

SAMU
ANNUAL REPORT
2020-2021





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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 30 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.

In 2021, our student elected representatives approved a new 3-year strategic plan, which includes a refreshed vision, mission, values, and goals for the organization, beginning July 2021. As this is an annual report, we are reporting our accomplishments based on the 2018-2021 strategic plan.

From our 2018-2021 Strategic Plan:

MISSION

The Students' Association of MacEwan University exists to enrich the student experience. As the collective student voice and champion for leadership and advocacy, we empower students through our programs and services, and create an engaging environment that maximizes opportunities.

VISION

The Students' Association of MacEwan University will be a strong advocate, exceptional resource, and a clear voice for the MacEwan University student. We will have one aim – to create a one-of-a-kind university experience by recognizing the student as our greatest asset and inspiration.

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.

OUR FOCUS

SAMU is a dynamic, fast growing, and diverse organization whose approach to success is constantly adapting to the needs of students.

SAMU is dedicated to advocating for student issues, regardless of political ideologies or opinions. We exist to enhance student well-being while they attend MacEwan University and create a positive impact to the student experience.

Through consultation and continual connection with the student body, we have been, and will continue to focus our resources and energy on our students and what matters to them. Simply stated, students come first. Students are at the center of everything we do and that is why Students First is one of SAMU's Core Values.



MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

MYLES DYKES

IT IS HARD TO BELIEVE THAT ANOTHER YEAR HAS COME AND GONE!

I have been President of SAMU since May 2021 and I have to say I am impressed of what I have seen and experienced so far. The outgoing Executive Committee worked to ensure a smooth transition and we have hit the ground running.

This past year has been a different one for everyone, including SAMU. It has been a year of adjusting, waiting to see how we need to adapt operations and hoping we can resume to regular campus life soon. Even as I write this message, things are changing – with the reintroduction of masks on campus. The one element that has remained constant is our continued focus of students first – the reason why SAMU exists.

One of the big changes at SAMU during the 2020-2021 fiscal year was the arrival of SAMU's new General Manager, Collin Steffes. He took time to observe SAMU's operations and get up-to-speed on the opportunities and challenges facing the organization. This was good timing as SAMU was due to revisit our Strategic Plan. So, with the leadership of our previous Executive Committee along with Collin's experience, SAMU developed a new Strategic Plan, outlining our path forward for the next three years. I was able to participate in this process as part of my role with Students' Council and am looking forward to implementing our new direction.

Another process that I was involved with as part of Students' Council was the approval of our 2021-2022 Budget. The budget presentation to Students' Council was enhanced to demonstrate stronger linkages to our planning processes. I appreciated ease and transparency of the process. The budget was approved unanimously by Students' Council, and I feel confident with the increased understanding by the group.



The pandemic has not stopped SAMU in representing students on the local, provincial, and national stages. SAMU Executive Committee and staff worked tirelessly to keep SAMU's concerns and issues front and center with MacEwan as well as the provincial and federal governments. We want quality, safe, and affordable education to be top priority for decision-makers and elected officials.

Finally, I was able to take part in SAMU offerings, such as student groups and events. I was impressed at what I was able to do, even with the different public health measures in place. The creativity and tenacity of SAMU employees to deliver programs, services and events to students was appreciated by many. What better way is there to blow off steam during the semester than to see a childhood favourite Bill Nye!

As we report on the accomplishments of 2020-2021 in this Annual Report, it is a good time to reflect and build on the momentum. I look forward to serving as your President this year, which also marks SAMU's 50th Anniversary, and continue to carry the torch for SAMU...and hopefully be able to meet more people in person.

MYLES DYKES (HIM/HE)

A NOTE ABOUT COVID-19

—CONTEXT

In March 2020, life drastically changed when the global pandemic reached Edmonton. At that point, most hoped everything would go back to 'normal' by September. Unfortunately, that was not the case. Classes resumed virtually for MacEwan students in the Fall and Alberta experienced several series of public health measures such as no social gatherings, closing of restaurants and building closures.

Like all organizations across the world, the Students' Association of MacEwan University (SAMU) had to navigate through uncertainty and fast-changing public information to keep students, volunteers, and staff safe. As you read the 2020-2021 Annual Report, notice how SAMU staff remained nimble to adjust its operations and service delivery to students. Also note how SAMU took the opportunity of a quieter campus to review internal operations and make improvements. As we gear up to welcome students back to campus, SAMU is ready to serve students, regardless of that being in-person, virtually or both.

STRATEGIC GOALS & OUTCOMES

To achieve our vision, focus our priorities, and guide our actions, SAMU was driven by seven strategic goals and six values as outlined in the 2018-2021 Strategic Plan. The Annual Report provides a summary of the achievement by strategic goal. As many of SAMU's programs, services and events were significantly changed or cancelled in 2020-2021, there are fewer metrics provided as they are not comparable to past years.

1. **DEDICATED ADVOCACY**
2. **COMMITMENT TO SUSTAINABILITY**
3. **RELATIONS WITH OUR COMMUNITY**
4. **STEWARDSHIP OF RESOURCES**
5. **INTEGRATION OF THE SAMU BUILDING**
6. **CONNECT TO STUDENTS**
7. **ENHANCE STUDENT EXPERIENCE**



1. DEDICATED ADVOCACY

While the school year looked very different in 2020-2021, SAMU made progress advocating on behalf of students locally, provincially, and federally. Whether individually for specific student circumstances, or on behalf of all students, SAMU is there to uphold student rights and needs.

SAMU advocated to MacEwan Board of Governors for greater predictability in tuition, linking increases to known data like the Consumer Price Index, as well as for additional bursaries for those experiencing hardship. Though students were outvoted on new tuition increases, MacEwan created bursaries for those experiencing financial hardship. SAMU also advocated against use of e-proctoring (now only used in exceptional circumstances with a very small number of students) and the inclusive use of online learning practices in response to COVID-19. SAMU's Vice President Academic partnered with MacEwan to advocate for Restorative Justice Practices to become standardized across universities. The Vice President Academic also revamped the "be Book Smart" campaign which promotes the usage of Open Education Resources and online tools to help students save money.

At the provincial level, our President and Vice President External took part in the Penguin Protest alongside our provincial partners, where they made hundreds of penguins out of snow to protest the Alberta government’s cuts to post-secondary education. It was part of the “Don’t Freeze our Future” campaign, which gained national coverage. SAMU submitted recommendations for the provincial government’s Alberta 2030 plan, which aims to revamp the post-secondary system in Alberta. Our recommendations included a reallocation of \$200 million in existing funds from tax credits to upfront grants for students, the development of a targeted free tuition program for low-income learners, and a move towards bulk funding for universities instead of multiple granting programs. Lastly, SAMU worked with Council of Alberta University Students (CAUS) organizations to host the first ever Alberta Student Congress, a forum on post-secondary student concerns engaging over 130 Albertan student leaders. SAMU’s own Vice President Student Life chaired the Congress.

Nationally, SAMU’s President and Vice President External were part of a federal advocacy team that secured \$9 billion in covid-related aid for students in Canada. This included the Canada Emergency Student Benefit and doubling the Canada Student Grant for the 2020-2021 year.

Finally, our Vice President External won two elections for leadership roles on CASA and CAUS boards in 2021, amplifying the needs of MacEwan students at the provincial and federal level.

Internally, SAMU restructured the Advocacy portfolio to focus on external advocacy and developed the Student Ombud Support which serves to guide students through MacEwan policies with academic and non-academic appeals. The new service will be launched in September. This change will help to maximize SAMU’s ability to represent students on all fronts – with MacEwan and externally.

Did you know?

SAMU belongs to several umbrella organizations to help make our voice stronger! SAMU is a member of the Council of Alberta University Students (CAUS), Canadian Alliance of Student Associations (CASA) and the Edmonton Student Alliance.





2. COMMITMENT TO SUSTAINABILITY

Decisions and commitments made by SAMU impact how sustainable we will be in the future. SAMU's strategic plan was set to expire, so Executive Committee embarked on a strategic planning exercise. Students' Council approved the Strategic Plan for 2021-2024 in April 2021, with strategic goals of Student Experience & Engagement, Student Voice, Student Supports, and Strengthening SAMU Operations. New vision, mission and values were also developed with input from Executive Committee, Students' Council, and staff.


The strategic plan is part of SAMU's Strategic and Corporate Planning Framework, which was developed this year to improve planning and reporting practices in SAMU. The intention of the Framework is to better align corporate planning, budget, advocacy, and capital processes with the strategic goals outlined in the Strategic Plan. The new process involves a broader group of staff in planning which leads to better informed and engaged employees.

The griff also created and implemented a new strategic plan, which will lead to increased focus on digital capabilities and channels, increased reader engagement and a more visible presence on campus. The griff returns to print distribution in September after being solely digital for the previous year and will continue to grow its digital presence.

To foster a culture of eco-awareness amongst students, SAMU changed Sustain-a-Mania to a four-day, online platform for this academic year. SAMU made partnerships with local green businesses (Replenish, More than a Fad, Good Goods) and introduced a Food Waste series on how to regrow your kitchen scraps. Blog posts, and step by step videos accompanied the daily events planned for the week. Community Blogs that were featured included: Composting 101, Zero Waste Challenge, Food Waste "How to regrow your produce scraps", and Eco Partner social media takeover.

Another facet critical to SAMU's sustainability is fostering a professional and supportive work environment. During this past year, SAMU designed and launched an Intranet site (named SAMUnity) to help staff communicate, feel connected and be aware of the happenings while working remotely. Staff were also invited to attend casual "drop-in" meetings weekly to create a sense of work community. This was in response to feedback received from a staff survey indicating they were feeling disconnected from other staff, working remotely. SAMU staff had the opportunity to attend several virtual conferences and training sessions they would have not otherwise been able to attend.





SAMU engaged with the surrounding community to build partnerships, support opportunities, and collaborate with community projects. These programs set out to improve the lives of MacEwan University students by connecting them to Edmonton.

While this was a little more difficult to do with public health restrictions, SAMU found innovative ways to connect students with local government and businesses. For example, SAMU hosted an Edmonton City Council Forum in partnership with the Edmonton Student Alliance, where students were able to engage with, and ask questions to city councillors on municipal affairs.

SAMU also partnered with local restaurants and activity providers to offer students meal kits and fun activities at home. Events included Nomiya Ramen and Anime, Aviary charcuterie, Art Class and Starlite Nachos and Live music. There were 140 student participants.

Student Groups engaged with the community by being involved in 72 collaborations. These included groups (both SAMU and other Universities), University departments and faculties, speakers, and external corporations and organizations.

To support local businesses impacted by the pandemic, MacEwan University's student media, the griff changed a monthly feature to "Food for Thought", which reviewed a local restaurant with take-out and delivery options, keeping students safe while enjoying local dining. The griff also created a local gift giving guide for the holidays, promoting Edmonton-owned businesses, and offering students the chance to win gift cards. When possible, SAMU also purchases gift cards and items from local merchants to use for prizing and even Online Breakfast Club, which continued to provide students with a free breakfast item even when not on campus.

3. RELATIONS WITH OUR COMMUNITY

4. STEWARDSHIP OF RESOURCES



Our vision can only be accomplished by carefully managing our resources along the way. SAMU updated its budget presentation to Students' Council to increase transparency and understanding. This was well-received and the 2021-2022 Budget was unanimously approved by Students' Council.

While Student Groups operational grants decreased this past year due to pandemic, over \$10,000 (34% of available funds) were awarded.

During the times of reduced operations, SAMU used the time to make internal improvements such as:

- Documenting and implementing streamlined recruitment and onboarding processes
- Consolidating marketing request forms and improving the marketing project process
- Developing a post-event evaluation process to gather quantitative and qualitative feedback
- Improving our workflow and engagement by purchasing a new program for our Student Groups called Student Groups Connect, which will launch in the beginning of the fall term.

After many years of hard work and planning, the SAMU building opened to students at the beginning of 2020. However, the building along with MacEwan campus was closed to comply with public health measures several times throughout the fiscal year. COVID practices, processes and cleaning were developed and implemented for building operations. Students had the opportunity to use the building to study in a safe environment when public health measures permitted.

Located on the first floor of the SAMU building, RBC was open and had virtual events throughout the year for students. The Benefits Desk was also open periodically but was shutdown during the second wave of COVID.

In preparation for students to return to campus in the Fall, construction of Chachi's (gourmet sandwiches) began with an expected opening date of September. Three other food vendors are expected to be open in January 2022 offering students even more food choices while on campus.

Student Groups was able to use their dedicated space in times with fewer public health restrictions and look forward to being able to have more access in the Fall term.

5. INTEGRATION OF THE SAMU BUILDING





6. CONNECT TO STUDENTS

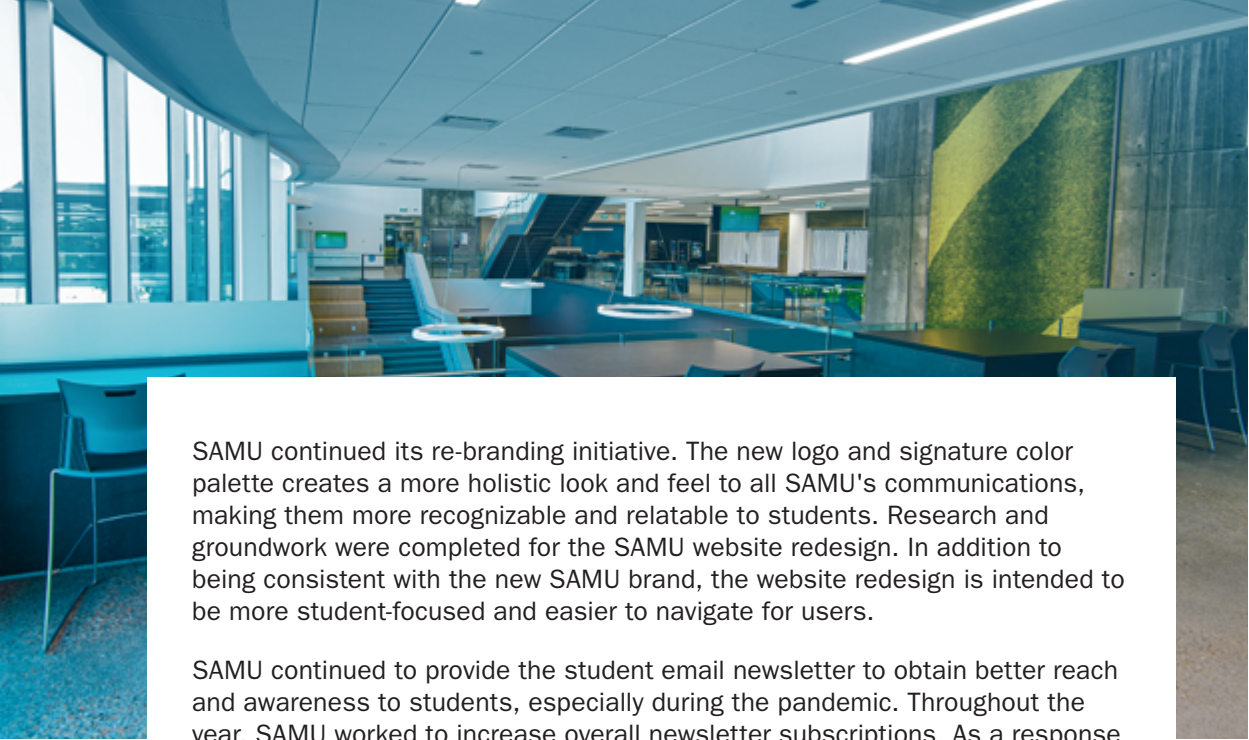
Engaging, empowering, and supporting students during their academic journey is the core of SAMU's mandate. SAMU continued to look at ways to support student initiatives and encourage involvement, even during such a difficult year.

To connect with student governance, Executive Committee held a Back-to-School panel to talk about topics such as the U-Pass, SAMU and MacEwan resources, campus plans and advocacy topics. Executive Committee also offered regular virtual office hours so students could connect to them directly. SAMU held its first ever Executive Committee and Students' Council Candidate Forums online which provided students with the opportunity to directly engage with candidates.

Two referendums were held - MyLegalPlan passed with a 76.79% acceptance rate and U-Pass renewal passed with a 75.55% acceptance rate. MyLegalPlan is an additional benefit to students that provides legal support and offers discounted rates to SAMU members.

SAMU created a new sub-committee called Student Voice on Sexual Violence Elimination (SVOVE). SVOVE is comprised entirely of students and serves to collect data and opinions from MacEwan students on their thoughts regarding MacEwan's sexual violence prevention policies.

SAMU used all available platforms (e.g. Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn etc.) to promote and execute programs and initiatives and keep students informed. SAMU also administered the Annual Student Survey to receive feedback from students about awareness, engagement preferences and perspectives on COVID-specific questions. This was the second year of issuing the survey, building trend data for future reporting. Overall awareness of SAMU decreased by 11% in 2021, despite our efforts to reach students in different ways during this pandemic. The data collected through the survey helps to inform and guide SAMU to ensure we can offer programs, events and services that matter most to students.



SAMU continued its re-branding initiative. The new logo and signature color palette creates a more holistic look and feel to all SAMU's communications, making them more recognizable and relatable to students. Research and groundwork were completed for the SAMU website redesign. In addition to being consistent with the new SAMU brand, the website redesign is intended to be more student-focused and easier to navigate for users.

SAMU continued to provide the student email newsletter to obtain better reach and awareness to students, especially during the pandemic. Throughout the year, SAMU worked to increase overall newsletter subscriptions. As a response to the survey data, students indicated their most preferred mode of communication with SAMU is through email. The newsletter has been a clear benefit to students with over 92,000 sends, an overall open rate of 67% and a click through rate of 23%, far exceeding industry standards.

While volunteer opportunities were limited due to reduced operations (e.g., no Safe Walk), SAMU volunteers still logged close to 3500 hours for the year for Peer Support, Food Support and the newly added service of Study Buddies. Despite the pandemic and ever-changing procedures, SAMU saw the highest retention rate of volunteers in recent years as well as zero issues with missed shifts or tardiness.

Our Student Groups also reported over 11,000 volunteer hours by their executive and general members, with over 1000 students actively involved.

The griff produced 130 articles for students to read with a reduced complement of staff and volunteers. They integrated content onto their newly designed website in summer 2020. The griff also partnered once again with MacEwan University's Bachelor of Communications program to host one filed placement student.



SAMU dedicated its efforts to lessening the stress of the university experience for students by providing relevant and meaningful programs, services, and events.

Due to changing public health measures and restrictions, many of SAMU's programs, services and events looked very different during 2020-2021 but were still able to be delivered to students. The majority of SAMU's programming made the switch to online platforms, while being mindful of user fatigue through online activity. Where possible, blog posts and features were more interactive by introducing step-by-step tutorials and how-to videos on student focused topics.

To kick off the 2020-2021 school year, SAMU collaborated with the Canadian Organization of Campus Activities (COCA) to offer a virtual concert for Fall Fest. SAMU also partnered with five other post-secondary institutions to offer a virtual Speaker Series featuring Eternity Martis and Angela Davis. SAMU also hosted two Speaker Series on its own – Jameela Jamil in October 2020 and Bill Nye in March 2021.

A photograph of a modern university lounge. The room features large, curved windows on the left side, offering a view of a street and trees. In the foreground and middle ground, there are several green and blue armchairs and sofas arranged for seating. A staircase with a blue carpet and wooden railings is visible in the background. The overall atmosphere is bright and contemporary.

7. ENHANCE STUDENT EXPERIENCE

With less opportunities to engage students directly, and the increasing economic stress of the Pandemic, SAMU looked for ways to engage and support students. In December, SAMU organized the first “12 Days of Giving” campaign, where students could enter 12 separate days of prize packages, from grocery gift cards and electronics to new mattresses and a tuition credit. This campaign proved to be the most successful promotional campaign SAMU has delivered and made it very likely that the campaign will return in 2021. SAMU received over 11,000 entries by the end of the campaign and over 2000 unique participants. Feedback was very positive, with 500 new email sign-ups for the newsletter, 78 prize winners and increased awareness of SAMU and its programs, services and events. One student wrote “Of course a broke student who wins a \$200 gift card to the mStore will improve my experience as a student. It lightens the amount of money out of my own pocket for textbooks!”

Reading Break events looked very different with travel restrictions, but SAMU shifted in their delivery and offered planned activities in Edmonton such as virtual game nights, pizza and Netflix recommendations, and various prize giveaways throughout the week. There was a total of 329 participants throughout the week and the new ‘Flee the Freeze- At Home Edition’ highlighted local businesses and gave students some well-deserved R&R.

SAMU Partnered with CHARM for a 2-part reduction series: Safer Alcohol Consumption in late October, and Safer Sex in January. Each series involved three video discussions with professionals and themed activities/prizes.

StressLess / Week of Well-Being shifted to a virtual setting, which resulted in more students being able to access resources and giveaways through our platforms. Information was still being featured during midterms and finals. Wellness blog included economic well-being, emotional well-being, physical well-being, social well-being and societal well-being.

SAMU had one online Gray Gallery student exhibit, hosted on our social media platforms and through our website. This was moved to an online venue for the exhibit as we were unable to bring students into the physical space to host an in-person art show.

SAMU worked on the U-Pass renewal negotiations and transition to Arc Card, the new U-pass identification project for the City of Edmonton and outlying transit authorities for the Fall term.

Students Groups remained quite active throughout the school year, welcoming five new groups for a total of 47 active groups. As a collective, the groups safely hosted 265 events and small activities, mostly online. They had 145 executive meetings and 238 business/event planning meetings, as well as 285 regular meetings for their student membership.



SAMU student services were altered to meet the needs of students. In Fall 2020, Peer Support moved service to online only with a text based direct messaging system. This reduced the face-to-face contact but ensured a continuation of being able to offer Peer Support to students. In Winter 2021, SAMU introduced an added option of a video call for students. Resources were also added on SAMU’s website about common issues.

The Pantry opened an online solution (Acuity) for booking appointments that also reduced the amount of admin work needed. There were 446 bookings since October 2020. The Pantry saw 517 individuals served during the fiscal year, compared to 429 the previous year. 73% of individuals were new users in 2020-2021. SAMU also formed a partnership with the Residence to provide non-perishables and fresh foods for international students needing to quarantine at the beginning Fall and Winter terms.

In Fall 2020 SAMU moved to a mobile version of Breakfast Club and worked with Aramark to offer coffee cards that were given out with the mobile cart. In Winter 2021 SAMU moved again to an online version of Breakfast Club that partnered with local companies to give out over 700 gift cards to students.

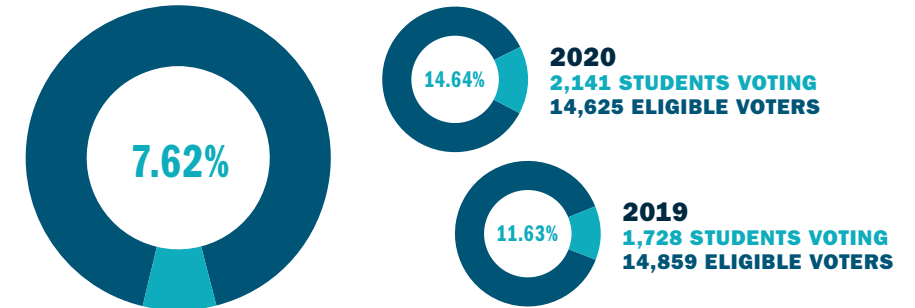
And finally, SAMU offered a new service in Winter 2021 called Study Buddies. The purpose of this service is to provide students with a supportive working environment to promote motivation and accountability as well as create a sense of community that students were missing in an online world. The service will continue to be offered in the Fall 2021 term.



Bill Nye – Survey Says

- Over 500 students attended the live streamed event, the highest registration for an online SAMU event.
- 94% of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with the event.
- The event offered students a nice balance of science, nostalgia and entertainment.

OFFICIAL 2021 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE ELECTION RESULTS - VOTER TURNOUT

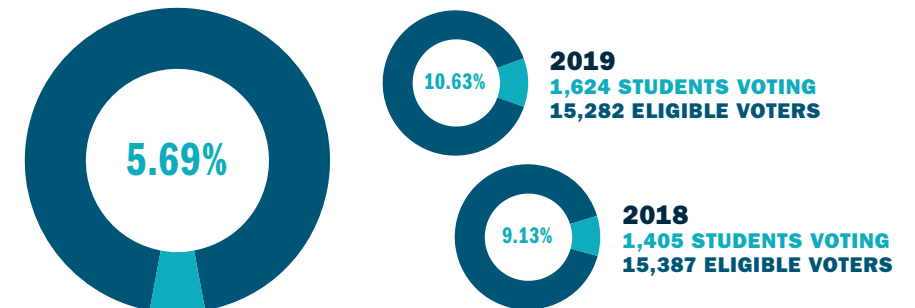


2021 TURNOUT: 1,134 STUDENTS VOTING • 14,887 ELIGIBLE VOTERS

ELECTION NOTES:

- 6 candidates ran for 5 positions
- Voter turnout is significantly lower in 2021 for the Executive Committee election. SAMU is monitoring this and hopes the lower rate was largely a result of Covid-19 and reduced students on campus.

OFFICIAL 2020 STUDENTS' COUNCIL ELECTION RESULTS - VOTER TURNOUT



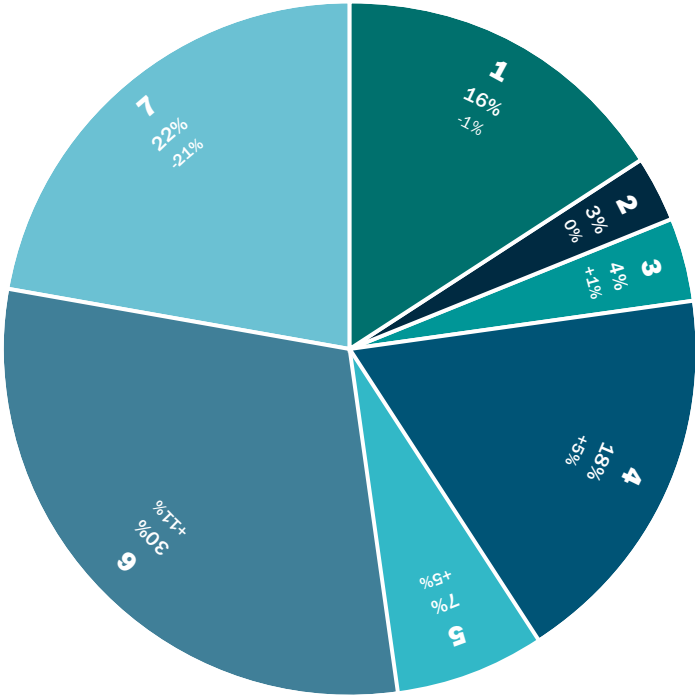
2020 TURNOUT: 875 STUDENTS VOTING • 15,378 ELIGIBLE VOTERS

ELECTION NOTES:

- 5 candidates ran for 14 positions.
- Voter turnout is significantly lower in 2020 for the Students' Council election. SAMU is monitoring this and hopes the lower rate was largely a result of Covid-19 and reduced students on campus.

SPENDING BY GOAL

ACTUAL-WITHOUT FIXED COSTS



STRATEGIC GOAL	CURRENT YEAR	% CHANGE FROM PREVIOUS FISCAL
1. DEDICATED ADVOCACY	16%	-1%
2. COMMITMENT TO SUSTAINABILITY	3%	0%
3. RELATIONS WITH OUR COMMUNITY	4%	1%
4. STEWARDSHIP OF RESOURCES	18%	5%
5. INTEGRATION OF THE SAMU BUILDING	7%	5%
6. CONNECT TO STUDENTS	30%	11%
7. ENHANCE STUDENT EXPERIENCE	22%	-21%



