

2024 Annual General Meeting

February 29th, 2024

Call to Order- The meeting was called to order at 12:35 pm by the Chairperson, Algoma University Student Union (AUSU).

Agenda

1. Welcome and Opening Remarks

- a. Introduction of the Chairperson
- b. Recognition of Attendees
- c. Explanation of Meeting Agenda and Objectives

2. President's Report

- a. Report Presentation

Speaker(s):	Interim President- Yug Modi (he/him)
Discussion:	<p>Yug Modi extended his gratitude for the opportunity to represent all students as the Interim AUSU President, addressing all campuses. Under his leadership, several achievements and highlights have been realized. These include the initiation of Yummy Inc as a subsidiary to manage cafeteria services in SSM, provision of financial support to students, and ongoing development of the emergency fund bursary. Additionally, a Taskforce has been established to address student concerns with administration, with the aim of fostering positive changes within the organization.</p> <p>However, challenges have been encountered, notably in the form of operational and governance issues due to a lack of policies. To tackle this, plans are underway to establish a policy review committee to address the deficiencies. Furthermore, staffing changes have led to increased transparency and communication within AUSU, signaling a commitment to improving internal processes.</p>

	<p>Reflecting on lessons learned, it is evident that insufficient communication with students regarding AUSU activities has hindered the achievement of 100% student awareness of services and benefits. Moving forward, the interim president aims to enhance financial aid opportunities for students across all campuses and increase student awareness ratio through collaboration with VPs and improved programming. These future plans underscore AUSU's commitment to serving the student community effectively and transparently.</p>
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b. QA session

<p>Question(s):</p>	<p>During the session, a participant queried the status of all policies listed on the AUSU website being under review, seeking clarification on this matter, the review process details, and an estimated completion timeline. In response, it was explained that internal staffing issues and executive transitions had delayed active policy oversight. The speaker detailed efforts to establish a policy review committee comprising staff members, executives, and board representatives, aiming to provide recommendations with student input and complete the review by the end of the upcoming academic year. The speaker further addressed adherence to existing policies during the review process, acknowledging past challenges in bylaw compliance but assuring recent efforts to adhere. Additionally, clarification was provided that AUSU executive members do not directly oversee elections, with dedicated officers managing electoral processes. This session highlighted AUSU's commitment to addressing policy review and transparency challenges amid internal transitions, emphasizing efforts to ensure accountability and governance transparency within the student union.</p>
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3. Executives Report

a. Report Presentation

Speaker(s):	VP SSM Advocacy- Minion Paul (she/her)
Discussion:	<p>Minion Paul, the VP SSM Advocacy, shared insights into her tenure, highlighting accomplishments and challenges. She emphasized achievements such as advocating for increased academic financial aid, securing over \$38,507 to support emergency cases, and collaborating with frontline staff to assist students facing housing crises. Additionally, Minion promoted mental health awareness through events like the Cat Cafe during AUSU Mental Health month, and provided leadership to AUSU staff, ensuring transparency and upholding bylaws and responsibilities.</p> <p>However, Minion also addressed challenges, including the lack of training for the 2023-24 board, resulting in them being ill-informed about governance procedures and policies. The absence of policies regarding housing support and financial procedures posed significant obstacles, alongside ineffective leadership, communication breakdowns, and team segregation. Moreover, the lack of measures to protect employees, inadequate financial oversight, and poor communication negatively impacted staff well-being.</p> <p>Looking ahead, Minion outlined future plans for the SSM Campus, focusing on implementing a succession plan to ensure safety and well-being. This involves providing proper training for new board members, fostering an understanding of bylaws and governance documents, and ensuring compliance with legal regulations. Research on legal compliance with AUSU staff will also be conducted to address any potential regulatory issues.</p>
Question(s):	No Questions were asked.

Speaker(s):	VP SSM Programming- Andrea Ryall
Discussion:	<p>VP SSM Programming Andrea Ryall reflected on her term, focusing on promoting student life engagement across the SSM campus through tailored events for the entire student body. Among the successful events hosted were those during O Month, WOW, Karaoke nights, Paint nights, and the Y2K Dance Party Featuring Beats by E-man. Andrea also worked closely with clubs to foster their growth on campus.</p> <p>However, challenges were encountered, including lower turnout at certain events such as off-campus events and the Champions League final watch party. Through trial and feedback from students, Andrea learned which events were most appealing to the SSM student body.</p>

	<p>In terms of budget management, Andrea initially spent more than anticipated in the first semester but adjusted spending in the second semester accordingly. Additionally, there was a gap in communication about events at the start of her term, which was addressed through improved marketing strategies.</p> <p>Looking ahead, Andrea plans to host a few more events during the remaining term while focusing mainly on providing an onboarding package for her successor, ensuring a smooth transition and continuation of engaging programming on the SSM campus.</p>
<p>Question(s):</p>	<p>The participant raised concerns about the nature of programming at SSM over the past six months, particularly regarding recreational events like parties and dancing, and highlighted a perceived lack of policies or awareness regarding responsible behavior, alcohol consumption, and staff-student boundaries. In response, the speaker acknowledged previous shortcomings in executive training and familiarity with necessary policies, emphasizing recent efforts to address these gaps by studying bylaws and intending to incorporate this knowledge into onboarding for future event organizers. This initiative aims to ensure better adherence to policies and promote safer, more informed event management moving forward.</p>

<p>Speaker(s):</p>	<p>VP Brampton Programming- Yug Modi</p>
<p>Discussion:</p>	<p>VP Brampton Programming emphasized his commitment to ensuring students receive engaging events and robust club support. Highlights included coordinating orientation events for new students, fostering increased club participation with 25 registered clubs and over 400 student participants, and collaborating with AU student life and other departments to bolster event support.</p> <p>However, challenges arose, including some events experiencing low student participation, which prompted him to refine programming based on student preferences. Additionally, protests on the Brampton campus posed difficulties in motivating students to attend events and engage in campus activities.</p>

	<p>Reflecting on lessons learned, he acknowledged that internal issues resulted in a lack of events and decreased student engagement in the last few months. He also noted the absence of representation at the Creekbank site, where students have limited resources and access to AUSU.</p> <p>Looking ahead, he aims to provide better resources to clubs and establish a structured Clubs Policy and Committee. He also plans to increase the number of tailored events to better meet students' needs and enhance overall campus engagement.</p>
<p>Question(s):</p>	<p>A question was asked regarding the departure of the previous general manager and president, and a request was made to provide clarity on why these changes occurred and if there were any underlying reasons for their departures?</p> <p>Answer: The response given by the VP Programming clarifies that the departures of the general manager and president were not simultaneous. The general manager left the organization on October 31st, while the president resigned on January 31st, 2024. The general manager's departure was due to reasons outlined in the question, suggesting issues that led to their departure. The president resigned because they felt unable to fulfill their duties effectively. The response emphasizes that these were separate incidents and not indicative of a lack of clarity within the organization.</p>

<p>Speaker(s):</p>	<p>Timmins Campus Life Coordinator- Wayne Thompson</p>
<p>Discussion:</p>	<p>Wayne Thompson provided an overview of his tenure, highlighting several positive developments. These included establishing strong communications with staff at the Timmins campus, attending the Northern College Orientation to connect with students and facilitate shared events, and organizing family-oriented events like Family Hockey Day. Additionally, he facilitated trips between SSM and Timmins, collaborated with SSM Student Life staff and AU Timmins staff, and secured a new workplace within the SSM campus for the AUSU Office. Furthermore, he made contact with the Student Union at Northern College to enhance recreational and educational opportunities for AU students.</p> <p>However, Wayne acknowledged challenges, particularly the lack of communication between some AUSU staff, the previous president, and the current executive and board representative. He also noted the absence of a</p>

	<p>comprehensive long-term plan for AUSU, including financial planning and projections for the next five years.</p> <p>In terms of "ugly" aspects, he mentioned mistrust among board members, misinformation causing confusion and reduced productivity, and a poisoned workplace environment where staff and board members felt unsafe and unheard. However, efforts are underway to address these issues and improve transparency moving forward.</p> <p>Wayne also outlined his future plans, aiming to advocate for Algoma U students in Timmins by creating a permanent Timmins Vice-President position and appointing an AUSU Timmins staff member. Additionally, he plans to update AUSU By-laws and develop a 1-year and 5-year Operating Plan for the organization in collaboration with current AUSU leadership and staff.</p>
Question(s):	<p>Questions were asked about the communication challenges Wayne encountered during his tenure, Wayne acknowledged issues of miscommunication and lack of transparency within the organization. He emphasized his commitment to advocating for student interests, particularly as the Timmins representative, and highlighted collective efforts within the board to address these challenges and improve communication moving forward. In response to queries about compliance with Robert's Rules of Order, Wayne affirmed adherence to these rules during meetings, despite discrepancies in statements from the previous president. He assured attendees that meeting minutes accurately reflect compliance with procedural rules, underscoring AUSU's commitment to transparency and integrity in its proceedings. Wayne's responses underscored ongoing efforts towards transparency, accountability, and improved organizational effectiveness within AUSU.</p>

Speaker(s):	VP Brampton Advocacy- Jeet Patel
Discussion:	<p>Jeet Patel's tenure was marked by several impactful initiatives aimed at supporting students and fostering a positive campus environment. Notably, he organized a series of mental health sessions at both the Brampton and Mississauga buildings, providing valuable resources and support for students struggling with mental health issues. Additionally, in collaboration with the AU wellness department, Jeet facilitated Consent Bingo sessions at the Brampton campus, promoting awareness and education about consent in a fun and engaging way.</p> <p>Another significant contribution was his active participation in pre-arrival sessions for AU student life, where they provided essential information and</p>

	<p>raised awareness about health and dental benefits available to students. Moreover, he went above and beyond to assist numerous students with their appeals process, ensuring that their voices were heard and their concerns addressed.</p> <p>Despite these successes, he stated that he faced challenges in discussions with Brampton transit regarding transit pass arrangements and encountered obstacles in organizing Pride coffee sessions in Brampton, highlighting areas where advocacy efforts could be intensified.</p> <p>Looking forward, Jeet has ambitious plans to further enhance support for students and promote equity within the campus community. This includes establishing a food pantry in Brampton to address food insecurity among students and launching the "Integrity with Equity" campaign, aimed at fostering a culture of fairness and honesty while advocating for equal opportunities for all students. With his sheer dedication and vision, these future initiatives are poised to make a meaningful impact on the Brampton campus community.</p>
Question(s):	<p>When questioned about the Pride coffee sessions in Brampton, Jeet explained that while there isn't a dedicated Pride center or safe space on campus, efforts are underway to collaborate with the SSM campus to secure a space where students can gather for such sessions. He emphasized the importance of providing a supportive environment for LGBTQ+ students and expressed plans to advocate for dedicated spaces and resources to meet these needs on the Brampton campus. These initiatives are poised to create a more supportive and equitable environment for all students at the Brampton campus.</p>

4. Townhall: Motions to make

- a. Opportunities for Members to Raise Concerns or Suggestions
- b. Discussion or any other Relevant Matters

Question(s):	<p>Question: A question was posed to VP Brampton regarding the possibility of collaborating on a Pride coffee session at the Brampton campus, given the absence of a dedicated Pride center?</p> <p>Answer: During the AUSU executive meeting, the Vice President (VP) Brampton addressed inquiries regarding a potential collaboration for a Pride coffee session at the Brampton campus, given the absence of a dedicated</p>
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	<p>Pride center. The VP Brampton acknowledged the lack of a formal Pride space on campus but highlighted ongoing efforts to foster inclusivity. Specifically, the VP mentioned the initiation of coffee sessions designed for LGBTQ+ discussions and expressed intentions to collaborate with the Student Services Management (SSM) to establish a dedicated Pride office or space to better support and engage LGBTQ+ students at the Brampton campus.</p> <p>Question: A follow up was asked whether there is a Pride center or safe space on the Brampton campus?</p> <p>Answer: In response to inquiries about the presence of a Pride center or safe space on the Brampton campus, the VP Brampton reiterated the current absence of a dedicated facility due to limited resources and infrastructure. However, the VP emphasized proactive efforts being made within the university to secure dedicated spaces to support LGBTQ+ students, indicating ongoing discussions and plans to address this need at the administrative level.</p> <p>Question: Who is the primary point of contact for campus club support within AUSU, and what resources are available for clubs?</p> <p>Answer: The meeting also addressed questions regarding campus club support within the Algoma University Students' Union (AUSU). The VP Programming clarified that inquiries related to club support should be directed to the VPs Programming. Furthermore, the VP highlighted available resources for clubs, emphasizing the importance of submitting reports for financial resources and encouraging collaboration for event planning and space bookings to facilitate the successful execution of club activities across the university campuses.</p> <p>Question: Are there existing documentation and policies for distributing aid funds to students?</p> <p>Answer: The VP Advocacy responded to inquiries about existing documentation and policies for distributing aid funds to students. Acknowledging the significance of clear guidelines, the VP Advocacy indicated ongoing efforts to establish comprehensive policies for financial support. Additionally, collaboration with Algoma University (AU) was highlighted as a key strategy to streamline and ensure the efficient distribution of aid funds to eligible students based on identified needs.</p> <p>Question: Can students apply for bursaries from AUSU, and how are efforts being made to ensure awareness of this resource?</p>
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Answer: AUSU's bursaries were discussed in response to queries about available financial resources for students. The meeting clarified that students can access information about scholarships and bursaries through AUSU's website. Efforts are underway to enhance visibility and promote awareness of these resources, particularly targeting students who may not qualify for other forms of financial aid. The ongoing commitment involves improving accessibility and ensuring equitable distribution of available funds to support student success.

Question: Is there a document detailing the application process for these bursaries, and what measures are in place to promote awareness?

Answer: Regarding specifics on the application process for bursaries, the meeting acknowledged the presence of bursary information on AUSU's website. Plans were discussed to establish clearer application procedures in the future, aiming to streamline the process for students seeking financial assistance. Efforts are also focused on enhancing awareness through targeted communication strategies to reach a broader student audience and ensure equitable access to available resources.

Question: How are emergency funds and bursaries distributed promptly and effectively to students in need?

Answer: The meeting addressed concerns about the prompt and effective distribution of emergency funds and bursaries to students requiring financial assistance. The response outlined a procedure where funds are directed directly to student accounts to ensure proper distribution and accountability. Additionally, plans were discussed to implement rigorous verification processes to assess student situations and needs, expediting the disbursement process to address urgent financial needs effectively.

Question: What steps are being taken to improve transparency and accountability in meeting minutes and governance practices?

Answer: In response to inquiries about governance practices, efforts to enhance transparency and accountability in meeting minutes and governance were highlighted. Plans include a thorough review and update of bylaws and governance policies to reflect best practices. Furthermore, the hiring of an administrative assistant and a recording secretary was mentioned to improve note-taking during meetings, ensuring accurate documentation and fostering greater transparency in decision-making processes within AUSU.

Question: How is inclusivity and representation within the university or student union structure being addressed?

	<p>Answer: The meeting discussed initiatives to address concerns about inclusivity and representation within the university or student union structure. Plans involve reviewing board composition and governance policies to ensure equitable representation across all campuses and student demographics. Efforts are underway to rectify board positions and update bylaws to better reflect the diverse student population and address evolving needs within the university community.</p> <p><i>In summary, the discussions and responses exemplify a proactive commitment to enhancing student support, inclusivity, and governance transparency within Algoma University. The questions posed regarding the establishment of a dedicated Pride space at the Brampton campus reflect ongoing efforts to cultivate a welcoming environment for LGBTQ+ students through initiatives such as Pride coffee sessions and potential collaborations with student services. Similarly, the focus on club support and financial aid distribution underscores AUSU's dedication to providing resources and opportunities that benefit student organizations and individuals across campuses. Efforts to streamline bursary applications, improve fund distribution processes, and enhance governance practices demonstrate a concerted effort toward greater transparency, accountability, and equitable representation within the student union. Moving forward, these initiatives aim to strengthen the university community by ensuring accessibility, awareness, and responsiveness to the diverse needs of Algoma University students.</i></p>
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5. Voting Item:

Amendments to Constitution and Bylaws (Board Positions)

a. Proposed Amendment

Agenda Item(s):	Constitution and Bylaws (Board Positions)
Speaker(s):	Yug/Minion
Discussion:	<p>Yug and Minion discussed the agenda item concerning the Constitution and Bylaws for Board Positions by announcing that they are currently reviewing the board structure and governance policy to ensure compliance and effectiveness. Minion added that they are addressing outdated bylaws and striving to represent the student body adequately.</p> <p>They emphasized the need to adhere to best practices, ethical standards, and legislative requirements, ensuring inclusivity and transparency. Yug highlighted their focus on board composition and equitable processes, aiming to address campus representation discrepancies.</p>

	<p>Furthermore, they mentioned evaluating bylaw requirements against past and current practices to guide the review process effectively. They clarified that proposed changes will be presented to the incoming board after thorough consultation, research, and review.</p> <p>Also, they elaborated on the ratification of new board positions introduced last year, emphasizing the importance of reflecting these positions accurately in the bylaws and governance policies. They reiterated their commitment to compliance with nonprofit regulations and legislative requirements.</p> <p>In conclusion, Yug and Minion thanked attendees for their participation and expressed their dedication to implementing necessary changes in the upcoming AGM.</p>
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6. Staff Reports

a. Report Presentation

Speaker(s):	General Manager- Matt Trainor (he/him)
Discussion:	<p>Matt Trainor introduced himself as the new AUSU General Manager, expressing excitement about supporting and leading the student-run organization. He emphasized his background in working with student leaders and highlighted AUSU's commitment to student welfare. AUSU adapted its organizational structure to accommodate the University's rapid growth, ensuring services and advocacy initiatives meet student needs. Notably, the successful launch of Yummy Inc. as the main campus food service provider showcased AUSU's resilience and adaptability. Despite growth, AUSU encountered human resource challenges, which were overcome through dedication and hard work. The establishment of Yummy Inc. posed numerous challenges, underscoring the complexities of starting a business from scratch. Facing and overcoming challenges in the past year has equipped AUSU's staff, executives, and board to handle future obstacles effectively.</p> <p>Matt emphasized the importance of maintaining a strong staffing structure to support continued growth and development. He also outlined key priorities, including policy development, completing the hiring and onboarding process for staff and executives, transition planning, governance policy review, and long-term strategic planning. Academic integrity and establishing a memorandum of understanding with the university are also essential focuses.</p> <p>Matt provided updates on the 2022/23 financial reports, noting that the audit is still in progress due to a documentation request related to AU payroll</p>

	<p>transfers. He presented statements of financial position and operations for the year, highlighting revenue sources, expenses, and net assets. Year-to-date revenue and expenses for 2023/24 were also discussed, along with ongoing budgeting efforts and investments in staffing and infrastructure. He concluded by emphasizing ongoing efforts to fill key positions, expand services like the food pantry, and maintain student employment opportunities. He reiterated his commitment to detailed budgeting and financial transparency, inviting questions and collaboration from stakeholders.</p>
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<p>Speaker(s):</p>	<p>Food Service Manager- John Holland (he/him)</p>
<p>Discussion:</p>	<p>John Holland serves as the Food Services Manager at The Kitchen/Baristas, bringing over 40 years of experience in the food business. Since joining Yummy in November, Holland has been dedicated to expanding food services and providing students with delicious, affordable, and welcoming meals.</p> <p>Under John's leadership, significant improvements have been made to the food services at SSM Campus. New equipment, including ovens, deep fryers, steamers, and flat tops, has been procured to enhance operational efficiency. The menu has been expanded to offer a diverse range of options catering to students' preferences. Additionally, Baristas, a new coffee shop, has been successfully opened, enriching the campus culinary experience. Despite initial challenges, the team has demonstrated flexibility and openness to feedback, enabling continuous improvement.</p> <p>Establishing the food services from scratch presented several hurdles. Development and implementation of a POS system encountered initial setbacks and hiccups. Addressing banking issues and transitioning between banks was necessary to ensure smooth financial operations. Equipment breakdowns necessitated adjustments to menu offerings, and training challenges arose due to a lack of infrastructure. These challenges were addressed through the implementation of SOPs and onboarding procedures.</p> <p>Looking forward, the food services management team aims to achieve several objectives. They plan to organize a grand opening event to celebrate recent progress and showcase the enhanced offerings. Additionally, they intend to develop a catering menu to expand services and cater to events and special occasions on campus. Gradual expansion of Baristas is planned to provide students with a wider range of beverage options. Technical issues, such as getting TVs operational, will be addressed to enhance the overall dining experience. Moreover, branding strategies, including logos and branding materials, will be implemented to establish a distinguished brand</p>

	<p>identity. Continuous improvement efforts will focus on refining SOPs and enhancing staff training procedures to ensure efficiency and quality service delivery.</p> <p>Despite initial challenges, the food services management team, under John Holland's guidance, has made significant strides in enhancing food offerings and operational efficiency at SSM Campus. With a commitment to continuous improvement and a focus on student satisfaction, the future of food services looks promising.</p>
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Speaker(s):	Ombudsperson- Teresa Placha
Discussion:	<p>Teresa Placha, serving as the AUSU-appointed Ombudsperson, played a crucial role in ensuring fairness, equity, and student support within the Algoma University and Student Union community. With a clear mandate and dedication to student welfare, Teresa oversees various aspects of student advocacy, complaint management, and policy recommendations.</p> <p>The mandate of the AUSU Ombudsperson encompasses several key responsibilities aimed at serving the student body effectively. These include raising awareness of the Ombudsperson's role, managing student complaints and appeals, fostering collaboration with faculty and staff, and advocating for systemic changes to address student concerns comprehensively.</p> <p>Within the AUSU Office of the Ombudsperson, students can access confidential, impartial, and student-centered guidance on a wide range of academic and non-academic issues. From academic disputes such as grade disagreements and exam scheduling conflicts to non-academic concerns like accessibility challenges, housing issues, and safety-related matters, the Ombudsperson provides invaluable support and advice to students navigating university life.</p> <p>While the Ombudsperson serves as a vital resource for students, it's essential to acknowledge the limitations of their role. These limitations include constraints on breaching confidentiality, providing legal or psychological counseling, altering university policy decisions, making disciplinary determinations, or intervening in matters covered by collective agreements. Despite these constraints, the Ombudsperson remains committed to advocating for students' rights and interests.</p>

	<p>Under Teresa Placha's leadership, the Ombudsperson's office has achieved significant milestones and made notable contributions to student welfare. Initiatives such as creating informational materials, proposing group appeal processes, developing online workshops on academic integrity, and submitting reports addressing various student concerns showcase the proactive approach taken by the office to address systemic issues and promote positive change within the university community.</p> <p>Despite the achievements, the Ombudsperson's office has encountered several challenges in fulfilling its mandate effectively. Academic grade appeals, notices of offense, backlog in appeals processing, accommodations issues, conduct complaints, fees and financial concerns, interpersonal conflicts, and safety issues represent some of the significant challenges that have required careful navigation and proactive solutions.</p> <p>Through navigating these challenges, the Ombudsperson's office has gained valuable insights and lessons. These include the importance of ongoing communication with students, the need for streamlined protocols for public statements, the value of strategic planning with input from all stakeholders, and the imperative for continued advocacy for policy improvements in grade appeals and conduct complaints procedures.</p> <p>Looking ahead, the Ombudsperson's office remains committed to its mission of promoting integrity, equity, and student welfare within the university community. Future plans include continuing the Integrity with Equity campaign, collaborating on task force initiatives, and advocating for systemic changes to address ongoing student concerns comprehensively.</p> <p>In conclusion, the AUSU Ombudsperson's office, led by Teresa Placha, plays a pivotal role in advocating for student rights, fostering fairness and equity, and driving positive change within the Algoma University community. Despite facing challenges, the office remains dedicated to supporting students and ensuring their voices are heard and respected.</p>
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Speaker(s):	Equity Centre: Food Pantry- Gurwinder Chawla, Meshwa KaPatel
Discussion:	<p>The Equity Centre's Food Pantry, led by Gurwinder Chawla, serves as a vital resource for Algoma University students facing food insecurity and other basic needs challenges. With a commitment to accessibility and equity, the Food Pantry provides essential support to students in need, ensuring they have access to food, clothes, menstrual products, and safer sex items.</p> <p>Under Gurwinder Chawla's leadership, the Food Pantry has seen significant volunteer engagement, with volunteers contributing over 280 hours per week, adding substantial value to the service. The number of active volunteers has tripled from February 2023 to February 2024, showcasing growing community involvement and support. Additionally, consistent contributions from Harvest Algoma and a substantial contract commitment from AUSU demonstrate strong community banking and financial support for the Food Pantry's operations.</p> <p>Transitioning to Meshwa KaPatel's perspective, the Food Pantry has embraced collaboration opportunities with various stakeholders, including the AUSU Kitchen, AU staff and faculty, and the broader student community. Collaborative efforts such as supporting students during exams, receiving fresh produce from People's Garden, and hosting educational workshops underline the Food Pantry's commitment to holistic student support and community engagement. Moreover, the development of the AUSU Food Pantry App signifies the service's dedication to innovation and improving client experience and management efficiency.</p> <p>Challenges faced by the Food Pantry include limited capacity, strained resources, and a growing demand for services. The increasing access rate of 300% per year highlights the urgency of addressing food insecurity on campus. Moreover, the service acknowledges the need for actions to tackle the root causes of food insecurity beyond providing immediate support.</p> <p>Meshwa KaPatel sheds light on the dire situation faced by the Food Pantry, characterized by limited resources, unmanageable demands, and insufficient support from university administration. As the core provider of food support on the SSM campus, the Food Pantry struggles with escalating demand and inadequate capital support. The service is overwhelmed by increasing client appointments and complex intersectional needs, raising questions about sustainability and the university's responsibility to its students.</p> <p>To address these challenges, the Food Pantry proposes several recommendations, including efforts to reduce the need for access to the pantry, increased institutional accountability for student welfare, collaborative approaches with the community, and prioritization of volunteer training and skill-building initiatives. Additionally, the service emphasizes</p>

	<p>the importance of securing more space for the Food Pantry and related sustainability projects to meet growing demand effectively.</p> <p>In conclusion, the Equity Centre's Food Pantry plays a vital role in supporting Algoma University students facing food insecurity and basic needs challenges. Despite facing significant obstacles, the service remains committed to its mission of promoting equity, accessibility, and student welfare on campus.</p>
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Speaker(s):	Equity Centre: People's Garden- Marissa Ditoro (she/her, they/them)
Discussion:	<p>Marissa Ditoro oversees the operations of the People's Garden at the Equity Centre, which serves as a hub for sustainable agriculture, community engagement, and educational opportunities at Algoma University. With a diverse team and a commitment to environmental stewardship, the People's Garden plays a crucial role in promoting food sovereignty and land-based practices on campus.</p> <p>Under her leadership, the People's Garden has flourished, thanks to the contributions of a strong team with diverse knowledge, skills, and perspectives. Key achievements include the development of a People's Garden Terms of Reference, which outlines the garden's goals and principles, and the successful opening of the season with a ceremony featuring land-based teachings and community sharing. Additionally, improvements to infrastructure, such as the addition of new garden beds and the repair of original beds, have expanded planting space and increased programming opportunities. Funding secured through Lake Superior Living Labs and Algoma University faculty members has enabled these enhancements, reinforcing the garden's commitment to sustainability.</p> <p>The People's Garden serves as a valuable educational resource, hosting workshops and events in collaboration with faculty and staff throughout the year. These events cover a range of topics, from fermentation to beekeeping, providing students with practical learning opportunities and engaging the broader community. The garden also integrates with course content, offering students hands-on experience in sustainable agriculture and environmental stewardship.</p> <p>Despite its successes, the People's Garden faces operational challenges, including aging garden beds, limited staffing capacity, and environmental concerns. The deterioration of original beds poses a significant obstacle, compounded by the volunteer team's limited capacity to repair and maintain</p>

	<p>them. Moreover, the garden relies heavily on student, staff, and faculty volunteers, leading to logistical challenges and delays in project implementation. Environmental factors, such as unpredictable growing seasons and climate change, further exacerbate operational difficulties.</p> <p>To address these challenges, the People's Garden proposes several recommendations aimed at increasing engagement, collaboration, and sustainability. These include expanding volunteer opportunities and sharing resources to alleviate staffing constraints, developing an annual engagement plan to involve students, classes, and the community, and establishing an official campus accord or charter to formalize commitments to sustainability and food sovereignty. Additionally, the garden seeks to enhance collaboration with external partners such as Harvest Algoma and pilot initiatives such as campus composting projects in partnership with the AUSU Kitchen.</p> <p>In conclusion, the People's Garden at the Equity Centre continues to serve as a beacon of sustainability and community engagement at Algoma University. With proactive measures and collaborative efforts, the garden aims to overcome operational challenges and further advance its mission of promoting environmental stewardship and food sovereignty on campus.</p>
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Speaker(s):	Equity Centre: Pride Centre- Marissa Ditoro (she/her, they/them)
Discussion:	<p>Marissa Ditoro oversees the operations of the Pride Centre at the Equity Centre, which serves as a vital resource and safe space for queer and trans individuals at Algoma University. Through increased access, diverse programming, and collaboration efforts, the Pride Centre strives to foster inclusivity and support for the LGBTQ+ community on campus.</p> <p>One of the key successes of the Pride Centre is the increased utilization of its physical space. It serves as a drop-in space and resource hub for queer and trans folks, offering gender-affirming supplies, safer sex and menstrual products, harm reduction kits, and a diverse range of resources. The Centre has also expanded its service offerings, providing programming such as Queer Coffees, book clubs, drag shows, and campus thrifting events. Collaboration with faculty, staff, and the community has further strengthened the Centre's impact and reach.</p> <p>Despite its successes, the Pride Centre faces challenges related to limited capacity, both in staffing and service offerings. With singular staffing dedicated to the Pride Centre, there are constraints on programming and</p>

	<p>space usage, hindering the Centre's ability to fully meet the needs of the LGBTQ+ community on campus.</p> <p>The Pride Centre confronts overt instances of homophobia and transphobia, both within the campus community and in broader societal contexts. Anti-Queer and Trans legislation and rhetoric contribute to sharply rising rates of discrimination and intolerance, manifesting in classrooms, student spaces, and working environments. Additionally, the lack of progress on outstanding policies, such as the name change policy advocated for by the Queer and Trans working group of AU EDI, underscores the ongoing challenges faced by the LGBTQ+ community.</p> <p>To address these challenges, the Pride Centre proposes several recommendations aimed at enhancing its services and advocating for LGBTQ+ rights and inclusivity on campus. These include developing a strategic plan for service development and staffing, increasing the resource library and programming offerings, and prioritizing advocacy campaigns and projects. Additionally, the Centre emphasizes the importance of ensuring that all AU and AUSU policies and projects are developed, reviewed, and upheld with a Queer and Trans perspective and understanding, fostering a more inclusive and supportive campus environment for all individuals.</p>
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Speaker(s):	Equity Centre: Recommendations/ findings- Marissa Ditoro
Discussion:	<p>Marissa Ditoro, overseeing the Equity Centre, presents recommendations and findings aimed at enhancing equity, justice, and inclusivity within the Algoma University Student Union (AUSU).</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Conduct Equity Audits: Propose the implementation of equity audits on an annual basis at all levels of AUSU. These audits should go beyond mere inclusion and strive to embed principles of justice, sovereignty, and affirmation within the organization's culture and practices. 2. Incorporate Equity Training: Integrate equity training and principles into both onboarding processes and ongoing training for all members of AUSU. This ensures that every member meets a standard level of understanding, implementation, and leadership in equity principles and practices. Currently, there is a reliance on individuals with lived experiences, which should be complemented by formal training and institutional support.

	<p>3. Institutionalize Equity: Embed equity within AUSU's bylaws, policies, daily practices, and partnerships. Establish a strategic plan that ensures the longevity, stability, health, and innovation of all equity-related services offered by AUSU. These services should be accessible at all campuses and prioritize calls to action for equity, justice, and sovereignty.</p> <p>4. Review Relevant Documents: Regularly review documents such as the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action, the Scarborough Charter, Human Rights Codes, and any new charters or accords. AUSU and Algoma University should commit to signing on to these documents on an annual basis, demonstrating their ongoing dedication to equity and social justice.</p> <p>Through these recommendations, the Equity Centre aims to foster a culture of inclusivity and equity within AUSU, ensuring that all members, regardless of background or identity, feel valued, respected, and supported within the university community.</p>
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Speaker(s):	Media Coordinator: Keila Kontulainen, Yug Modi, Anton Peter
Discussion:	<p>The Communication Department has been successful in effectively communicating events and information to the Algoma Student Body through various channels. They have highlighted a variety of important moments, ranging from fun AUSU events to spotlighting student activism. Utilizing a new board outside the AUSU office and achieving significant growth in the Instagram account's followers and engagement have enhanced visibility. Additionally, approximately 50 posts have been produced since September 2023, delivering essential information to Algoma students. Furthermore, integrating a color palette into branding has created familiarity and fluidity across designs, contributing to a cohesive visual identity.</p> <p>However, the department faces challenges, including the absence of a permanent Communication Officer, resulting in the temporary suspension of the weekly AUSU Newsletter. Filling this position is crucial to ensuring the newsletter's effective and efficient production on a weekly basis. Moreover, the AURA podcast has been put on hold due to delays in acquiring new equipment required for content production. Additionally, the lack of a suitable location for filming future interviews poses further limitations on podcast production.</p>

	<p>Looking ahead, the department's future plans include successfully filling the Communication Officer position, which will facilitate the resumption of the Newsletter and potentially initiate new media projects. Acquiring requested equipment, particularly a camera, is essential for enhancing media capabilities and expanding outreach efforts. Additionally, obtaining suitable filming locations will enable the production of AURA podcast content. These steps will contribute to the department's ability to effectively communicate with the Algoma Student Body and enhance engagement and participation in AUSU activities.</p>
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<p>Speaker(s):</p>	<p>Human Resources Manager- Zanzy Polycarp</p>
<p>Discussion:</p>	<p>Human Resources Manager Zanzy Polycarp has spearheaded several achievements and highlights within the department. One notable success includes talent acquisition, where the HR team has taken charge of the onboarding process, ensuring a smooth transition for new hires and allowing hiring managers to concentrate on their primary responsibilities. Additionally, they have implemented mandatory training links for all new employees as part of the streamlined onboarding process. This initiative aims to equip new hires with essential skills and knowledge, promoting health and safety awareness and compliance with regulations such as the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), thus fostering a safe and inclusive work environment.</p> <p>However, the department also faces challenges, particularly in the areas of HR policies and procedures. While the organization has a strong foundation, there is room for improvement in certain policy areas. The HR team is actively working on developing and implementing these policies to ensure clarity and consistency across the organization's practices. Addressing these challenges will contribute to the continued success of the HR department in supporting the organization's goals and objectives.</p>

b. QA session

<p>Question(s)</p>	<p>Question: The attendee expressed regret over the vacancy of the residence representative position for an extended period, highlighting the importance of having a representative for the residents' community on campus. The concern was raised to seek a remedy or interim solution moving forward.</p> <p>Answer: The chair acknowledged the concern and permitted the attendee to raise the issue despite the absence of the food service manager. The response did not provide immediate action but indicated a willingness to address the matter in future discussions or through alternative processes like interim appointments or elections.</p> <p>Question: A concern was raised about the financial burden imposed on students in certain residences (R3 and R4) who are required to sign up for a minimum \$1,500 meal plan per semester. This cost is especially challenging for students receiving Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP) funding, as they receive their financial support in two installments, which may not align with the upfront payment requirement for meal plans.</p> <p>Answer: The response provided context on the decision-making process behind the meal plan structure. Due to a rapid turnaround, decisions regarding meal plans were made swiftly. The response acknowledged the challenges faced by OSAP students and expressed a commitment to improving the meal plan process for the following academic year, aiming for more consideration and flexibility in payment schedules.</p> <p>Question: There was a query regarding the scope of staff training and development initiatives, particularly concerning the involvement of the Human Resources (HR) department. The attendee expressed concerns about perceived gaps in basic training for staff beyond interactions with the general manager.</p> <p>Answer: The HR representative clarified the focus of HR-related training versus job-specific training. They explained that HR primarily handles legally mandated training but collaborates with department managers to identify and address job-specific training needs. The response emphasized the collaborative nature of developing training programs, highlighting the importance of input from departmental managers to ensure training initiatives align with specific job roles and responsibilities.</p> <p>Question: The answer provided is basically on a corporate structure, not a nonprofit organization structure. Stakeholders in this sense would be all the</p>
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students and the members of AUSU. What steps are being taken to have a framework ready to train the staff for the coming year, particularly when we don't have basic managers?

Answer: The response acknowledges the importance of understanding the nonprofit organization structure and the role of all students and AUSU members. It emphasizes the need for a collaborative effort between the general manager and HR to develop a comprehensive training process. This process involves reviewing policies, governance structures, and operational procedures to ensure that all staff members are effectively onboarded and aligned with organizational goals. The speaker acknowledges the challenges involved in this process but expresses commitment to prioritizing team building, policy understanding, and procedural clarity to ensure a successful transition for new executives and staff members.

Question: Concerns were raised regarding the clarification on the food service policy regarding remaining meal plan balances at the end of the year? Will credit be received for future semesters, particularly in the upcoming spring?

Answer: The response states that this question will be addressed in the upcoming board meeting of the kitchen board. It's noted that the decision on whether to issue credit for remaining meal plan balances will be discussed and communicated to students who have paid into the meal plan. The speaker indicates a favorable stance toward issuing credits but emphasizes that the final decision rests with the board.

Question: What is the AUSU policy for handling vacancies in positions like the residence representative that remain vacant for an extended period, such as from November onwards to the next election?

Answer: In response to this question, it's clarified that according to AUSU bylaws and policies, a by-election can only occur if a position becomes vacant before October 31st. Since the vacancy occurred in November, a by-election was not possible. However, it's acknowledged that there should have been interim arrangements or other measures taken to address the representation needed for resident students during this period. Students were encouraged to approach executives directly with concerns in the absence of a representative.

Question: In the previous referendum on transit, concerns were raised about the on-demand system, weekend services, and equality/discrimination issues. With the approval of the 3-year contract extension, can students still raise

	<p>these concerns or request changes before the next negotiation?"</p> <p>Answer: The response assures that all student queries and concerns brought forward during the referendum will be communicated to the transit authorities. The OSU executives express dissatisfaction with previous responses from transit and confirm upcoming negotiations scheduled for March. They emphasize the importance of student input and recommendations in shaping these discussions. Despite low voter turnout, AUSU is committed to advocating for student concerns and pushing for improvements in transit services based on student feedback and data.</p> <p>Question: Given that transit is overcrowded and students face challenges with bus availability and service quality, is AUSU engaging in dialogue with transit to address these issues and improve the situation?</p> <p>Answer: In response to this question, it's highlighted that AUSU is actively negotiating with transit to address overcrowding and service challenges. Plans include advocating for more buses, extended service hours, and improved overall transit quality to alleviate burdens faced by students. The executives emphasize the seriousness of these discussions, noting ongoing efforts to obtain necessary data from transit regarding revenue and student fees to inform future negotiations effectively.</p>
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7. Meeting Wrap Up

- a. Recap of Key Points from the Meeting
- b. Acknowledgement of Participants and Volunteers
- c. Adjournment of the Meeting

The meeting was adjourned by the chairperson at **4:50** pm. The adjournment was moved by Meshwa and seconded by Nidhi Patel.