIALS

These are the basic elements that are vital to making SAMRU successful. They are the most important influences in determining our success towards our mission and vision. They are the building blocks, the essential elements of our success.

LEGITIMACY

The Students' Association of Mount Royal University has the legal authority and responsibility to act as an official, incorporated, representative body for our members. We build credibility through transparent and accountable governance, consistent and effective management, principled advocacy, and successful operations. We have an excellent reputation because we keep our promises.

RESILIENCE

The Students' Association of Mount Royal University is financially sustainable, environmentally responsible, and politically astute. Our solid foundation is based on dedicated and passionate staff and volunteers, a reciprocal loyalty between SAMRU and our workers, the possession and control of our own building, excellent financial health, and a progressive policy framework. We stand the test of time.

RELEVANCE

The Students' Association of Mount Royal University continually seeks to understand and adapt to our members' needs through engagement, outreach, communication, representation, advocacy, peer support, and service provision. We are an integral part of the student experience.

RELATIONSHIPS

The Students' Association of Mount Royal University cultivates healthy, productive, and sustainable relationships internally and externally. We collaborate with campus and community groups to provide the best experiences and opportunities for our members. We are the vibrant hub of the campus community.

LEARNING ORGANIZATION

The Students' Association of Mount Royal University pursues the best ways to meet the needs of our members through innovative practices, continual professional development, and systematic evaluation. We are always striving to be better.

1.0

CORE ELEMENTS

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

These form the basis of strategic choice and are the starting point for the balance of the strategic plan. With this plan, SAMRU possesses an updated and comprehensive strategic planning framework from which a number of strategic goals and operational action plans will be developed and implemented. SAMRU's established evaluation process will ensure that these goals are executed and evaluated by key SAMRU staff to meet these strategic objectives.

ADVOCACY



Continue to pursue holistic advocacy that empowers collective and individual student voices"

We will endeavour to bring the voices of students, both individually and as a group, to all those that need to hear them. This work includes representing students on MRU committees and boards, to members of municipal, provincial and federal governments and to the community at large, but it also involves empowering our members to hear their own voices, to discover themselves. Sometimes we will bring a common purpose from many voices, but we will also work to make sure that no lone voice is lost in the crowd. We will work to ensure that advocacy is not seen as a compartment of the organization or a specific job duty. Instead we will strive to make all of our work an act of advocacy—through all our daily interaction with students, through the credibility we develop with the community and through the demonstration of our belief in the value of learners, we will endeavour to illuminate the worth of our members and their role in the community.

COMMUNITY



Develop and sustain relationships with the campus community to foster an environment of authentic collaboration"

From our belief in a community built on relationships and shared resources, we will work to build connections among the campus community that enrich the work of all involved. By demonstrating that cooperation, trust and respect lead to authentic relationships we will work to find relevant common purpose with members of the campus community, including the MRU Board, administration, faculty, support staff, and other campus groups. We will work to find mutually beneficial goals and capitalize on opportunities to work with our internal and external campus partners to improve efficiencies and provide value to our members. We will offer our own expertise and services where they are needed to enrich the fabric of the campus community. Finally, we will also encourage and inspire members of the campus community to collaborate independently with each other, modelled on our successful partnerships.

1.0

CORE ELEMENTS

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

ENGAGEMENT



Further promote an aware and actively participating membership towards achieving maximum student engagement"

We believe engagement goes beyond dissemination of our message, requiring a whole environment of interaction with our members. Engagement involves both active participation in the organization and dialogue. We will value and promote active participation by our members. We will work to find new ways to promote our organization to those members who do not actively participate, to have them be aware of the services and opportunities we offer and make informed choices. We will go above and beyond our current levels of involvement and we will value every interaction with our members as an opportunity for engagement. We recognize that not all students will wish to fully engage with the Students' Association, but we will challenge ourselves to reach out to as many members as possible. Our goals are to increase active participation and to create an ongoing two-way conversation with our members involving face-to-face interactions, forums, emerging technologies, and spontaneous conversations as well as a comprehensive strategy of traditional communication tools.

ENRICHMENT



Continue to deliver enriching and relevant services, opportunities, and events leading to student success"

We recognize our members are a community of learners and our services are a complement to their traditional education; we offer our members enriching co-curricular opportunities and provide holistic support for their academic pursuits. We will ensure enduring relevance and value in all of the Students' Association's offerings – including services, advocacy, lobbying, and operations. We work in the best interests of students. We also believe enrichment must include fun and excitement—we will work to continue a comprehensive offering of programs from essential support services to entertaining programmed events. To accomplish this we will research new programs, initiatives and services and refine our existing offerings in a way that continually adds to the value to our members.

1.0

CORE ELEMENTS

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

INNOVATION



Examine and evaluate our organization to remain innovative and responsive to our members"

We will continue our commitment to being a learning organization whose actions are informed by effective engagement with our key stakeholders by maintaining honest and critical evaluation of our operations, by seeking out new best practices, and by developing innovative initiatives. We will consistently look to improve our existing activities as well as seek new opportunities for our members. We will work to ensure our effectiveness by using qualitative and quantitative tools to collect input from students, from the campus community, and from other stakeholders. We will value this input as essential to our growth, even when it may be critical or challenging. We will reflect on the input we receive and work to employ it in the best possible way. Finally, we will be courageous and innovative—willing to take calculated risks on new, untested initiatives and we will examine those new initiatives to evaluate their success.

2.0 ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS

EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT

Whether economic, social or political, the external environment affects an organization's ability to operate and deliver services.

The external environmental factors facing SAMRU in early 2010 can be summarized as:

- 2010 budget cuts affecting PSE in Alberta, with the government allowing some institutions to apply for an increase above CPI to tuition rates; freezes and decreases to post-secondary funding in Alberta resulting in institutions increasing non-academic fees; hiring freezes in PSE.
- Mount Royal College becomes Mount Royal University, with a new brand and vision to be the best undergraduate university in Canada.
- Changing student demographics and needs.
- SAMRU contractual obligations, opportunities and limitations.
- Supplier and partner relationships.
- Municipal concerns such as transit; construction of the new West LRT leg began in February 2010 and is slated to be completed by 2012; it will not run directly to MRU, but shuttle busses down 37th St. SW to connect MRU to the nearest station are expected to be put in place.

- Generational expectations of increased involvement in decisions that affect them.
- Increased generational expectation of volunteerism.

WYCKHAM HOUSE EXPANSION AND RETROFIT

SAMRU wrapped up Phase I of a long-needed expansion project. Originally built in 1987, Wyckham House was designed to accommodate roughly 5,000 students. As the student population grew, the need for an expanded student centre became more acute. According to enrolment projections, MRU anticipates a significant increase in its enrolment status for full-load equivalents (FLE) by 2015. According to the September 2009 Trends at a Glance publication, MRU has approximately 7,908 FLE students and is anticipating reaching 12,400 FLE students by 2025.

It was ultimately determined that a new design was needed for the expansion of Wyckham House, that a focus on a performance space was neither feasible nor in the best interests of students, and that improved governance visibility and access to student services should be the priority. SSE Architects, which has since become S2 Architecture, recommended Linus Murphy as principal designer for the expansion project in 2005. S2, and Murphy in particular, had experience in renovations and expansions and in student centres and was LEED certified

2.0 ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS

(therefore capable and qualified to assist us in introducing environmental initiatives into the building design and construction). Through a course of strategic initiatives, the College revised its proposal related to the terms of a new LOA and became more interested in supporting the SAMRC's building endeavours. Because of work over the previous five years, designed to improve the Students' Association's credibility and enhance our relationships with key College decision makers, the opportunity for an advantageous LOA finally existed.

Discussions with the College quickly revealed that they were not nearly as resistant to these changes as they once were. The College was also agreeable to adopting an arm's length liability policy where by mutual agreement the Students' Association would continue to be responsible for our own success and failure. By partnering with the College, we were able to receive a mortgage from the Alberta Capital Finance Authority, which gave us a 30-year mortgage at a fixed interest rate, and granted us access to much more funding than if we had obtained a mortgage through a bank. This allowed us to better make use of the existing Capital Campaign Fund as well as increased our threshold for debt tolerance from \$9 million to approximately \$14 million, allowing us to proceed with actual expansion, rather than only retrofitting our old building. On June 5th 2006, the functional program (an outline of the functions the building will need to deliver), revised LOA, business plans and other supporting documents were presented to the Board of Governors after prior approval by the Campus Development Committee. After an

Order in Council was obtained from the Alberta Legislature in October 2006, the expansion project began to move forward more quickly.

In fall 2006, the SAMRC in partnership with the College and S2 Architecture, hired CANA Construction as the project manager for the expansion. This working group developed a comprehensive budget for the project. Because of the nature of the construction industry in Calgary, some changes were needed to be made to the original plans in order to deliver a budget project in line with the \$14 million scope determined by the Board of Governors.

In April 2007, the Board of Governors, on the recommendation of the Campus Development Committee, again approved the revised schedule, scope and budget for the expansion project. Ground was broken in May 2007, once the development permit was released by the City of Calgary. Construction on the new building continued throughout 2007, beginning with excavation and moving on foundation and structural elements. Students got a firsthand look at the ongoing construction through the second floor lounge windows, including the "stay in school kids" message scratched out by the steelworkers.

In May 2008, the Students' Association moved from their old offices in Wyckham House and the building was closed for the summer in order to join the new areas to the old and complete renovations to the existing building. After a summer working from townhouses in East Residence, the SAMRC Executives and staff returned to the new Wyckham House

2.0 ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS

just in time to open for the 2008 Fall Semester. Throughout fall 2008, various pieces of work continued—much of the new furniture had yet to arrive and work was still needed on the third floor offices. Additionally, some elements of the building needed time to be analyzed and properly implemented, such as the HVAC system, all of which was well tolerated by students and staff.

On March 14, 2009, the Students' Association held a Grand Opening celebration and officially cut the ribbon on the bigger, better Wyckham House. Most of the major work on the building has been completed, but it is expected there will still be some deficiencies to be noted and addressed as the now SAMRU settles into its new building. Phase II, a renovation of the Liberty Lounge, food court, washrooms and lower level, is currently in the planning stages.

HUMAN RESOURCES

SAMRU has had a period of significant growth due to the completion of the expanded Wyckham House Student Centre last year. We now have 30 full-time staff members and approximately 70 part-time staff members and occasional employees. Our comprehensive human resources infrastructure includes progressive personnel policies and procedures, flexible work schedules, bi-annual salary and benefits reviews, a full job classification system, and a commitment to professional development.

FINANCES

SAMRU is currently in a strong financial position – able to meet its current and long-term obligations, fund opportunities for growth in its services, fend off threats to the organization and contribute substantially to ensuring its financial stability and long-term sustainability.

This financial position was achieved and is maintained through well-defined financial policies predicated on the Association's fiduciary responsibility to its membership. Through conservative budgeting practices and careful fiscal management, SAMRU is able to fund its mission-critical activities while continuing to strengthen its foundation in preparation for the future.

EVALUATION

SAMRU began developing outcome evaluation tools approximately ten years ago. In 2006, we articulated outcomes for the majority of our operations, services and governance functions and developed new logic models (comprehensive evaluative tools) for each area. A review of this work was conducted in 2009 and the logic models for the volunteer centres and clubs were revised and new methods of data recording were implemented. Further review and revision of the other organizational areas will occur in 2010. A challenge we are facing is managing this vast array of data and delivering timely, accurate and relevant reports. Technological tools for this are being considered and may be developed in-house.

2.0 ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS

MRC BECOMES MRU

Since the previous strategic plan, many things have changed at Mount Royal, most notably the fact that it became a university in 2009. This has had and will continue to have a significant impact on SAMRU. The student demographic will change as more degree programs become available and students will be staying on campus for more time to complete the longer degrees. MRU is now a part of the Association of Universities and Colleges in Canada and has begun to be included in university survey rankings such as the National Survey of Student Engagement and the Canadian University Survey Consortium.

SAMRU'S RELATIONSHIP WITH MRU

SAMRU's relationship with MRU has continued to improve since the previous strategic plan. The major restructuring within senior administrative roles five years ago has continued to create a shift in the University corporate culture. This has had a favourable impact on SAMRU and the new strategic priorities around continued collaboration reflect this positive movement. SAMRU is hopeful that the relationship with the University will continue to improve and that we can work together supporting student success.

3.0 STAKEHOLDER OPINION

PURPOSE OF STAKEHOLDER INPUT

As a crucial component of SAMRU's strategic planning process, stakeholder input was gathered. The questions asked during the interviews, focus groups and surveys were designed to provide SAMRU with a foundation for developing strategic priorities and an assessment of how stakeholder perceptions aligned with SAMRU's own analysis of its capabilities, challenges and opportunities.

SWOT ANALYSIS AND STRATEGIC PRIORITIES BASED ON ALL STAKEHOLDER INPUT

Janelle Woo, Centre Point consultant, put together a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) Analysis and Strategic Priorities list from all of the stakeholder input. Strengths and weaknesses are an internal analysis of SAMRU. Opportunities and Threats describe external forces leading to opportunities for SAMRU and issues that might threaten SAMRU.

NATURE OF QUESTIONS FOR INTERVIEWS, FOCUS GROUPS AND SURVEYS

All methods of collecting stakeholder input were designed around the same types of questions intended to solicit opinions and depth of knowledge on some or all of the following:

1. Familiarity with SAMRU's programs and services and frequency of use.
2. SAMRU's mandate and mission.

3. SAMRU successes and/or what the person appreciates about SAMRU and the keys to SAMRU's future success.
4. Major weaknesses or challenges.
5. Relationship with University administration, and the University Board of Governors (BOG).
6. Perceptions as to the changes in the role and profile of SAMRU.
7. Perceptions regarding changes the University is facing and how that might have an impact on SAMRU.
8. Opportunities as well as external threats or risks to SAMRU operations.
9. SAMRU's competition.
10. Opinions on collaborative ventures which would help SAMRU achieve its goals.
11. What SAMRU's core priorities should be in the next three to five years.
12. What the ideal present and future would be for SAMRU.

SENIOR UNIVERSITY ADMINISTRATION INTERVIEWS

Six interviews were conducted with individuals in senior management positions at Mount Royal University. All of these individuals had been identified by SAMRU management as key stakeholders.

- President, Mount Royal University
- Vice-President, Academic
- Vice-President, Administrative Services
- Vice-President, External Relations
- Executive Director of Student Affairs
- Associate Vice-President, Enrolment

3.0 STAKEHOLDER OPINION

The following questions were presented to each interviewee:

1. On a scale of 1-5, with 5 being very familiar, how familiar are you with SAMRU's programs and services? How often do you have contact with them?
2. What do you see as SAMRU's mandate?
3. In which areas have they been most successful?
4. What are their major weaknesses or challenges?
5. How would you describe the nature of their relationship with administration? The Board?
6. Have you seen changes in the role and profile of SAMRU? What kind of changes? Are these changes positive or negative?
7. What changes is the University facing that might have an impact on SAMRU?
8. What do you see as outside opportunities that they could take advantage of?
9. What do you see as external threats or risks to their operation?
10. Who/what is their competition?
11. What kinds of collaborative ventures would help them achieve their goals?
12. What should their core priorities be in the next 3-5 years?
13. What would be the ideal future for SAMRU?

FOCUS GROUPS

As a crucial component of SAMRU's strategic planning process, focus groups were conducted with students currently attending Mount Royal. These focus groups were designed to provide SAMRU with a foundation for developing strategic priorities and an assessment of how stakeholders' perceptions aligned with SAMRU's own analysis of its capabilities, challenges and opportunities.

The following questions were presented to each focus group:

1. On a scale of 1 – 5, with 5 being very familiar, how familiar are you with SAMRU's programs and services?
2. What do you see as SAMRU's mission?
3. In which areas have they been most successful?
4. What are their major weaknesses or challenges?
5. What do you see as outside opportunities that they could take advantage of?
6. What do you see as external threats or risks to their operation?
7. Who/what is their competition? (What keeps you from staying on campus)?
8. What do you think the SA's three top priorities should be over the next few years?

3.0 STAKEHOLDER OPINION

Advisory committee focus group

Students' Council receives advice on key issues from its Advisory Committee. The public members of this committee were interviewed as part of the SAMRU strategic planning process.

Students' council focus group

An invitation to all councillors was issued in December 2009 and seven members participated in a 1.5 hour session. Members of the Executive Committee did not participate in order to facilitate open conversation.

Students-at-large focus group

In December 2009 and January 2010, focus groups comprised of students-at-large were conducted. The December focus group consisted only of students with no connection to the Students' Association other than being members.

Mixed focus group

In January 2010 a focus group comprised of a mixture of students-at-large who had no connection to the Students' Association aside from being members and active volunteers with SAMRU was held.

Volunteer focus group

In January 2010 a focus group comprised of active volunteers with the Students' Association was held.

Residence students focus group

In January 2010 a focus group comprised of students living in residence was held.

Part-time students focus group

In January 2010 a focus group comprised of part-time staff was held.

ELECTRONIC SURVEY

In December 2009, an electronic survey went out to Students' Council, SAMRU staff, volunteers and clubs members. The survey link was emailed to 17 Students' Council members, 35 staff members, approximately 50 centre volunteers and approximately 40 clubs executives. In total, 50 electronic survey were completed.

RANDOM INTERCEPT SURVEY

In December 2009 and January 2010, five surveyors were hired to conduct a random intercept survey around campus in order to receive input from students-at-large. In total, 284 surveys were completed by students.

4.0 PLAN REVIEW

REVIEW PERIOD FOR THE PLAN

The review process for SAMRU's 2010-2014 strategic plan is as follows:

ANNUAL REVIEW

Students' Council, through the Executive Committee, will conduct an annual review of the Strategic Plan, ensuring it remains relevant. This will involve prioritizing the work necessary to realize SAMRU's vision.

STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

Work will begin to ensure that there's "strategic alignment" between all of SAMRU's offerings (e.g. volunteer centres, business operations, student facilities) and the new plan.

PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

We also have to operationalize the plan – identify goals that will be implemented each year, create project maps for each goal, and begin implementation in a systematic manner. This means more micro planning will start in May 2010.

ANNUAL OBJECTIVES

These include initiatives and person/ group responsible, with a mid-year review of objectives. Each review includes a reassessment of the strategic and practical nature of the objectives and realignment and re-prioritization as needed.



APPENDIX

APPENDIX

Appendix 1:

2005-2010 STRATEGIC PLAN COMPONENTS

Prior to the 2010-2014 Strategic Plan, the published mission, vision, values, beliefs, critical success factors, and strategic priorities for SAMRC were:

SAMRC MISSION STATEMENT (2005-2010)

We enhance students' lives in a meaningful way by delivering high quality services, leadership, advocacy and support. We serve students to help them succeed.

SAMRC VISION STATEMENT (2005-2010)

A sustainable and self-directed organization, the Students' Association of Mount Royal College is the Canadian benchmark for high-quality, diversified and innovative student services. Our student centre is the vibrant hub of the campus community.

SAMRC BELIEFS STATEMENTS (2005-2010)

We believe in:

- the ability of students to reach their highest potential
- the value of peer-based advocacy
- diversity, leading to a stronger community
- maintaining exceptional integrity
- accountability to our members and transparency of decision making
- students deserving outstanding services and support

SAMRC VALUES STATEMENTS (2005-2010)

We value:

- Honour
- Excellence
- Achievement
- Determination
- Stewardship

Appendix 1:

2005-2010 STRATEGIC PLAN COMPONENTS

SAMRC CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS (2005-2010)

1. Representation and Advocacy: the core of the Students' Association's legislated mandate to ensure students' voices on university and political agendas.
2. Student Services: a holistic approach to education allows students to learn just as much outside of the classroom as inside it, through co-curricular offerings.
3. Communication: Communication, including student feed-back is essential to the continuous improvement of SAMRC services, ensuring value and relevancy.
4. Reputation and strength of relationships: The Students' Association is developing a reputation as pragmatic, innovative, responsive, dynamic and progressive. This reputation is a key element to ensuring credibility. Partnerships and collaborations allow us to augment our scarce resources.
5. Sustainability and Continuity: a solid foundation on which to base all of SAMRC's work, from services and operations to the people side of the equation.
6. Accountability and Transparency to SAMRC's members and other key stakeholders. Transparency in processes and decisions is expected.
7. Progressive: new and better ways to deliver services, while increasing efficiencies and efficacies to deliver excellence to our students.

SAMRC STRATEGIC PRIORITIES (2005-2010)

1. Organizational Relevance: provide services, representation, advocacy, lobbying and operation, working in the best interests of students
2. Learning: improve what we already do, implement new ideas, gather and act on feedback
3. Sustainability: achieve excellence in governance, management and implementation
4. Communications: market the Students' Association to all campus audiences
5. Relationship Building: foster strong and durable relationships with all our key stakeholders, including students, College staff, campus Boards, the larger community, and alumni

Appendix 2:

ORGANIZATIONAL HISTORY

The known history of the Students' Association of Mount Royal University (SAMRU) dates back to 1948, when students formed together as a loose consortium to serve students. Mount Royal College became Mount Royal University in September 2009, and the Students' Association changed its name according to legislation. For this history, the Students' Association of Mount Royal College (SAMRC) refers to the organization prior to September 2009.

In 1963 a business professor named Robert Wyckham supported and guided student executives about ways to make the Students' Executive more effective¹. Prior to an official Students' Association building or student centre, students used Dr. Wyckham's office and kitchen as spaces to develop their plans and discuss questions and concerns related to student governance. Through these early meetings and with the help of Robert Wyckham's guidance, these early student executives developed a vision for a new student government structure and a student-owned Student Centre building for Mount Royal College.

Plans for the new student centre building were supported by the (then) governing act, The Alberta Colleges Act, which stated that subject to the approval of the college board, students' associations may acquire real property by purchase, lease, or otherwise, and may hold and alienate it. As such, in 1965 a new building was purchased near the downtown MRC campus, and was named Wyckham House in honour of the professor who had helped these students' Student Centre vision become a reality. In 1972 SAMRC moved to the College's new Lincoln Park campus, where it owned and operated different spaces throughout the College campus. However, it wasn't until 15 years later that SAMRC's various spaces and affiliated services were consolidated into one area, which again became known as Wyckham House. In 1987 SAMRC united all of its services and operations under one roof, the Wyckham House Student Centre building at the West Gate entrance of the College's Lincoln Park campus. The opening of the new Wyckham House in 1987 represented the results of over 20 years of planning and negotiations by MRC students.

By 2005, Wyckham House on MRC's Lincoln Park Campus had been home to the SAMRC for 18 years. During this time the student population and SAMRC's service offerings and programs had grown significantly. The number of students SAMRC served and the volume of services it provided far exceeded the space available. As the Students' Association continued to grow and offer more student services, space use in Wyckham House had become increasingly critical. Research and planning initiatives, as well as 2005-2010 strategic plan, addressed these physical space issues and ongoing organizational development needs. Significant resources have been dedicated to planning and executing the Wyckham House expansion and renovation. The 2010-2014 strategic plan turns to making the most of this new space with its new vision, mission, beliefs, values, essentials and strategic priorities.

¹MRC Students' Association, or like society, did exist prior to 1963, although no reference to an official organization prior to this time can be found. There is one reference to a students' group in a yearbook from the early 1960s and a series of photographs of Students' Councillors from the late 1950s; however, no official reference to the SAMRC exists prior to Robert Wyckham's time. The SAMRC was formally incorporated under the Societies Act in 1967.

Appendix 3:

SUMMARY OF SWOT AND KEY STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Janelle Woo, Centre Point consultant, put together a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) Analysis and Strategic Priorities list from all of the stakeholder input.

SWOT SUMMARY FROM STAKEHOLDER INPUT

SAMRU STRENGTHS

SA provides quality and needed services.

- SA has done a great job providing a variety of quality services.
- SA is great at anticipating and responding to the needs of the students.
- 26% of students surveyed said that the SA should continue doing everything and 25% said that they had nothing for the SA to stop doing.

Wyckham house is a success

- Wyckham house is amazing and a huge success.
- Provides a place for people to gather.
- Liberty lounge offers a type of socializing that doesn't exist anywhere else on campus.

Supporting and providing experiences for students

- SA works hard with clubs to support their services.
- SA gives students the opportunity to engage in student politics and be involved in clubs and volunteer services.
- SA provides a good framework and structure to support student executives given significant responsibilities.

Strong student executive

- Executives are highly thought of.
- Executives participate in many MRU committees.
- Increased maturity in elected executive.
- Despite low voter turnout, the SA has done well in attracting good students to the roles.
- Good student leaders supported by SA management.

Appendix 3:

SUMMARY OF SWOT AND KEY STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

MRU feels they have a great relationship with SA executives

- MRU administration and Board of Directors respect and have positive relationships with SA executives.
- MRU administration has minimal exposure to staff, but feels that the student executives reflect the work of the SA staff.
- MRU and board are impressed with the calibre of executives and feel they get better every year.
- However, SA has maintained autonomy from MRU.

Student input is valued and appreciated

- SA is strong at finding solutions, not just problems.
- Student input is valued as critical issues are not missed.
- SA has a large presence in running the institution and decision making.

Viewed highly amongst peers

- SA is recognized as one of the best in the country.
- High standards draw in better candidates year after year.
- SA is a leader in student groups in the province.

SA provides a voice for students and keeps them informed

- The SA does well representing the students and providing students a voice.
- 13% of students surveyed feel that the SA informs them and helps them be more aware.
- SA has done well in lobbying the government and representing the student view.

SA brings students together

- SAMRU provides social connection, belonging and peer support.
- 12% of students surveyed said that SA provides community, connections and a sense of importance to students.

Appendix 3:

SUMMARY OF SWOT AND KEY STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

SAMRU is a great place to work

- Opportunities for personal development.
- Autonomy and flexibility in individual work.
- Pride and appreciation in people's work and their mission.
- Positive environment.
- Participatory decision making.
- Culture of collegiality.
- Staff are making a difference and believe in the purpose.
- Staff feel valued by students' council and executives.
- Staff and volunteers like working with the SA for the people.

SAMRU has great leadership, team and players

- Includes volunteer base.
- Strong interdepartmental teamwork.
- Supportive team, encouragement to grow.
- Experienced leaders and committed staff.
- Diverse staff with unique skills.

SAMRU operates efficiently and effectively

- Good fiscal management.
- Has bylaws, policies and procedures in place.
- Focused and clear on the mission, vision and values.
- Engages in planning and is inclusive in their planning process.
- SA has changed to become more business-like (organized, common purpose) and strategic in their approach.

SAMRU builds good relationships

- Working relationship with MRU administration and board.
- Quality partnerships with other groups/organizations.
- Recognition that university status was achieved with the SA and MRC administration working together.

Appendix 3:

SUMMARY OF SWOT AND KEY STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

SAMRU has history, endures and preservers

- Strong reputation.
- Historical identity.

SAMRU WEAKNESSES

Low student engagement

- Low student awareness and involvement in the SA and student government.
- Low voter turnout and number of candidates.
- Not capturing students through “issue” engagement, i.e. Students rising to fight a cause they believe in.
- No benchmarks and measurements for what is an acceptable level of engagement.
- Challenges with volunteer recruitment, retention and commitment.
- MRU lacks school spirit; students not feeling connected.

Lack of external communication to students and MRU

- Value proposition is not clearly communicated to students.
- Students are unaware of the second and third floors of Wyckham House.
- Lack of communication to students leading to criticism of where money is spent and misconceptions of who they are (e.g. Executives get involved to build their resume).
- Students don't know the Student Council and SA's successes.
- Students don't know when (e.g. What the SA can help them with) and how to contact executives or councillors.
- 53% of students surveyed do not use SA programs and services because they lack information or are unaware of them.
- Students feel the SA is cliquy, or private and too formal.

Little engagement from MRU faculty

- Lack engagement from faculty to encourage student involvement.
- Lack of communication and relationship between the SA and faculty.

Appendix 3:

SUMMARY OF SWOT AND KEY STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Unclear role and working relationship of MRU and SA

- Past issues between SA and MRU still linger despite improvements in the last five years.
- MRU is not SA's competitor, but recognize that they do offer food services and similar programs.
- Looking at SA services to see if it makes sense for MRU to manage/pay for (e.g. Dentist).
- Staff and students don't know the role and working relationship of MRU and SA.
- Students do not differentiate who provides services (e.g. Is it MRU or SA?).
- No consistency in views on how the SA should work with MRU.
- Mixed feelings from electronic survey respondents about the working relationship that the SA should have with MRU.

Losing focus

- Fear that introducing too many services can cause lack of focus and a dilution of quality.
- Examine SA services to ensure they are what the students want and if they are the best ones to be doing it (e.g. Some might be best handled by MRU).

Unclear roles and internal working relationships

- Unsure of the roles and working relationship between staff, Executive Committee, and Students' Council.
- No clear position descriptions for Councillors.
- No guidelines on how Students' Council interacts with SA staff (e.g. When they can go directly to staff or through executives).
- Councillors can feel un-empowered to make decisions and feel their hands are tied.

Student executives are too busy

- Sense that student executives are stretched too thin.
- Executives need to spend time on advocacy and representation but don't necessarily have the time to communicate what they're doing.

Students don't feel the SA knows their needs

- Some students feel that the SA is out of touch with what their real issues and needs are.
- 17% of students surveyed don't use SA programs or services because they don't interest them or are unnecessary/don't apply.

Appendix 3:

SUMMARY OF SWOT AND KEY STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

- Some students feel that the services exclude the “average” student.
- Need to collect more information from members.

Turnover of staff and executives

- Leads to work not being finished.
- Need for training of roles and responsibilities for volunteers, staff and executives.
- Need for succession planning for SA staff, especially key positions.

Lack of internal communications between staff, student centres and councillors

- Lack of communication and direction between levels of management, departments, MRU administration and faculty, and students.
- Lack of communication about results, who is working on what within the SA and to students.
- Lack of cross-volunteer centre communication and training.

Not enough performance measures and evaluation

- Lack accountability.
- Need program evaluation.
- Need to align with goals of the SA.
- Need to frequently evaluate what is important to students and how the SA is doing.

Current operational issues

- High workload.
- Inefficiencies and disorganization.
- Need help with IT (e.g. Website, old equipment, file sorting).
- Slow processes.

Other

- Need to increase lobbying and advocating for students.
- Staff and volunteers identified a lack of training in customer service and conflict resolution.
- Staff sometimes lack motivation and engagement in the SA.

Appendix 3:

SUMMARY OF SWOT AND KEY STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

SAMRU OPPORTUNITIES

University Status

- The student body characteristics may change to: more students out of high school, students staying longer in their degrees and spending more time on campus to study.
- Changes may cause: student leaders to stay longer, increased chances for long term engagement, different expectations and behaviours from students, and new service gaps.
- The SA might find their peers are more from universities than colleges.
- There are opportunities to participate and influence the changes in the institution as it transitions to a university (e.g. General Faculties Council).
- Find ways to leverage the university status.
- Need to understand what being a university really means.

Demographics of students

- Millennials – "watch me" mentality.
- Currently predominantly women between 18 – 24.
- Younger students tend to live at home and have time to be more involved.

Find common goals with MRU

- MRU's new goal: becoming the best undergraduate university measured by all aspects of student success and satisfaction (including academics and complementary outside-class experiences).
- MRU and SA can work together to increase student involvement.
- More collaboration between SA and Student Affairs and Campus Life.
- Need a shared vision and principles to carry forward to new executives and new MRU administration.

Growth in number of students

- Economic recession tends to mean an increase in student enrolment.
- As the student population grows there will be increased demand for campus services and facilities.
- Will need to start planning for growth now.
- Also results in more revenue through student fees.

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SUMMARY OF SWOT AND KEY STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Increasing transit

- New C-train line, however, not to MRU.
- Students identified a need for a shuttle bus.

Community growth

- Community to the west of campus is planned to grow up to 4,000 more residents.
- Is it within the SA mandate?
- Outside community can take advantage of the SA services with some awareness.
- Partner with the community (e.g. the farmers' market).

Partnering with other student associations

- Partner with other institutions to offer better services (e.g. University of Calgary, legal aid clinic, international student community).
- Share best practices and information.

Growing residences

- Currently there are minimal students living on campus, however, this may change as the student population grows and the university status attracts more out of town students.
- Potential to partner with residences who are a "captive" population.

Work with Alumni

- Opportunity to work closely with alumni association and develop mutually rewarding programs.
- Engage students and then transition them to alumni.
- Survey alumni about their experience as a student.
- Develop alumni services such as job placement assistance and networking.

MRU's Centennial

- MRU's centennial is coming up.
- Opportunity to engage and collaborate on programs with alumni.

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SUMMARY OF SWOT AND KEY STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Environmental sustainability as a trend

- Opportunities to lead best practices in environmental sustainability.
- Students are conscious of the environment.

Expand services, programs, or groups

- Offering concerts and speaker events.
- Focus on those who live in the residences.
- Expand volunteer development.
- Create an information desk to answer general questions and refer students to services.

Communication

- Growing trend to use IT (e.g. Websites, social media, wireless, TV boards, computer lounge, communications, open sources, IT security).
- Use other university events to get the message out (e.g. FYI).
- Harvard assessment group's research into what makes students successful.
- Use student orientation to reach students early.
- Students value ways to connect and peer support.
- Students want to be informed.

Academic globalization

- Promoting the expansion of students' worldviews and academic experiences globally.
- Increase in international students who may want to be involved in student activities and programs.

Partnerships with Faculty to create ties to classroom education

- Using students' talents to help through internships, DFS, classroom credits, class projects.
- Partner with faculty to work on linking course work with relevant SA programs.

Other

- Growing emphasis on volunteering in high schools

Appendix 3:

SUMMARY OF SWOT AND KEY STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

SAMRU THREATS

Unpredictable economy

- Changes in funding for the University affect how they provide services to students.
- Impacts the students' ability to afford services and tuition.
- Recession can mean reduction in government grants.
- A "doing more with less" mentality.

Changes in legislation

- No control over legislative changes.
- Possible risks with liquor licenses.
- Possible closure of post secondary schools.
- May mandate changes to the fee structures; unpredictable revenue streams.
- Depends on government planning.

Student fees

- Financial dependency of students' fees.
- As costs go up, students are more aware of their fees.
- Students may want un-bundling of services with their fees.
- More pressure to show value.
- SA can't become complacent about providing and demonstrating its value to members and the campus.

Characteristics of an electoral process

- Brings changes every year in points of view, priorities, etc.
- Planning and consistency is difficult with turnover.
- Strategic plan may not be followed the next year.
- Outcomes from the electoral process can be less than perfect.
- Important to have the right relationship between current staff and student body.
- Challenging dynamic as staff are consistent while the elected executives change.
- Low voter turnout and number of candidates may decrease SA's legitimacy.

Appendix 3:

SUMMARY OF SWOT AND KEY STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Possibility for negative reputation

- Media and press can change reputation.
- Potential for risks (e.g. Bar security and response to violence).

MRU

- MRU can restrict what SA does (e.g. Communication with the students).
- Provide competing services.
- Unclear role definition and differentiation.
- The politics involved can be barriers to effective delivery of services and programs.

Transit

- Rising parking costs make it hard for students to stay on campus.
- West LRT might bring “undesirables” to MRU.

Limiting diversity

- Movement away from multiculturalism toward melting pot mentality.

Competition for student attention

- Students are too stressed to care or listen.
- Students don't stay on campus.
- MRU considered a commuter campus.
- Competition is for the hearts and minds (attention) of students.

University status

- May lose the SA's 'grass roots' ability to make changes by becoming a university.
- Increased chances of miscommunication between MRU administration and SA during this time of change.

Other

- Becoming too focused on one issue can cause the SA to fall into a rut.

Appendix 3:

SUMMARY OF SWOT AND KEY STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

SUMMARY OF PRIORITIES

The following are priority themes identified by stakeholders participating in an intercept survey, electronic survey, focus groups and interviews.

Increase awareness and communication about the SA

- Members know who they are and the benefits.
- Communicate the value of student fees.
- Be transparent with SA finances and executive payment.
- Have representation in the residences.
- Increase communications, marketing and awareness.
- 20% of students surveyed said that the SA should focus on starting to communicate and advertise to make SA better known.
- 35% of students surveyed said that the SA should start increasing information about and promotion of the SA.
- Increasing student awareness, engagement and interaction.
- Increased communications of opportunities, programs and services.
- Strengthen presence and identity, become a hub.
- Better communication/promotion of SA with students, faculty and MRU.

Student engagement and advocacy

- Increase student participation in student government.
- Engagement (e.g. Voter turnout, sporting events, school spirit).
- Continue to represent the students through government structure and committees.
- Lead the province in relationship with the government (lead all student groups and institutions in Alberta).
- Sharpen their political focus – get at issues that affect students.
- Continue to advocate and present strong leadership.
- 5% of student survey respondents said that the SA should focus on increasing student involvement.
- 5% of student survey respondents said that the SA should focus on advocating for academic improvements in MRU.
- Better representation and voice for students.
- Students would like to receive incentives for involvement (e.g. Volunteering) with the SA.
- More power for students to influence decisions.

Appendix 3:

SUMMARY OF SWOT AND KEY STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Examine and assess SA's work

- Re-examine many of the programs and services to see if SA is best to handle it.
- Finding out what makes students successful through surveying (including surveying alumni).
- Evaluation, benchmarking, and prioritizing SA's work.
- Goal setting and strategic planning.
- Plan for growth in the student population and campus services and facilities.
- Re-evaluate SA's programs and services and how they are done.
- Stop duplicating services and start evaluating services.

Work and collaborate with MRU and faculty

- Participate in governance changes with the transition to university status.
- Collaborate and strengthen relationship with partners, the institution, and the board.
- Work with the MRU on their goal to be the best in Canada.
- Participate in strategic planning with the University in enhancing student engagement.
- Monitor and manage the relationship between MRU and SA.
- Improving the relationship with the University and faculty.
- Increasing communication and information to MRU and faculty.

Build relationships and provide services for alumni

- Develop relationship with alumni.
- MRU Centennial – opportunity to collaborate with alumni.
- Job placement assistance and networking for and with alumni.

Get at students' needs and more services

- Keep in touch with students and collect information on their needs.
- Prioritize how the SA can fiscally help students and lower their monetary burden.
- Students surveyed said for the SA should focus on: Providing financial and career support (9%), more fun and events (7%), better parking/transit (6%).
- Reduce costs for students (e.g. Tuition, parking, and increasing variety in events).
- SA should try to keep prices low for students.
- Continued focus on students and their needs.
- More club, service and activity development.
- Continue to provide services and programs to support students.

Appendix 3:

SUMMARY OF SWOT AND KEY STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Continue good internal processes

- Fiscally responsible.
- Succession planning.
- Be more sustainable (financially, work practices and environmental).

Appendix 4:

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

The list of participants is presented alphabetically by last name. Participants in the electronic survey and the random intercept survey are not listed. Thank you to everyone who took part in the interviews, focus groups, surveys, and planning sessions.

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