



STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION  
OF MACEWAN UNIVERSITY

**SAMU**

**ANNUAL REPORT**

**2023-2024**

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## WHO WE ARE

The Students' Association of MacEwan University (SAMU) is a not-for-profit organization working independently from MacEwan University to support students. With over 50 full- and part-time staff, SAMU exists to serve students' non-academic needs.

We are governed by the elected student representatives who set the strategic vision on behalf of students. SAMU is guided by our 5-year Strategic Plan (2021 – 2026) and focuses its efforts on achieving the four Strategic Goals outlined in the plan.

This annual report represents the third time we report our accomplishments based on the 2021-26 strategic plan.

### Mission

SAMU builds a positive student experience by creating a place to engage and connect, being a champion for all students, and providing opportunities that allow them to get the most out of their educational journey.

### Vision

All students benefit from a vibrant student life and a culture of empowerment.

### Values

- Students First
- Inclusiveness
- Adaptability
- Relevance
- Accountability

### Good Governance

Good Governance, as practiced by a Students' Council composed of individuals who are well-informed and team-oriented, provides strategic direction for SAMU that aligns with the vision of the Association as a whole, anticipating and responding to the needs of present and future students through the effective stewardship of the bylaws, policies, and strategic plan of the Association.

## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Another year has passed, and the Student Voice is as loud as ever! Being re-elected as your Students' Association President, a privilege I do not take lightly, has allowed me to continue fighting for you and your needs, alongside all the dedicated people at SAMU. In recognition of the unaffordability crisis, SAMU has been painstakingly advocating to MacEwan and all levels of government on behalf of students. Some of our institutional advocacy wins include:

- No Mandatory Non-Instructional Fee (MNIF) increases for ALL students for the 2024-2025 academic year.
- Only a 2% increase to International Student Tuition, despite the institution being able to increase tuition up to 10%
- Waving the Winter 2023/2024 Sports and Wellness fee, saving students \$1.2M, amounting to a savings of \$102 for EVERY MacEwan student.

Despite our best efforts, students continue to face rising costs of education, costs of living, and poor mental health. The year ahead is riddled with challenges, but as your Students' Association, we will continue to work diligently to provide you with much-needed supports, services, and serve as a champion for you and your needs.

I have seen the passion of students grow and continue to build momentum. As you undertake your academic journey, keep in mind that the Student Movement has not been idle. We work hard to understand your needs and the adversities that come with being a student. Our commitment to enriching your university experience is exemplified by your elected student representatives both at the Students' Council, our highest governing body, and your Executive Committee. The vibrancy of our campus is a testament to not only the great work that SAMU does but also the culture of empowerment shaped by thousands of exceptional students.

Whether you have questions, concerns, or ideas on how we can better serve students, we are always available to assist you throughout your academic journey. It is such a privilege to be your President, and I look forward to creating a vibrant and inclusive community with all of you!

**Warm regards,**



Gabriel Ambutong (He/Him)  
**2024/25 SAMU President**

## STRATEGIC GOALS & OUTCOMES

To achieve our vision, focus our priorities, and guide our actions, SAMU is driven by four strategic goals and five values as outlined in the 2021-26 [Strategic Plan](#). The Annual Report provides a summary of SAMU's achievements and progress on each strategic goal:

1. Student Experience & Engagement
2. Student Voice
3. Student Supports
4. Strengthening SAMU Operations

### 1. STUDENT EXPERIENCE & ENGAGEMENT

The overall student experience is enhanced by the opportunities provided by SAMU.

#### What It Means

The student experience goes beyond attending classes. SAMU offers people the fun and social side of student life by hosting programs and events and providing students space to connect. SAMU also provides volunteer and employment opportunities while supporting Student Groups on campus. The above reflects SAMU's commitment to making on-campus life more accessible for all students.

#### Strategies

##### 1.1 Put the finishing touches on the SAMU Building, enhancing the safe and intentional spaces for students to gather, relax and study.

The SAMU Building is a hit with students. With the word getting around that SAMU has some great places for working, studying, socializing and eating, the building is often full, with all tables being used. Plans were made to increase the capacity by adding more tables and chairs.

All five tenants in the SAMU Building continued operations and SAMU is receiving full revenue output from the leases. A number of building enhancements were made throughout the year to benefit students:

- Upgraded the main staircase with cushioned mats so that hanging out on the different levels is more comfortable.
- Upgraded some office spaces to better service staff and students:
  - more white boards, lowered the barrier at the front desk and added a countertop for more use. Ordered more desks to accommodate increased full and part-time staff.
- Composting waste containers added around the building.
- Added some more furniture configurations to the student groups area to add more seating.
- Student Group Space continued its longer operational hours for student groups and all students who can use the area.

- The Lookout event space was once again used for many SAMU and Student Group events. This year it was opened up for MacEwan to rent, when not in use, which has helped with extra revenue. SAMU and Students continue to have first access to use the Lookout.

With the new School of Business building, currently being under construction and due to open in 2027. This will have an impact on all of SAMU's resources with the increased students and traffic, planning has started for building upgrades and increased service capacity.

## **1.2 Increase student awareness of SAMU and its opportunities through strong communications and engaging marketing and branding.**

### **Awareness**

The annual Spring Student Survey provides valuable data and feedback that enables SAMU to ensure we are providing the programs, services and events that align with student needs. The 2024 survey had 2,174 responses, a 37% increase from 2023. This shows that students want to provide their feedback and that the feedback we receive is an accurate reflection of the broader student population. The data from the survey is used by all SAMU departments to plan for the upcoming year.

Ever since doing our first Spring Student Survey in 2020, it was clear that SAMU needed to focus more effort on raising awareness of not only who we are but all that we do for students – and we needed to get the message to students in their first year. SAMU has been steadily raising awareness amongst students year over year, with the 2024 Spring Student Survey showing only 5% of respondents being unaware of SAMU.

### **Student Communications**

SAMU's number one way to communicate to students is through the SAMU newsletter that is sent out every two weeks during Fall and Winter terms. Students identified email as the most preferred method of communication through the Spring Student Survey. The newsletter is sent to over 17,000 students each time and boasts a 68.7% average open rate. Programs, services and events aren't effective if students don't know about them and the newsletter continues to be the main and most effective point of communication.

Video is another very effective form of communication. SAMU hired a part-time videographer to produce a series of videos focusing on various aspects of SAMU and to engage students. This has been very successful with videos posted to Instagram Reels averaged 7,000 views each with one video achieving 10,000 views. The position will be hired again next fiscal to continue leveraging this important channel.

A website is central to SAMU communications. All other communication channels drive to the website that contains the information students need. Realizing the importance of this channel, the website was redesigned and launched in Fall 2023. The new design made the website quicker, more efficient and improved content delivery to students.

SAMU's Instagram account continues to gain attraction and be an effective supplement to other communication channels:

- Instagram: 5,679 followers (+18%), 36,069 profile views

### **New Student Events**

SAMU offers two key events that are focused on introducing and raising awareness of SAMU and its programs, events and services. Meet SAMU Week introduces SAMU to new and returning students by offering a whole week of fun and activities during the first week of school in both September and January. The week of popular activities includes:

- MacEwan New Student Orientation (NSO)
- Meet SAMU Tradeshow & Games (2 days)
- Fall Fest and Winter Fest

Meet SAMU Expo is key to raising awareness amongst new students. The event features all SAMU departments showcasing what they offer in a trade show format. Students can get information, ask questions, play games, pick up their U-Pass ARC card, grab a SAMU Student Handbook and enter for a chance to win \$1000 in tuition credits. It is estimated that over 250 students were engaged during NSO and over 500 students attended Meet SAMU Expo. Winter Meet SAMU had over 168 students in attendance.

### **SAMU Student Handbook**

The SAMU Student Handbook is another key tool in raising awareness of SAMU. The calendar planner includes both SAMU and MacEwan information and resources. The Handbook is supported financially through paid advertising. The Handbook continues to be very popular with 5,500 copies printed. Approximately 4900 were given out by the end of September 2022, and 400 were given out during the Winter term.

### **SAMU's 12 Days of Giving**

SAMU's 12 Days of Giving campaign, which debuted in December 2020, has become a welcome tradition by students, especially with student affordability being top of mind. The 12 Days of Giving Campaign is a successful way to engage students and raise awareness. Gift cards and tuition credits were used as prizes each day of the 12 Days of Giving Campaign, as this is what students said they most wanted for prizes (from Spring Student Survey 2022).

The 2023 campaign was the fourth time running the campaign and had the highest engagement numbers yet:

- 1322 average daily entries – 10% increase from 2022
- 15,863 total student entries – 10% increase from 2022

### **Ponoka Campus Visit**

EC visited the Ponoka Site again and engaged with MacEwan students there. They promoted the SAMU programs, services and events available to them and listened to concerns that students had. Easy access to drinking water and printers were top concerns. Working with MacEwan admin, EC was able to ensure that Ponoka students now have access to free and clean drinking water. Working with the Dean of Nursing, they also were able to make sure

any mandatory printed items are printed for free by faculty and have also reached out to get discounted student printing in Ponoka.

### **Promo Squad**

The SAMU Promo Squad initiative operated for its second year in 2023-24. Promo Squad is implemented through the Marketing & Communications department and consists of a part-time staff and student volunteers who help promote SAMU and its various initiatives. The volunteers engage with students through interactive games, prize draws and snack giveaways, either with a station set up in the pedway or by going mobile through campus. Results for 2023-24 compared to previous fiscal:

- Number of trained active members: 18 (+13%)
- Total number of promo squad shifts: 175 (+88%)
- Number of SAMU initiatives promoted: 38 (+40%)
- Average number of student interactions per shift: 70 (+8%)
- Total number of student interactions: 11,883 (+213%)

### **1.3 Increase student engagement by offering relevant and meaningful events, programs, services, volunteer activities and employment opportunities for students.**

Providing events, programs, and services is at the core of what SAMU does. Through student feedback and engagement, and experience, SAMU believes it has a good understanding of the types of activities students want and need. Each year we offer a combination of new initiatives along with the return of student favorites.

#### **Fall Fest and Winter Fest**

Fall Fest is the largest event that SAMU offers and is held as part of Meet SAMU Week to welcome all the students to a new school year and cap off the first week of the Fall Term. The weather and artist lineup (including BBNO\$, Emeline, Armani White, Jamie Fine and Dacey) was a big attraction for students, with approximately 3600+ students attending. 2023 marked the return of the event to the front lawn of MacEwan. Vendor tents, activity booths and the 360-video booth helped keep students engaged and entertained. The event also gives our Executive committee members exposure through the introduction of performers and a chance to engage with students face-to-face.

Winter Fest is an event used to welcome new students starting in January and welcome back existing students from the holiday break. The theme for this event was a Y2K Dance Party, held at and in collaboration with the Starlite room. A total of 187 tickets were sold (\$5 each) and attendance was still strong (131 students) considering the extreme cold weather of -50 Celsius. The dance party events continue to be popular with students and SAMU plans to hold another one or even two again in 2025.



### **Comedy Series and Speaker Series**

Comedy Series was first offered in the 2022-2023 year and was a hit with students. In November 2023 SAMU brought in stand-up comedian Atsuko Okatsuka to entertain students. Well known for her unique style of humor and her HBO special, Atsuko brought smiles to students' faces during an evening of fun. The event sold 83% of tickets at an affordable rate of \$5 for early bird tickets, and \$10 after early bird. Select students were offered the chance to get autographs and photos with Atsuko Okatsuka.

Speaker Series is an event that brings in a guest celebrity or speaker that students are interested in hearing from. The event allows the students to get up and close to the speakers and even engage them with their own questions. In March 2024, SAMU hosted Josh Peck, an actor, comedian and YouTuber. The event was popular with 97% of tickets sold at the same affordable price as Comedy Series. Select students were also offered the chance to get autographs and photos with Josh Peck.

### **New Events**

Putting on events for students takes a lot of planning. To help with the wide variety of offerings to students, the Events team hired two students as part-time event assistants.

Campus Clash was a new event that was offered to students in partnership with the Edmonton Elks football team and in collaboration with MacEwan University and other post-secondary institutions in Edmonton. The event allowed students to experience a CFL Football game at an affordable cost. It also allowed students to have some fun competition with other schools to see who could show the most school spirit. MacEwan had a great presence with 727 tickets sold which also meant the Edmonton Elks donated \$1454 back to the SAMU Pantry. A pre-party at Towers Pub and transportation to the game was arranged by SAMU for MacEwan students.

### **Maker Series and Games Cafe**

Introduced as new events in 2022-23, Maker Series and Games Café were very popular and brought back again this past year. Maker Series features some DIY crafts for students. Candle Painting, Hot Chocolate Kit Making, Valentines Card Making and Plant Pot Painting was offered over the course of 6 days throughout Fall and Winter terms with a total of 632 students participating.

Games Café is an event where students can drop into The Lookout (SAMU event space) and enjoy playing some new and classic board games with friends along with some snacks and refreshments. It's a great way to relax between classes or take a break from studies. There were three Games Café sessions held this past fiscal year with 464 students dropping by for some games with friends.

### **Last Class Bash**

Last Class Bash is a tropical group trip for MacEwan and NAIT students organized by SAMU and NAITSA. The second post-covid trip was held in 2023-24 and was once again popular with students. A total of 27 MacEwan students travelled to Mexico at the beginning of May to enjoy some sun, sand and well-deserved relaxation. Group activities and excursions were planned and held for the group while they were there.

## **SAMU Markets**

Due to the ongoing success of SAMU's annual Holiday Market in December, a second market was added with an Eco focus. Both markets allow students, alumni and locals to set up a table to sell locally made crafts and items. The Holiday Market had 37 vendors and over 1400 people attending.

The Spring Awakening Market was held during Eco Month in March and featured student and community vendors who uphold sustainable business practices. The Spring Awakening Market had 39 vendors and 900 people attending.

## **Zen Zone**

The Well-Being Portfolio's Stressless was rebranded as Zen Zone to align more with campus needs. The rebrand gave the Programs department space to set a new precedent for in-person and online resources and wellness initiatives:

- Reintroduced free coffee for students at Breakfast Club
  - Fall: 700 students served
  - Winter: 750 students served
- Expanded reach across campus partnering with: Mental Health Week (MHW) and Healthy Relationships Week (HRW).
- Fall Term: Ask A Banker financial wellness lunch and learn initiative with United Way - 25 students attended
- Wellness Bags: Distributed 1300+ in Fall Term
- Winter Term: Mental Health Week - contributed 300 wellness bags to MHW and 150 to HRW
- Ask a Banker: Financial wellness lunch and learn initiative with United Way. - 35 students attended
- Wellness Bags: Distributed 1150+ in the Winter Term

## **Discounted Ticket Programs**

The Edmonton Oilers ticket program continued in 2023-24 and was popular with students, with most games selling out. The Oilers ticket program allows students to experience hockey games at a cost which is more affordable than purchasing at the box office.

- 270 pairs of tickets available
  - 2 pairs donated
  - 265 pairs sold to students at a discount
  - 3 pairs sold on Ticketmaster (didn't sell in time for to students)
  - Stanley Cup Playoff run home tickets were available to students at well below secondary selling market price.

Students also had the opportunity to purchase discounted ski lift tickets for Marmot Basin, Lake Louise and Sunshine. This was the second year offering the ski passes and a total of 130 passes were sold, 4% less than previous year.

## Artworks Factory

Artworks Factory introduced a Flower-Pressing showcase during Fall Fest that became a “big hit” with students. The lineup for participation spanned the entire Fall Fest with 600 students making imprints on reusable bags. Over 350 students attended the two Artworks Factory showcases in Winter, which were facilitated by student artists.

## The Griff

After the September 2023 launch of the brand refresh of the Griff, the publication settled firmly into its new direction by January 2024. This refresh has proven to be very successful with The Griff being awarded Student Publication of the Year by the Canadian University Press, in a tie with the Western Gazette.

After the Griff’s publishing cycle ended for the 2023-2024 academic year, the editor-in-chief was assisted by a dedicated part-time staff member to begin development on new fact-checking processes, a code of conduct, contributor supports, and other administrative documentation processes.

It’s the opinion of the editor-in-chief that, qualitatively, printed content in this timeframe was very strong compared to the previous year. With new fact checking and workflow processes, the Griff’s content will be more relevant and accurate for students. The publication is attracting a greater variety and higher number of contributors.

Highlights from The Griff strategic plan implementation includes:

### Brand

- Underwent a complete rebranding.
- Changed the publications logo/masthead, branding, content style, and approach to reporting.
- Increased visibility and relevance to students which played a large part in the increased metrics compared to the previous year.

### Content

- 217 articles published in print and/or online (**35% increase from previous year**)
- 112 of those articles were written entirely or in-part by volunteer contributors (**119.6% increase**)
- 12 additional contributions were solely visual, either illustrations or photographs.

### Magazine Distribution

- 11,400 copies of the Griff printed (**46.5% increase**)
- 10,062 magazine pickups (**54.7% increase**)
- 88 per cent pickup rate (**5% increase**)

### Website

- 28,295 website visits (From Aug. 29, 2023 - June 30, 2024)
- 51,739 page views, 43,590 unique page views
- Main traffic came from search engines, then direct entry, then social networks

- Most successful story was “Is Yegwave a news thief?” with 3,016 page views

Note: Social Media analytics are not included as The Griff is affected, along with all other Canadian news organizations, by the social media account bans. The Griff has found success by publishing content on LinkedIn. The Griff will continue to explore other alternative ways to reach its audience in the upcoming year.

#### Contributors

- Attendance for 24 contributor meetings: 96 students (not unique students)
- Total of 46 unique contributors

#### Volunteer and Part-Time Positions

SAMU’s volunteer program is vital to providing opportunities for students to gain real experience while, in turn, helping SAMU to run its programs, events and services. This past year saw another year over year increase in the volunteer program:

- 201 volunteers (+3% compared to 2022-23)
- 5,924 volunteer hours (+3% compared to 2022-23)

SAMU hires students for part-time positions which helps students gain employment while they are going to school and provides valuable experience, often pertaining to their chosen career, which can help them gain employment upon graduation. These positions are also vital to adding increased capabilities to SAMU, allowing it to offer enhanced programs, services and events. SAMU added three new Part-time positions in 2023-24, for a total of 28 positions hired – a 12% increase from 2022-23. SAMU was pleased to add the following positions:

- Bookkeeper, Graphic Design Assistant and Videographer

#### **1.4 Support Student Groups by offering networking opportunities, meeting space, outreach support and online platforms.**

Student Groups and the Student Groups space saw an increase in activity and engagement as both Student Groups and the SAMU Building saw an increase in popularity. Student Groups planned various events and training to help raise awareness of Student Groups, encourage new group start-ups, and assist existing groups with recruiting members. The Student Groups Connect platform, the new online platform that was introduced two years ago and is helping Student Groups grow and enhance efficiency.

- Student Groups Mingler: an in-person networking event for groups and their members to get to know one another and share ideas while playing various board games. Two Minglers were held, one in the Fall and one in the Winter term, attended by 75 (+7% from year prior) and 95 (+27% from year prior) students, respectively. The Fall Mingler received an 85% satisfaction rate and the Winter received a 95% satisfaction rate.
- Student Groups Expo: The Student Groups Expo is a chance for students to see what groups are available in a tradeshow format. An expo was held each of the Fall and Winter terms. The Fall expo had 45 groups participate (+29% from the previous year)

and Winter had 48 (+14%). The Expos were busy with students exploring all the groups and successful for the groups in recruiting new members with over 900 students total attending the two Expos.

- Student Groups Connect: This was the third year on the new platform, and it grew to over 3200 users, a 60% increase from 2022-23. The platform continues to be built out and improved to ensure it is used to its full potential. The addition of the room booking platform Skeeda in May further enhanced the efficiency and effectiveness of room bookings for Student Groups. A total of 130 room bookings were made from May – June.
- The Student Groups department hosted the first “Student Group Appreciation Night” in April to show their appreciation for all the hard work the various student groups do in enhancing our university community. The appreciation night provided an opportunity for groups to get together and celebrate their accomplishments. Over 150 students attended the event. Based on a post-event survey, the overall satisfaction was 90%

### **Student Groups Event Grants**

Student Groups helps to increase student engagement by providing Event Grant Funding to groups so they can put on events for students. SAMU awarded \$39,571 in Event Grant Funding which helped groups host 69 events, a 3.6% decrease compared to the year prior. Groups used the funding for events ranging from small-scale game nights to large-scale galas. The funding means groups can focus more time on planning to make their event successful, and less time on fundraising.

## **2. STUDENT VOICE**

The Student Voice is amplified by SAMU.

### **What it Means**

SAMU is a Students' Association, meaning it provides ways for students to be heard collectively by the University and at all levels of government. Students also have a voice through its democratic processes, electing Students' Council and Executive Committee members to govern SAMU.

### **Strategies**

**2.1 Develop an Advocacy Plan and implement processes to strengthen SAMU's advocacy program.**

#### **Global Conflicts Survey**

In order to better understand the needs of students impacted by various wars and military conflicts across the world, SAMU conducted a Global Conflicts Survey, which ran for the course of one week, from January 19th to January 28th, and received 90 complete responses. Participants were asked about the scale and areas of impact on their lives as a result of these conflicts, as well as where they would like to see continued or improved support on campus.

## **2.2 Enhance awareness and interest in SAMU's democratic processes through education and encouraging student participation.**

### **Pizza & Portfolios (EC for a Day)**

This was an opportunity for students to learn more about the Executive Committee roles before the upcoming Executive Committee elections. Students asked current EC members questions about the role and what it is like to be an advocate for students. The event had over 150 students attend the 2-hour event, and students received a slice of pizza for their participation.

### **GovWeek**

GovWeek is an initiative to promote awareness and encourage students to campaign for Students' Council. Throughout the three-day event, there were tabling events on the second floor of the SAMU building such as nominations tabling, Campaigning 101, Build Your Platform, and ended with Councillor Q&A. There was a total of 557 students who attended the multiple tabling events and Councillor Q&A. There were 247 entries for the two \$500 tuition credit prizes students had a chance to win.

### **Town Hall**

Town Hall is an event where Students' Council engage with the student body by tabling in the Lookout. Each table had a different topic, an assortment of handbills related to the table's topic, and Councillors who discussed the topics and answered questions from students. Vietnamese subs were given to students participating and grocery gift cards were used for prizing. A total of 274 students attended the event, which is a 59% increase in attendance from last year's Town Hall. A feedback form was provided to attendees, and 31 students filled out the form, which will help to plan next year's Town Hall.

### **Student Governance and Leadership Engagement**

SAMU's Marketing department was tasked with developing a new marketing plan to increase awareness and engagement in Students' Council (SC) and Executive Committee (EC) elections and other governance opportunities such as Committees. Collaborating with the Governance and Advocacy Supports team, work has started on a plan that will be rolled out for the SC Election in September 2024.

### **Executive Committee Training**

An external Project Manager was hired on a contract to develop and implement a series of online Executive Committee training modules. This new tool was used to help train our Executive Committee in April and May 2024. Work will continue to ensure the training modules remain effective and updated.

## **2.3 Continue to build collaborative relationships with other Students' Associations and organizations to enhance the collective student voice with all government levels.**

### **CAUS Advocacy Week**

SAMU participated in the Council of Alberta University Students' annual Advocacy Week, meeting with MLAs and business/community leaders, with the goal of pushing for a government response to student issues including affordability and mental health.

### **CASA Advocacy Week**

Three student representatives from SAMU participated in the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations' Advocacy Week, targeting MPs, Senators, civil servants, and NGOs in the Ottawa area.

### **ZBR Advocacy**

In collaboration with other students' associations and unions in the city, SAMU's VP External successfully advocated for the passing of the proposed Zoning Bylaw Renewal, the first significant update in over forty years.

### **Edmonton Student Alliance**

Following the election of the SAMU VP External as Chair for the Edmonton Student Alliance (ESA), SAMU led the development and planning of a meeting between the members of the ESA and the City's elected officials and civil servants. This included the office of the Mayor, several city councillors, and lead staff on portfolios such as housing, transportation, and community engagement.

### **Assembly of First Nations' (AFN) Annual Water Symposium and Trade Show**

SAMU's VP External was invited to attend and speak at the 7th annual water symposium, hosted by the AFN. This was following other engagements with the AFN throughout the year, as a part of the VP External's focus on advocating for Indigenous students and their experience on campus.

### **Meeting with Minister Randy Boissonnault**

The SAMU Executive Committee had the chance to host Minister Randy Boissonnault, the federal Minister of Employment, Workforce Development, and Official Languages of Canada. Advocacy topics included affordability of education, cost of living impacts on students, as well as the need for meaningful and high-quality employment for students during and after their studies.

## **2.4 Foster positive relationships with MacEwan University to better serve students.**

### **Tuition/MNIF Meetings**

The President and VP Governance and Finance (VPGF) represented students to MacEwan during the ministry-mandated tuition and fees consultation process. The university is not required to follow SAMU's feedback, but this process resulted in a 2% increase in domestic tuition and international tuition, some of the lowest in the province (factoring in there was a 10% increase ceiling for International students this year).

### **VPGF on Board of Governors**

A change was made to have the VPGF sit on the Board of Governors as the second Board representative to increase SAMU's effectiveness and impact when advocating on the Board level because the VPGF will have sat on the Tuition/MNIFs consultation meetings and will continue to advocate on students' behalf at the Board with the President.

### **MacEwan Day on the Hill**

For the first time, SAMU's VP External participated in a joint advocacy effort with MacEwan University to advocate on student issues including access to housing.

### **Brain Freeze**

SAMU partnered with MacEwan again in 2023 to offer the Brain Freeze Festival to students in December. Brain Freeze offers students a chance for a little bit of fun during the last week of classes before the Winter Break including: activities, games, food and drinks, a local vendor market and more. SAMU had a booth to promote its Last Class Bash trip, along with other upcoming events. It was noted by the organizing committee that if the event is to be repeated next year, an earlier date and start time be selected to make it easier for students to attend.

### **Open House**

SAMU participates in MacEwan's Open House to engage with potential students and let them know how SAMU supports their student journey at MacEwan. SAMU has a booth on the second floor pedway to engage with potential students and tell them about SAMU's building and the programs, services and events it offers.

## **3. STUDENT SUPPORTS**

Student supports provided by SAMU are responsive to unique and evolving needs.

### **What it Means**

Student life can be difficult. SAMU offers students a variety of programs and services to help with financial, mental, physical, and social stresses. SAMU is an inclusive organization, supporting diversity and participation of all students. As student needs evolve, SAMU watches trends and listens to students to ensure that SAMU offerings are reflective of those needs.

### **Strategies**

#### **3.1 Develop and deliver initiatives that are inclusive and are responsive to all student needs.**

SAMU is proud of all our support services that help enhance the student experience. Being a student is stressful at any time, but inflation and the cost of education have made it even more challenging. SAMU does whatever it can to make it a little easier for students. Our lineup of support services that we offered included:



### **Breakfast Club**

Breakfast Club is always a very popular service with students. SAMU supplied 6,051 meals through 10 pop-up breakfasts, which included one hot breakfast. This is a 15.5% decrease in meals served and four fewer pop-up breakfasts than the previous year. However, the average number of meals served per event increased by 18%. The increase in the cost of food and the growing popularity of the event was the reason for the decrease, so demand did not exceed the budget.

### **The Pantry**

In 2023-24, 1020 new website accounts were created. A total of 2284 hampers were given out this fiscal, a 40.5% increase from 2022-23. With the cost of food and other expenses continuing to increase, students are feeling the financial pressure more than ever. The Pantry is an important service that helps those students in need with a hamper that has approximately two weeks of food. The Pantry supported 1,410 students with hampers during Fall and Winter terms.

### **Peer Support**

Peer Support conducted 51 sessions over Fall and Winter, an increase of 19% from the previous fiscal. This number doesn't include students who visit the Support Hub in person to ask questions or get resources, which totalled 485 for Fall & Winter.

Of the students who utilized peer support, 49% were Mental health-related, 36% were school stress-related, and 19% were relationship-related (note: a conversation can be multiple topics). Approximately 24% of students disclosed they were facing thoughts of suicide, double the amount from the previous fiscal.

### **Safe Walk**

Safe Walk is a service provided by SAMU and student volunteers. Students can request a walk and are escorted by two volunteers to their car or bus stop. A total of 32 walks were conducted in Fall and Winter terms, a 146% increase from the previous year.

### **Student Advocacy Centre**

The SAMU Student Advocacy Centre supports students facing academic or non-academic issues, but also provides policy guidance, edits on correspondence with MacEwan faculty or staff, and can attend meetings with students.

The Student Advocacy Centre had a total of 116 students submitting initial submissions. Of these 116 students, 58 (50 %) met with a Centre Representative to discuss their concern further. Out of the 58 students that met with a Centre Representative, 39 (67.2%) students sought on-going support from their Centre Representative.

The breakdown of student visits by faculty are as follows: 56% Faculty of Arts and Science, 16.4% School of Business, 13.8% Faculty of Nursing, 7.6% Faculty of Health and Community Studies, 4.3% Faculty of Fine Arts and Communications, and 1.8% School of Continuing Education.

The top issues that the Student Advocacy Centre assisted students through were: Academic Misconduct Violations 19.8%, Filing Complaints 15.5%, Reassessment of Marks 12.1% and Required to Withdraw 12.1%.

Satisfaction surveys were sent to students who deal with the Student Advocacy Centre. Of the students who completed the survey, 60% rated their satisfaction high (4-5 stars), 20% were either indifferent or neutral (2-3 Stars), and 20% of students were dissatisfied with the service level that they received (0-1 stars).

### **Eco SAMU**

Eco SAMU offered a variety of programming for students including:

- Eco SAMU started off the term with a successful Free Store that saw over 100 students come and help themselves to free items that are offered by SAMU.
- ECO SAMU collaborated with Aramark and MacEwan Eats to develop a Fall Harvest Menu inspired by SAMU's Stepping Stones, Urban Farming Plot. Held on the first day of Autumn, ECO SAMU served 350 students.
- Offered monthly environmental programming tailored to our Fall and Winter semesters:
  - Monthly Community Mixers in Fall: Environmental Lunch & Learn, Queer Time Tuesday, and Inner Development Goals Living Workshop
  - Winter Term: Healthy Relationship Week collaboration, Community Mixers, Black History Month Support/Showcase, ECO Month.
- Queer Time Tuesday: Collaboration with Deville Coffee to bring more awareness to curated Queer Community Spaces on the last Tuesday of every month.

### **3.2 Evaluate and assess student supports to remain relevant and accountable to students.**

#### **Student Affordability Survey**

The number one concern of students for the past few years, according to the annual Spring Student Surveys from 2021 to 2024, is the cost of education in terms of textbooks, tuition, and other fees. To get a complete picture of this issue, the External and Stakeholder Relations Manager, Parvin Sedighi, and the VP Academic (VPA) worked together to develop and launch a Student Affordability Survey. The survey received thousands of responses and provided valuable data and insights on the real-life, ground-floor experiences of how students are struggling to pay for education. The data and report will help to plan strong and accurate advocacy points for ongoing projects and priorities for the student body.

#### **SAMU Cares**

The SAMU Cares program is a bursary which assists students and families and is funded by the creative fundraising efforts of the SAMU community. The bursaries are to help students and their families with financial assistance in the Fall and Winter terms.

In 2023-24, the SAMU Cares' process for accessing the bursary was updated to better suit students and staff through the implementation of a digital application with unique identifier codes.

In Fall, 40 students were able to benefit from the bursary and 34 students in the Winter (2 more than the previous fiscal). With the endowment announcement, SAMU will now open applications for the spring and summer term of each academic year, making bursaries available to students year-round. (Fall, Winter, Spring).

### **Student Groups**

The Student Groups department conducted verbal and written surveys to assess satisfaction with events and other aspects of Student Groups.

- Student Groups Appreciation Event was the most enjoyed event with a 90% satisfaction rate
- 76% of groups are satisfied with the Student Groups Connect platform (**62% previous**)
- 86% of groups are satisfied with the Student Groups Handbook (**76% previous**)
- 82% of groups are satisfied with their overall experience as a student group (**80% previous**)

The overall increase in satisfaction with student groups is linked to the increase in quantity and quality of training opportunities and resources. Specifically with regards to the Handbook and Student Groups Connect, groups were more satisfied because they were better equipped to navigate and utilize these resources.

### **3.3 Strengthen collaborations and partnerships with MacEwan University to expand supports and resources for students.**

#### **Cause Collaboration with MacEwan**

SAMU is always keen to help advocate for initiatives and causes that benefit or interest students. SAMU and EC collaborated with MacEwan to help promote several worthy causes to students, including: Pink Shirt Day, Black History Month, Pride Week, Mental Health Week, Healthy Relationships Week, Sexual Violence Awareness Week and Truth & Reconciliation Day.

#### **Student Groups**

Over the past year, the Student Groups Department has built and maintained relationships with various MacEwan Departments, including MacEwan Conference Services, the International Department, the Office of Sexual Violence Prevention, Education, and Response (OSVPER), Center for Sexual and Gender Diversity, MacEwan Residence, Student Affairs, MacEwan Student Experience Record, and MacEwan Alumni. These relationships will benefit student groups in various ways, such as helping them access services, reach audiences, and collaborate for future activities.

## Period Products

Free period product dispensers were installed in SAMU's female and all-gender washrooms. Feedback from students indicates a high satisfaction level:

- Overall satisfaction with the period products 4.7/5
- Ease of dispenser use 4.9/5
- Quality of products 4/5

## 3.4 Enhance relationships with external organizations to leverage resources and supplement new and existing initiatives.

### Splash and Bash

Splash and Bash is a collaborative event with UASU, NAITSA and West Edmonton Mall and was held again for students on February 2nd. The event allows students to enjoy an exclusive pool party at the World Waterpark at a discounted price. The event sold out with 691 tickets being sold to students and their friends, a 69% increase from the previous year.

### U-Pass

U-Pass saw increased activation rates (percentage of students who were assessed for U-Pass and activated it) this past Fall and Winter. SAMU still had free ARC Cards from its initial delivery to give away to first-time users but ran out in March. Moving forward, ARC cards will be charged for new users and for replacements.

#### Fall 2023

14,575 Students Participated in Fall 2022 U-Pass **(+7%)**

9368 Activated U-Pass **(+19%)**

64% Activation Rate **(58% previous)**

#### Winter 2024

14,310 Students participated in Winter 2023 U-Pass **(+7%)**

9080 Activated Winter U-Pass **(+8%)**

63% Activation Rate **(63% previous)**

#### Spring/Summer 2024

4607 Students participated in Spring/Summer 2023 U-Pass **(-0.6%)**

2495 Activated Spring/Summer U-Pass **(-4%)**

54% Activation Rate **(56% previous)**

### Student Refugee Program (SRP)

SAMU welcomed a newly sponsored student, and they are integrating well and have been given the tools and support to maintain successes and achievements. Increased Local Committee Membership and operations with MacEwan Academic and Finance strengthened relationships with MacEwan for all matters concerning SRP. Local Committee Members are actively searching for better ways to support SRP Students' Self-Reliance and Settlement here in Edmonton and SAMU will welcome a new SRP member in Summer of 2025.

## 4. STRENGTHENING SAMU OPERATIONS

SAMU is an innovative and sustainable organization with an engaging work environment.

### What it Means

SAMU can best serve students when its own house is in order. By fostering strong relationships between elected student roles and staff, documenting policies and processes and being responsible stewards of resources, SAMU can be a supportive and sustainable organization for students for years to come.

### Strategies

#### 4.1 Review SAMU governance structures and make improvements to reduce duplication of efforts and delays in decision-making processes.

##### Governance Review Project

Through a third-party governance review in 2021/22, SAMU started work in 2022-23 on 45 of the recommendations that came from the review. Work continued and the project was completed in 2023-24.

#### 4.2 Document main policies and processes to support business continuity and transitions in leadership and staff.

##### Internal Advocacy Advisor

An important new full-time position was added to the SAMU operations team. An Internal Advocacy Advisor was hired in April to help our Executive Committee with internal advocacy-related initiatives. The position quickly showed its value and success, and work has started on another position being added to support the External Advocacy support of the Executive Committee for 2024-25.

##### Directives

During the Governance Review process, it was recommended to review, retire and update existing operational procedures and turn them into Directives. A committee was established and the work is ongoing and is helping to better clarify operational rules within SAMU.

#### 4.3 Diversify revenue streams to reduce reliance on student fees.

##### Advertising Revenue

SAMU and the SAMU Building offer opportunities to generate revenue through various advertising channels including posters, tabling, digital displays, email newsletter and the student handbook. Advertising for the Handbook offsets the cost of printing.

- SAMU Building & Campus advertising revenue: \$33,000 (+72%)
- SAMU Student Handbook advertising revenue \$20,260 (-56%)

#### **4.4 Act as financial and environmental stewards and implement effective practices to enhance sustainability.**

##### **SAMU Membership Fee Increase Paused**

SAMU paused the increase of the membership fee for the 2024/25 year in response to ongoing affordability struggles for students. SAMU will still be able to deliver high-quality programming, events, and services. Collectively, this saves students a total of over \$100,000.

#### **4.5 Foster a professional and supportive work environment that lives the organizational values and delivers a culture of excellence.**

##### **SAMU Awards**

SAMU Awards Night is a chance to celebrate the 36 students, staff, and Student Groups nominated for a SAMU Award. A total of 93 people (nominees and guests) enjoyed a buffet dinner in The Lookout (SAMU's event space), applauded all the nominees and winners and played some fun Kahoot trivia games afterward. SAMU Awards recognize outstanding individuals who have interacted, supported, or assisted with the goals and efforts of the SAMU organization and community.

##### **Remuneration Review**

A comprehensive review was started in 2021-22 by a third-party consultant, resulting in a number of recommendations, most of which were implemented in 2022-23. The remaining recommendations were completed in 2023-24, and a new RRSP/TFSA program for staff will be implemented in the early 2024-25 fiscal.

##### **Human Resources (HR) Processes**

A new HR process for conducting staff performance reviews and employee satisfaction surveys was piloted this past fiscal year. The process is a feature of the online HR system, BambooHR, used by SAMU. This process is more efficient and collaborative than the previous method and will be rolled out organization-wide in 2024-25.

## EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE ELECTION RESULTS

### Official 2024 Executive Committee Election Results

Number of Students Voting	Eligible Voters	Percentage
953	15196	6.3

3 Candidates ran for 4 positions

### Previous Year – 2023 Executive Committee Election Results

Number of Students Voting	Eligible Voters	Percentage
2173	14325	15.20%

8 Candidates ran for 5 positions

### Official 2023 Vice-President External By-Election Results

Number of Students Voting	Eligible Voters	Percentage
1008	14322	7.00%

2 Candidates ran for 1 position

## STUDENTS' COUNCIL ELECTION RESULTS

### Official 2023 Students' Council Election Results

Number of Students Voting	Eligible Voters	Percentage
1333	15548	8.6%

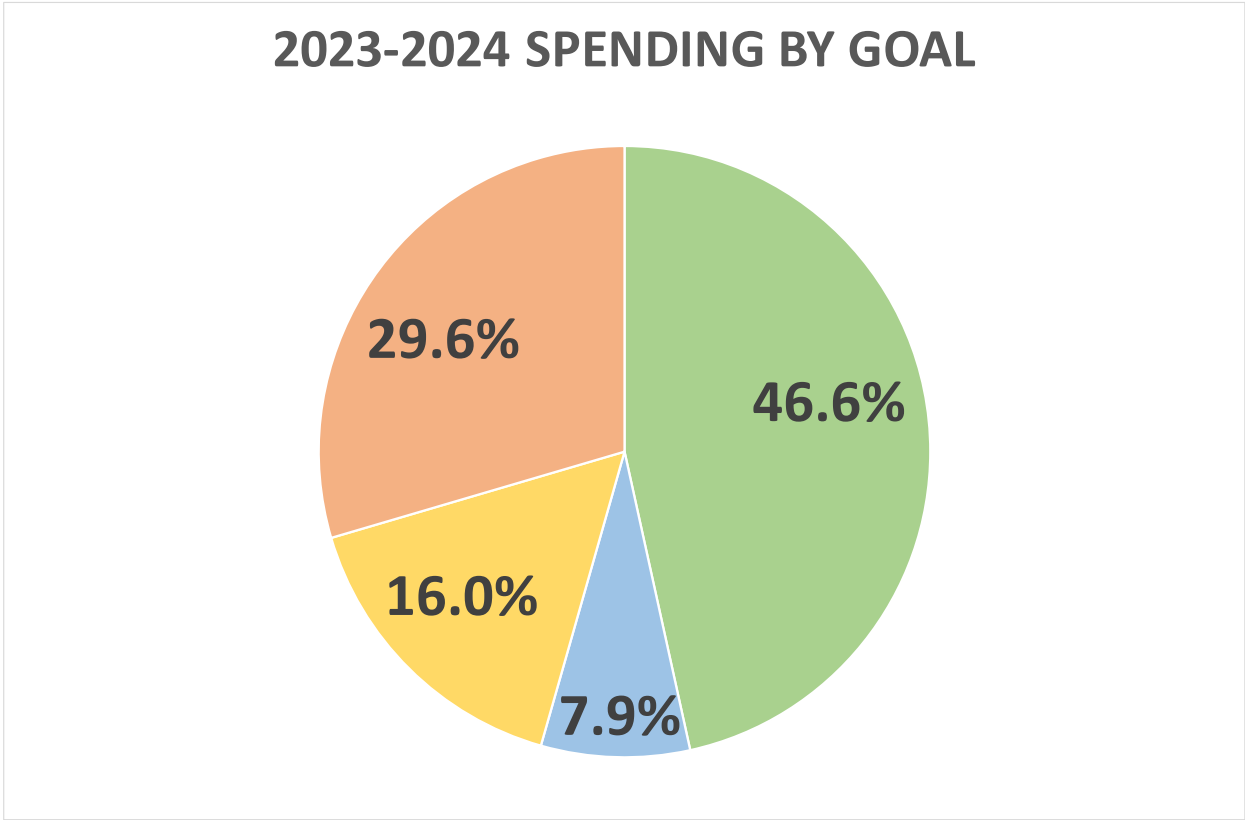
13 Candidates ran for 14 positions

### Previous Year - 2022 Students' Council Election Results

Number of Students Voting	Eligible Voters	Percentage
948	14683	6.5%

13 Candidates ran for 14 positions

# SPENDING BY STRATEGIC GOAL



Strategic Goal		2023-2024
1. Student Experience and Engagement	The overall student experience is enhanced by the opportunities provided by SAMU.	46.6%
2. Student Voice	The student voice is amplified by SAMU.	7.9%
3. Student Supports	Student supports provided by SAMU are responsive to unique and evolving needs.	16.0%
4. Strengthening SAMU Operations	SAMU is an innovative and sustainable organization with an engaging work environment.	29.6%