

# Ryerson Students' Union 5 Year Strategic Plan 2020 to 2025

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**Adopted by:** *Ryerson Students' Union 2019/2020 Board of Directors on April 21st, 2020*



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## History of the Ryerson Students' Union

For nearly 72 years, Ryerson Students' Union (RSU) has advocated on students behalf to improve the conditions on campus, and to help students excel through their academic journey. The very foundation of the RSU has been to provide students with more, whether that be more opportunities, more resources, or more activism.

As a student led and student governed organization, the goal of the RSU has always been to operate by communicating directly to students. Students have been at the forefront of advocacy work carried out by the RSU by submitting motions at Semi-Annual and Annual General Meetings.

Over the last 10 years, students have submitted motions that have positively contributed to students well-being and academic life on campus. For instance, the implementation of the Fall reading week, advocated by the RSU, allowed students struggling with their mental health issues or who were feeling overwhelmed to catch up on school and relax. The RSU has advocated on behalf of students at both the University and Provincial levels against issues such as education cutbacks and increasing tuition prices. The banning of water bottles on campus created awareness about the importance of environmental sustainability. Up until the Presto card was implemented, the RSU worked out a deal with the TTC to provide students with discounted metro passes.

A large part of the university experience is growing, learning, and developing your identity. As a way to make sure that everyone feels comfortable in the skin they're in, Ryerson students have advocated for gender neutral washrooms around the Student Campus Centre (SCC), Women's only hours at the RAC, and piloted campaigns against gender violence which lead to the creation of the CSSSVS (Centre for Safer Sex and Sexual Violence Support).

This year was unique in its challenges as student unions across the province were under attack. However, the RSU showed the true power that student voices hold. Collectively, as an organization, and with the support of students, we were able to fight alongside the Canadian Federation of Students (CFS) to appeal the province's decision to implement the Student Choice Initiative (SCI). The Student Choice Initiative limited the union's financial ability to provide services and programming to students. Furthermore, the 2019/2020 Board of Directors fought against the University's administration to continue the recognition of the RSU as the student's



official government. With this win, we can continue to support students, create programming, and foster student engagement and community.

## **Structure of the Ryerson Students' Union**

**Members** – All students enrolled in a full-time undergraduate program or any graduate program (you may have to remove grad students) at Ryerson University.

**Board of Directors** - Members elect a Board of Directors each year to direct and maintain the work of the RSU.

**Commissioners** – The Board of Directors elects a range of Commissioners from the Board. Commissioners lead work in several key areas of activity. Board of Directors are encouraged to run for the positions of Commissioners.

**Committees** – The Board of Directors establishes committees to oversee the work of the RSU. Committee members are elected from the Board of Directors. Directors are encouraged to participate in least one committee.

**Executive Committee** – Members elect five Executive officers who work full-time for the Students' Union. They are the President, Vice-President Education, Vice-President Operations, Vice-President Student Life & Events and Vice-President Equity.

**Full Time Staff** – Full Time staff manage and implement the day-to-day activities of the RSU. The role of staff is to bring to life the direction determined by the Board, Executive or RSU committees.

**Part Time Staff** - Part Time staff work with the executives and full time coordinators to execute the day-to-day activities of the RSU. The role of part time staff is to fulfill the groundwork of hosting, and organizing campaigns for students on campus. All part-time staff are full-time undergraduate students at Ryerson University.



## **Ryerson Students' Union Mission Statement & Values**

### **Mission Statement**

Your Union! Your Voice!

Our mission is to empower students and build community on Ryerson's campus by advocating for your rights, supporting student groups, events and initiatives, and providing discounted services to save you money!

### **Values / 3 Pillars**

#### **1. Building Campus Life**

As a student led organization we know the impact that extra-curricular activities have on students' lives. The RSU prioritizes student engagement by fostering a community on campus that seeks to empower and encourages students to get involved in and around campus.

The RSU is the home to over 150 student groups, course unions, and affiliated groups. We provide funding, and the space necessary for students to engage and collaborate with one another.

Additionally, the RSU prioritizes marginalized groups on campus by creating spaces where students, no matter their identity, can feel safe and heard. The RSU has 7 Equity Centres: The Centre for Women & Trans People, The Good Food Centre, Racialised Students' Collective, RyeACCESS, RyePRIDE, and the Trans Collective. These centres serve as a space for students from different marginalized backgrounds to come together and organize equity and social justice initiatives, events, and campaigns.

#### **2. Advocating on Behalf of Students**

As students, it's often hard to navigate through the University's policies and procedures, and sometimes our concerns are lost. The Students' Union works to advocate on your behalf, raise your concerns, and make student life easier. The RSU offers free legal and advocacy services for



students, and makes every effort to address problems you may be experiencing – whether financially, academically, or in your personal life.

### **3. Providing Cost-Saving Services**

Being a student is expensive, so the RSU works to save you money by providing discount and cost-saving services. By pooling our resources, we provide a range of services to make your life easier. Services such as the Members' Health & Dental Plan, CopyRITE Printing Service, Tax Clinic, Legal Service, Academic Advocacy, Graduation Photos, Campus Lost & Found, Members' Handbook & Dayplanner, and Examination Kits are some of the benefits of a membership in the Students' Union.



## **Ryerson Students' Union Areas of Focus**

### **Accessibility:**

The Ryerson Students' Union is committed to fostering community and inclusion in adherence to the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) and the Ontario Human Rights code. RSU events must be accessible for all members regardless of ability and this accessibility must be communicated effectively.

### **Accountability:**

The RSUs mandate has always been governed by our membership. The RSU not only has a corporate responsibility to hold ourselves accountable, but it is also in our best interest to have the continued trust and support of our members.

With that being said, the RSU is governed by bylaws, and policies that require Executives, Board of Directors, and staff to be accountable to the students. Students have access to our annual budget that is posted on our website each year. In addition, students have the right to sit on specified committees, and to attend board of director meetings where they can engage and ask questions. Above all, students are encouraged to engage, submit motions, and attend both semi-annual and annual general meetings.

Annual General Meetings (AGM), require the full-transparency of staff, executives, and board of directors through reports of campaigns, events, programming, and initiatives that took place throughout the year.

### **Democracy:**

#### **\*\* Democratic Decision-making**

Each member local, represented by each student association (i.e. Ryerson Students' Union - Local 24), has an equal say in setting the policies, direction and priorities of the Federation, including how funds are spent. All major decisions are made at provincial and national meetings at which every member student association is represented.

The Ryerson Students' Union has been student led and operated for over 50 years. Every year, students have the opportunity to partake in the RSU election. All full-time undergraduate students have the right to run and vote in the election.





Similarly to the RSU elections, all of our meetings are carried out by students' votes if decisions need to be made. At both SAGM's and AGM's, only full-time undergraduate students have the ability to vote and pass motions.

The RSU is accountable only to its membership and takes direction from them in all manners relating to the policies and operations of the union. The membership has the sole authority to order any action from the RSU and can do so during its annual general meetings, annual general elections or any process outlined in the unions operations policies, constitution and bylaws, as appropriate.

### **Education:**

The RSU is the students' union for Ryerson University. With that comes the need to prioritize students' education. Beyond advocacy work and ensuring that students are financially capable of being able to attend school, we ensure that students have additional resources to educate themselves and develop both professional and personal skills.

At the RSU, we offer a co-extra curricular grant that allows students who are in an unpaid internship to access additional funding to help supplement their course work.

We also try to enhance the educational offerings on campus. One way we do this is through offering American Sign-Language classes through RyeAccess. This allows students to develop a skill that better supports the deaf and hard of hearing community on campus. During examination periods, students experience more stress than usual and we provide examination kits during mid-term and exam season to ensure that Ryerson students have all the necessary resources to be able to write an exam.

### **Equity:**

Ryerson Students' Union Equity Statement:

Student Union solidarity is based on the principle that all members are equal and deserve mutual respect and understanding. As members of the students' union, mutual respect, cooperation and understanding are our goals. We should neither condone nor tolerate behaviour that undermines the dignity or self-esteem of any individual or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive environment. It is our collective responsibility to create an inclusive space for discussion and



dialogue. All forms of discrimination and harassment will not be tolerated, nor will hate speech rooted in, but not limited to Islamophobia, anti-Semitism, sexism, racism, classism, ableism, homophobia or transphobia. We all have an obligation to ensure that an open and inclusive space, free of hate, is established. If you are not here in an understanding of good faith, or you have violated this understanding, you will be asked to leave.

### **Student Advocacy:**

**Campaigns:** The RSU implements initiatives around educational issues and policies, equity and social justice issues, student rights and access to education on a local, provincial and federal level. Campaigns can also be based on the immediate needs of Ryerson students. The Executive Committee works closely with the Equity and Campaigns Organiser and the Student Issues and Advocacy Coordinator to create meaningful campaigns and initiatives to better the lives of the membership and to advocate for student rights.

**The Equity Service Centres:** The Equity Service Centres are funded by the RSU. The Ryerson Students' Union is committed to promoting equity and inclusion in all aspects of campus life. As such, the students' union supports seven Equity Service Centres to help foster a community that is anti-oppressive and works to create safer spaces for women, lesbians, gays, bisexuals, trans people, students with disabilities, racialised students and the growing population of students living in poverty. These Centres are the Centre for Women & Trans People, the Good Food Centre, the Racialised Students' Collective, RyeACCESS, RyePRIDE, the Centre for Safer Sex and Sexual Survivor Support, and the Trans Collective.

### **Student Development:**

The RSU provides opportunities for students to learn and engage in co-extracurriculars. We offer paid internships, and part-time on campus jobs. Additionally, we provide leadership opportunities through the RSU Board of Directors, student groups, course unions, or affiliate groups. There are also a large amount of volunteering opportunities at the RSU that provide students with experience that allows them to secure jobs, or apply for internships off campus.

### **Student Life & Community:**

**Events:** The RSU builds and enhances student life for Ryerson Students through various events and also in partnership with RSU Campus Groups and Ryerson University. The Executive Committee, Events Committee, Grad Chairperson Events, the Events Coordinator, Equity and Campaigns Organiser and the General Manager work together to plan and promote and host events.



**Campus Groups:** The RSU provides funding and resources for over 180 Campus Groups. The Campus Groups are supported by the Campus Groups Coordinator, Campus Groups Committees and the Vice President Student Life and Events. Groups receive funding and all groups have access to additional funding through grants and sponsorships. The RSU helps groups secure space on campus for meetings and events, provides office space and event management support. The RSU works with campus groups to build and enhance student life academically, spiritually and socially.

**RSU Volunteer Program:** Volunteer With The RSU provides volunteer opportunities for Ryerson Students. The Volunteer programme has successfully built community, provided experiential learning and provided integral support for RSU Events and Services. Volunteer opportunities include Orientation and Week of Welcome events, Blue and Gold Team, Tax Clinic, RSU Parade and Concert, Health and Wellness Fair and the Campus Groups Fair.

**Student Support:**

The RSU provides various services to support the membership. The Executive Committee works closely with RSU full time staff to implement current services and introduce new services to benefit and supplement student life.



## **Re-imagining the Mission of the Ryerson Students' Union**

For every organization, it is healthy to revisit values and create a strategic plan that will guide and perfect the organizational values to help with the day-to-day operation.

With that being said, the RSU needs to work towards a plan that services its memberships. The 3 pillars of the RSU work and benefit Ryerson students through a variety of supports. However, what needs to change is the way in which we communicate with our membership, and what support we're offering.

Over the next 5 years, the Ryerson Students' Union needs to increase their financial revenue so they are not solely dependent on student levies. The years of 2019 and 2020 taught us that complications arise when the government, and the university infringe on student autonomy. As a way to protect the organization financially, the RSU needs to consider ways to increase revenue.

Additionally, the RSU services over 30,000 full-time undergraduate students. However, our largest social media platform has just over 7,000 followers. Reaching out to students via social media only reaches 23% of our membership. One of the RSU's greatest value is inclusivity. As an organization, we need to find additional ways to engage and communicate effectively with our membership.



## **Prioritizing Accessibility and Equity**

### Accessibility

RyeACCESS applied for the Enabling Accessibility Fund to make majority of the doors accessible in the Equity Service Centres. The RSU should make sure this is finished to completion. The RSU should follow the steps taken by RyeACCESS and ensure that all spaces, events, venues, and initiatives carried out by the RSU are accessible.

The elevator in the SCC is frequently out of service. It may be useful to talk to the building manager to determine how to minimize this issue and what protocols and accessibility solutions are in place for individuals who want to access the second and third floor. As outlined in AODA, notifications should include: reason for disruption, how long the disruption will last and alternate methods of service. The elevator should be reliable and timely. As well, the University should address this issue in other buildings such as Kerr Hall, where elevator access is limited and inconsistent.

For small events or events with low budgets, the RSU should prioritize making events as accessible as possible. For presentations and group meetings, there is a voice-to-text feature in PowerPoint that behaves like live-captioning. No additional resources would have to be spent, especially if there are no deaf or hard of hearing attendees confirmed.

Whereas the SCC and Ryerson building are difficult to navigate, it may be valuable to produce a layout of each building and where rooms are located. This can be included in the student handbook and on the RSU website.

Whereas the lighting on the main floor and basement in the SCC is dark and hard to navigate for low-vision students and community members, the lighting should be upgraded to make the space more accessible. This includes adding more light fixtures and increasing the brightness of them.

RyeACCESS has requested coat racks, cabinets and storage for their space to ensure the space is easy to navigate for their community members.

To alleviate the stress of obtaining sick notes and the costs associated with them, it may be beneficial to inquire whether this can be added to our Health and Dental coverage.



Whereas student space is limited on campus, empty classrooms become a valuable workspace for students to study. The Ryerson library has a schedule of available study rooms on their website. In a similar manner, the RSU should set up an online schedule that allows students to see which classrooms are vacant and available to use. In order to achieve this, the RSU would have to ask for this information from the University.

### Equity

Whereas the Trans Collective has created an Emergency Bursary proposal (led by Ezra Li) for their community members, the RSU should proceed with finalizing the bursary.

Supervisors should review the Workplace Harassment Policy with all part-time staff to ensure all staff have the same training and understanding of the policy.

To establish consistency with the equity service groups and volunteers and the board of directors, there should be a standard training document that all individuals are trained with. This document is currently in the training folder of VP Equity's google drive and should be reviewed yearly.

### Determining Success of Programing

The Equity Centres mandates are to support marginalized students on campus, and provide them with resources and a safe space to build community. Part-time staff change semi-annually as the RSU hires staff for both the fall and winter semesters. The continuous change simultaneously affects programming that runs out of the centres. As a way to ensure the consistency of programming, and ensuring that the programming benefits students using the centres, the RSU should implement metrics that collect data around the success and satisfaction of the Equity Centres Programming.

Qualitative and Quantitative should be the two methods of data inquiry considered to record data for the centres. Doing so will allow the RSU to collect a large scale of data that can better help with the success of the Equity Centres.

Quantitative data will help the RSU visualize how many students are accessing the centres on a daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly basis. The centres should record how many students attend their events, the scale of their events, how much their events cost, and the marketing strategies used to promote the events.



In terms of examining qualitative data, the Equity Centre staff should be consulting and communicating with the students who access the space to understand their needs and how they could better be supported. There should be a feedback form filled out after all events to understand members' level of support and satisfaction, with regards to the programming.

Additionally, these forms should be reviewed annually to determine what programming was successful and to discontinue or improve the programming that didn't serve the membership in the way it was intended to.



## Governance

### Changing Governance Structure

The Ryerson Students' Union is registered as a Not-For-Profit corporation. Being a Not-For-Profit comes with additional governance structures that hold directors and officers of the organization accountable beyond internal policies and bylaws. For instance, directors' obligations are binded by legislation and common law such as [\*The Corporations Act\*](#).

In accordance with *The Corporations Act* any student who takes the active role of becoming a Board of Director for the Ryerson Students' Union has an obligation to take on and uphold their Fiduciary Duty. This terminology is used to define the responsibilities board members have with the organization in that they are required to put the interests of the corporation before their own.

This very principle is challenging for students to adopt as the majority of student leaders get involved in extracurricular leadership because of their personal passion for advocacy. Therefore, it is hard to let go of issues that are personal to better the organization as a whole. The failure of directors being able to adapt this responsibility has led to internal issues within the RSU.

The Ryerson Students' Union governance structure is outdated, difficult to manage, and increases the possibility of mismanagement, and breaking fiduciary duties. Reviewing the RSUs current structure and fixing the existing problems can help reduce mismanagement and will create a system that better holds directors accountable.

In 2015, the Appian Way Group conducted a Business Analysis of the RSU and provided recommendations on how to repair the damage within our governance structure. The recommendations have slowly begun to be implemented, such as hiring an Executive Director for greater oversight of the day to day operations, and reducing the size of the Board of Directors, to meet quorum and for stronger accountability. The Appian Way Group recommended breaking the structure of the board into three categories for different responsibilities and oversight. The three structures are divided into a Board of Directors, executive officers and a general assembly.





Table 1.0 *Recommended Governance Structure from Appian Way Group.*

**Recommended Governance Structure:**

**Board of Directors**

**Mandate:**  
Corporate strategy and policy, financial and management oversight.

**Membership:**  
President (as CEO)

Vice-President Operations (as Secretary-Treasurer)

7 At-Large Directors

General Manager, non-voting (as COO)

**Election:**  
Hiring process conducted by Nominating Committee, elected by Members at AGM.

**Executive Officers**

**Mandate:**  
Day-to-day management of Executive portfolios.

Via President, day-to-day supervision of the Executive Directors

**Membership:**  
President  
VP Operations  
VP Education  
VP Student Life and Events  
VP Equity

**Election:**  
Popular vote, at-large

**General Assembly**

**Mandate:**  
Political representation of students, set advocacy policy.

**Membership:**  
Same size and composition as your current Board of Directors

**Election:**  
Popular vote, by constituency

The Appian Group recommended a structure of governance that has been adopted by other student unions across Canada, specifically the University Students’ Council of Western, and Brock University Students’ Union. These two repeatable unions have managed to strengthen their governance internally, and have a structure that is successful for oversight and accountability.

It is in the RSUs best interest to change our governance structure to ensure oversight, accountability, and prevent internal conflict. The proposed governance structure allows for the mission of the RSU to be fulfilled despite the constant change of board of directors and executives.

This structure ensures that the daily operations are being monitored for people who are trained and experienced to provide their input. Otherwise, we would be required to seek approval from students who are elected based on popularity and not expertise.



It is in the best interest for the RSU as a corporation to adopt the three tiered system at an SAGM or AGM to allow the membership to vote on the structure. If passed, it should be effective the following year to ensure that the board of directors have a fair and a democratic election and are aware of the changes that took place. The bylaws and policies should therefore be re-written to fit this new framework. Those bylaws and policies should be re-written by the current board of directors when the structure is voted in.

## **Implementing Better Training**

### Board of Directors

Currently, the only mandatory training for the board of directors is during a weekend retreat. The training is structured around team building to address the competitive nature of elections. It is a way to resolve the slate versus slate mentality and to implement a united team. The retreat is beneficial for the element of team building, but falls short in preparing the board of directors for their yearly responsibilities. The RSU needs to implement stronger training centred around corporate responsibility, financial training (regarding making annual budgets), media training, and training around Roberts Rules and creating motions. Our recommendation would be to have a multi-day training for each focus area so the board of directors can work through real life scenarios and learn their jobs. Additionally, after the first board meeting, individual committees should have training focused on the mandate of the given committee. For instance, the finance committee should have an in-depth financial training about how to create a budget, and consultation training so they know how to connect with different departments and involve them in the budget creation. Another example that would be less formal would be the Student Action Committee and Events Committee. They should have training around recruitment and class presentations. All board of directors sitting on these committees should be able to do public speaking, and should be responsible for outreach and campaigning. Therefore, training regarding running an effective campaign needs to occur.

### Executives

Every year there is minimal succession training given to incoming Executives stemming from differing political positions. The RSU has fallen into a detrimental belief system of refusing to accept advice from the previous executive team. This results in the lack of sustainability for student initiatives or campaigns, and causes the RSU to start from scratch each year. In order for



the RSU to remain successful and to ensure the organization is successful each year, better training needs to be implemented to enhance executives in the following areas:

- Critical Thinking
- Professionalism
- Campaigning
- Event Planning
- Corporate Governance
- HR and Management
- Finances
- Leadership
- Communication and Media

Some of the above recommended areas of training can be applied to specific executives portfolios depending on their job responsibilities. Professionalism, critical thinking, corporate governance, leadership, and HR management should all be areas that every executive undergoes. This training should occur during the beginning months of the Executive's term.

### **Sustaining Institutional Knowledge**

The failure of the RSU being able to sustain institutional knowledge stems from the lack of onboarding and transitioning from one executive team to the other. There is a resistance from incoming executive teams to be trained on their own free time by the current executive team and prevents them from obtaining the knowledge they gained throughout their term. As a way to prevent this, both the incoming and outgoing executives should be paid during the month of May (after exam season) to assist with onboarding. That way, the refusal to work for free would be eliminated and it would be required for both parties to participate in the best interest of the organization. Furthermore, the transitioning training in May would allow the incoming executive to shadow the out-going executive while learning their roles and establishing relationships with staff.

Additionally, each Executive team should be responsible for completing an End of the Year Report, outlining campaigns, events and initiatives that were successful and how they were able to accomplish them. This knowledge should be passed on to the incoming executive and stored in a folder so executives can rely on past initiatives for their year planning.



## **Revising Outdated Bylaws & Policies**

Every year, the Board of Directors elects members to sit on the governance committee. This committee should be tasked with implementing the changes in bylaws and policies voted in at Board of Directors meetings, and Semi-Annual Meetings or Annual General Meetings to ensure that the RSU is up to date with their policies and bylaws. The information should be sent to [graphics@rsuonline.ca](mailto:graphics@rsuonline.ca), after SAGMs, AGMs, and board of director meetings so the RSU Graphic designer can update the policies on our website.

This committee should also be tasked with proposing to get rid of or revise and re-write outdated policies and bylaws that contradict or where the language is inaccessible or discriminatory. The Governance committee should review the bylaws and policies on a monthly basis, bringing recommendations to the Board of Directors every month to vote on the changes. In the case that the changes need to be voted on by the membership, motions should be submitted by the committee for the Semi-Annual or General Annual Meetings.



## Financial Stability and Increased Revenue

In accordance with section 8.1 of the Ryerson Students' Union [Financial Policies](#), the RSU ...

“shall generate revenue by providing services to the students and by earning interest via investing into different projects or initiatives. This policy will ensure that the decisions will be conducted keeping the best interest of the students union in mind without threatening the financial stability of the students union.”

### Hiring Sponsorship Coordinator

By hiring a sponsorship coordinator, this will allow for the RSU to better market neighbouring businesses, while also serving as a benefit to the organization to increase revenues. It would be beneficial to have someone who has experience in sales and marketing. It is also advisable to have someone who has a background in event planning that can assist with selling the benefits of partnerships.

### Increase external tabling and external event room bookings

Tabling is one of the ways TRSM is able to bring in external businesses and additional revenue. For instance, a company like Nestle might be launching a new product and will be looking for somewhere for students to experience the product. This is where tabling comes into play. By renting out a section of that space for a specified time, it allows for them to ‘sell’ their product, students to experience it, and for the organization to collect revenue from the rental fee.

Another form of revenue for the school is using vacant space on the weekends and renting it out to organizations who are planning conferences or events (i.e. weddings, showers, family reunions, etc.). An email should be sent out to student groups at the beginning of the year to ensure the dates do not conflict with their planned events.

A nominal booking fee can also be introduced for student groups and course unions to help cover the costs of set-up and cleanup as well as the staff that book out the space.

It is recommended that an analysis be completed for rooms in the SCC that are idle and can be rented out.



## **Partnering with Local Businesses**

*Two-fold Increase RSU Revenue, Decrease Costs of Resources for students.*

Bringing our neighbouring community into Ryerson directly benefits students. Negotiating and marketing neighbouring businesses will drive sales for them and allow us to offer cost-saving resources for students. A small percentage of their sales can go towards the RSU, increasing our revenue. Understanding what students want will be the first step.

The RSU needs to start using our location to the organization's advantage. The RSU is located in the centre of Downtown Toronto, the businesses surrounding this area are fairly successful, and are always looking to grow their clientele due to the competitive nature of the downtown core. The RSU should conduct an analysis of all the businesses within a one (1) mile radius of the Student Campus Centre. Doing so will allow the RSU to assess what businesses would benefit students, and to find ways to collaborate.

*Examples of this;*

1. Partnering with hair salons or barber shops to provide students with affordable prices for haircuts that are accessible to them from campus, in return for promoting their services.
2. Partnering with local restaurants to get students discounts on meals. (Ex. Ali Bababa provides Ryerson students with 10% off.) - How can we get other restaurants to do this for Ryerson Students as well.
3. Staples - working out a partnership with staples to provide students with affordable school supplies
4. Getting discounts that are faculty specific - Henry's Camera Store/ Micheals for FCAD students.

## **Implement Programming That Increases Revenue**

In order to become self-sustaining, the RSU must create services that drive revenue. This means such services must meet the following two conditions a) membership must have a need for that service and b) membership must be willing to pay the RSU for that service. This is challenging as the vast majority of RSU services have been created with the intent of being free to students (ie. some unions in Canada charge a small fee for legal services and other services we offer for free); however, it has been done at other unions.



One such example initiated this year by the RSU was with the Verified Podcast where students can rent out podcast equipment, otherwise only available to RTA students, for \$10 per microphone per hour. Additional examples can be found under section 8, financial stability.

### **Selling Lost & Found Items**

The Ryerson Students Union is tasked with being the University's Lost and Found. The RSU is brought all types of materials such as school supplies, clothing, and technology. In our rules, we are to keep the material for 6 months. If a student does not collect it, we are to donate it due to the limited amount of storage available.

Current Lost & Found protocol is as follows:

- LOG all new items into our Excel document, *Lost & Found Inventory List*, while filling out all required fields (date, location found, item description)
- STORE items in respective locker (keys, wallets, and technology items are to be in the 3 lockers with lock and key)
- HOLD items for the course of 1 year
- DONATE items after no collection following the year

A beneficial suggestion would be to sell the technology or rent it out. For example, laptops that are unclaimed passed the date, should be wiped by IT and rented out to RSU Members (similar to the podcast equipment). There are a large sum of students and student leaders who work inside the Student Campus Centre. Students can rent out laptops at the library and we should also offer this program out of the RSU.

### **Charging for Large Scale Events**

RSU events are one of the largest expenses for the organization. As a way to stay accountable to our pillar of cost-effective services, we provide students with free admission to the majority of our events. Historically, not charging students has placed the RSU in deficits because the organization is not making back any money.

As a way to counteract this, we could start charging students for large scale events such as concerts, conferences, and case competitions. For example, the RSU can host a case competition on how the RSU can increase revenue. This can be partnered with each of the student societies, improving collaboration, increasing student engagement, providing educational and professional opportunities, and providing solutions to increase revenue for the organization. The benefits students get from attending these events would far exceed the cost they would pay for the event.



**Other Examples Employed by Other Successful Students Unions Include:**

- Creating a used book space where students can sell their used books to other students and the RSU charges a small facilitation fee for streamlining the process. (The RSU formerly ran this program)
- Creating a tutoring service where students can tutor other students and the RSU charges a small facilitation fee for partnering students with tutors and vice versa. (University of Calgary SU employed this program)
- Creating a resume building service where students pay to have their resumes and cover letters reviewed and edited by an expert.
- Online test bank where students purchase digital copies of previously administered midterm and final exams. (University of Calgary SU uses this program)
- Creating lessons (i.e sign language, coding, cooking) that are important to students and charging them a reasonable fee of admission. This can be partnered with training companies like BrainStation. A fee or a percentage of their sales can be charged to them for promoting their services.
- Creating a housing program where the union charges a few and assists students in finding off campus housing. The service would list housing units around campus that are safe and affordable and aims to remove the stress of finding affordable housing for students so that they can focus on their studies. (This service has been successfully employed at Hull University Student in the UK and University of Calgary Students' Union)





## **Increase Student Engagement**

Membership engagement is important to a student union because depending on how well a student union engages its membership ends up dictating many different areas of that union such as voter turnout, service utilization, campaign knowledge and event attendees. In the past years the RSU has not done well in engaging its membership. Moving forward the RSU should put more steps into implementing initiatives and events that are in line with its membership needs and requests. The following are some ways the RSU can increase membership engagement:

### **Annual Events**

One of the many things that the RSU does is host events for its membership. The membership benefits from this by being provided with different networking and community building activities. At the same time, it allows the RSU to reach out to students with their services and initiatives. Currently the RSUs annual events are Week of Welcome, Winter Week of Welcome, Culture Jam and Parade & Picnic. With the implementation of more annual events for the membership, membership to student union relations engagement can increase. These events can allow incoming and returning students to look forward to recurring events throughout the year. This in turn will allow the RSU to be known on campus for many other things other than the services it provides. Once the RSU is known for more recurring events, it will cause an increase in its membership engagement and give more avenues for the RSU to reach out to the membership

### **First Year Education**

Engaging the First-year population is critical for RSU membership engagement due to the fact that there is 2 weeks (O-Week and Week of Welcome) dedicated to first year engagement. Leading up to these two weeks the RSU should prepare over the break to create new campaigns and evaluate past initiatives to make sure they are up to date with the memberships needs. During this time it is also critical to communicate with 1st year students all the services that the RSU provides as well as past wins and campaigns that the RSU has done. Not only is education on RSU important but also the education of students' unions and student union autonomy. Through this constant education of the yearly incoming 1st year students the RSU will increase the use of RSU services as well as event attendees.



## **Daily Outreach**

Daily outreach on Ryerson Campus can greatly increase membership engagement by informing students on the services provided by the RSU, educating the membership on campaigns and informing students on upcoming events. With an implementation of a daily outreach schedule it will allow the RSU to engage students daily and in turn increase awareness of the RSU on Ryerson campus. Organizing a volunteer schedule and adding incentives for volunteers would also help increase the reach of the daily outreach by having more on the ground support. However, it is important that during this outreach that the current executives are taking initiative to outreach to students and informing on the daily work that staff and executives are doing for the membership throughout their term.

## **Greater Visibility**

Although being located in the middle of Gould Street, many students are still unaware as to the location of the Student Campus Centre and the numerous essential services that it houses. As a result, students genuinely are unfamiliar to the plentiful of resources offered by the Ryerson Students' Union. A possible solution to increase visibility, aside from only using social media, could involve investing in a network or digital platform that is solely focused on bringing program and event awareness to students, providing students with event reminders and also direct communication to our membership regarding any questions that they may have. This platform could also simultaneously run with the previously mentioned recommendation from Jamie Hassos regarding ways to communicate with students about increased campus study space.

An additional solution could entail the use of a weekly RSU newsletter being emailed to students routinely. While Campus Group Coordinator is able to email student groups and course unions, I believe a persistent, routine and weekly scheduled Student Campus Centre Newsletter should be communicated to all students on campus. In this manner, we are able to directly communicate to the entire student body, not just those already involved in student groups, and also provide students with clarity via digital communication. In this way we are also able to increase the number of students participating, opposed to reaching the select current members.

Furthermore, the RSU also has potential to improve visibility by better utilizing its frontage on both Gould Street and Church Street. While students are constantly able to view the front and back of our offices from different areas of campus, very few know that this is the RSU. A solution could entail the implementation of an effective marketing campaign to be posterred on our windows extending from the RSU Boardroom throughout to the end of our printer area. I feel



as though this is a prime location to plaster advertisements and campaigns to increase RSU and SCC visibility to students; with increased visibility comes increased student engagement.

### **Improved Shareability**

The power of social media is key; however, it is important for us to curate alternative shareability options. With improved shareability comes a greater and larger membership who is able to access and benefit from the use of our services. While the RSU uses social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram, it is important to do so in an effective manner. A recommendation to improving shareability could entail creating more effective content that students are able to relate, interact, and share with. While monitoring our Instagram account, I have been able to analyze our interaction levels while pursuing various marketing efforts. As a result, our greatest impacts were noticed when content was actively, shared, retweeted, reposted and involved students to comment on (student online polls, giveaways, raffles, etc.) Constantly posting event posters does not always prove to be the most effective way to engage with students via social media. While it is important for us to utilize additional methods to improve promotion and marketing, it is also essential that we are using our social media platforms more effectively. Lastly, it is recommended we begin investing in promotional advertisements on our social media platforms to make our posts become visible and shareable to profiles who do not already follow us, but relate to our content and current following base.

### **Stronger Marketing and Promotion**

While we most often rely on posting to Facebook and Instagram, it is crucial for the RSU to find ways to more directly and more effectively communicate with the student body. One of the most effective ways to improve our brand promotion involves the idea of increased outreach methods. This idea entails not only increasing the amount of times we host outreach events and increase the locations we outreach from, but the manner in which we decide to do so as well. We must find ways to engage with students aside from just sitting at a table and hoping for students to engage with us. It is recommended that outreach contains more digital displays or entail more interactive communication tools such as activities, questionnaires or relation story sharing. I believe students are unaware and misinformed about all the services provided by the RSU and the importance of having an autonomous student dmographic government. Additionally, the use of displays is also key, as digital displays, window advertisements overlooking campus and popup set-ups, create a buzz and hype that students will find hard to ignore. Aside from improving our outreach methods, I also believe creating better relationships with sponsors and improved networking could assist with our promotion and marketing efforts. While we constantly have



various vendors reaching out to come to campus, my experience has been that not many actually get a chance to make it happen, or if they do it is usually for a one-time event. I recommend us better utilizing these relationships in formulating arrangements to have these key suppliers be involved in more events and in greater capacities. While we do our part to promote them on campus, this idea of sponsoring one another could benefit us as we can expect for these partners to advertise our services as well. This is extremely important for nearby businesses. Some examples of relationships in which were positive and impactful for students, and I believe would me more than willing to pursue long-term relationships which involves, Staples on University, Craig's Cookies, and Shark Club. These examples, from my experience, have been connections which we have been able to effectively use, brought in positive feedback from students, and facilitation was easy for all parties involved.

### **Increase Accountability to Membership**

Remaining accountable to our membership is crucial to our continued mission in supporting and advocating for students. In attempting to increase transparency within the daily operations, Ryerson Students' Union can adopt and commit to a few mechanisms to facilitate this process.

In regards to the Executives being accountable to the board and in turn, to the membership, the Executives can commit to submitting monthly reports in regards to their work and responsibilities. As implemented this year, this mechanism was effective in describing in detail, projects that were completed and in progress demonstrating, not only hours worked, but the quality and quantity of work completed within these hours.

In regards to the board and their relationship with their respective faculty, the board may implement and hold monthly town hall meetings to encourage open communication and therefore accountability with the membership. Town Halls within faculties provide a more welcoming and familiar environment to answer questions and allow members to inquire about the RSU and current initiatives.

In addition, the Ryerson Students' Union can continue to leverage marketing and promotion for current accountability mechanisms such as attendance of board meetings and semi and annual general member meetings. Although these are available options to the membership to hold the RSU executives and board accountable, many are not aware of these tools or are not aware of the procedures. More access as to how meetings work and how to submit motions so members can use these tools available to them effectively can be shared. This further allows students to be able



to have open communication with the Ryerson Students' Union and hold acting individuals accountable to their commitments and responsibilities.



## **Strengthening Advocacy**

### **Addressing the Student Choice Initiative**

The Ontario Provincial Government began putting legislation in place that sought additional oversight of Student Unions across the province. The implementation of the Student Choice Initiative provided students with the option of opting into Students Unions' non-essential services. In doing so, the RSU saw a decrease in our yearly fees collected from students, thereby reducing the services offered to students (i.e. unable to host certain large scale events, or providing students with grants).

The Canadian Federation of Students was able to overturn the government's decision, bringing them to court and arguing that it was undemocratic for the government to infringe on student unions operations as independent organizations. They won the case. However, the government appealed the court's decision.

The Student Choice Initiative is still an ongoing battle and the RSU may have to continue operating under the mandate of this legislation. In doing so, advocacy plays a huge role. Firstly, it is important for the RSU to ensure that the majority of the services being offered are considered as essential. In doing so, the organization will acquire more funds, will be able to run more programming and host more events for students.



## Annual Revisions

### Executive Committee Meeting

Executives should have two (2) mandatory meetings throughout their term that reviews the *5 Year Strategic Plan*. The objective of these meetings will be to select areas of the strategic plan that they can realistically work on throughout their term.

#### First Meeting

Within the first two (2) months of the Executives term they should sit down with the Executive Director and Financial Controller to strategize for the rest of the year. In this meeting, the Executives should have a clear idea of what they would like to accomplish with regards to events, campaigns, and initiatives.

Once they have their year laid out, they should consult the *5 Year Strategic Plan* to create a strategy for the year that will benefit the organization and will move the RSU towards accomplishing the recommendations laid out in the strategic plan. This should be a united effort by all the executives to complete these objectives.

#### Second Meeting

At the end of the Executives term, during their last month in April, the executives should get together to discuss what recommendations they worked towards this year and what they were able to accomplish. This meeting should be minuted and documentation should be provided to the next Executive Committee so they are aware of what has been completed and what still needs to be accomplished.

At this meeting, the Executives should also propose new recommendations or ways to improve the RSU based on their experience and observation over their term.

The Executive Director will be responsible to organize and provide the documentation to each incoming Executive team to help them strategize and accomplish the recommendations set out in this document.



## **Re-Creating 5 Year Strategic Plan**

In 2025, the acting Executive Director and President should work towards putting together a new 5 strategic plan committee, in which Executives, Staff Members, and Board of Directors work together to create a new or updated 5 Year Strategic Plan.

The plan should outline the mission of the RSU, the success, and recommendations to address the areas of improvement. It should be passed by the acting Board of Directors at the end of the year, and if possible, at the Annual General Meeting to get student input. Additionally, surveys should be conducted with the RSU membership to get students advice on where the RSU should be headed for the future.