

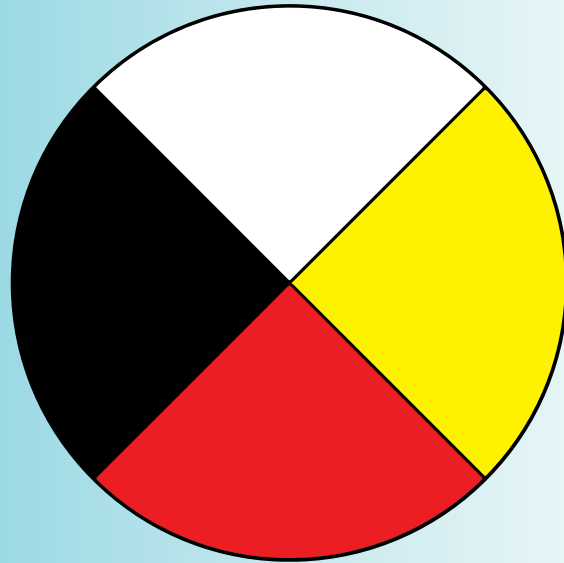
OPERATIONAL UPDATE REPORT

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carleton university
students' association

Created and Written by: Sarah El Fitori



Land Acknowledgement Statement

CUSA acknowledges that our offices, service centres and businesses are situated today on the traditional territory of the Algonquin Anishinaabe, lands never ceded or surrendered in peace to the Crown of Canada. Indigenous peoples living under the modern colonial state of Canada have suffered disproportionate injustice and marginalisation.

A mere land acknowledgement is not enough to make reconciliation and reparation to the Indigenous peoples of Turtle Island. We must stand in solidarity against colonialism and remember our responsibility to the land and the peoples who have kept it for generations— which means affirming their call for the free and unencumbered return to their ancestral land. It is also fitting, for this body of lawmakers, to remember the spirit and wisdom of Indigenous governance models—from the collaborative bicameralism of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy to the consensus-based government of the Inuit—to deliver to students a better student union.

We recognize that our presence on this land is the result of a history marked by injustice, and we are dedicated to honouring and strengthening our relationships with Indigenous nations across Turtle Island. This includes acknowledging and respecting the diverse First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples who call this land home. We encourage all students to learn about current movements to support Indigenous self- determination. To learn more about the stolen land you live on and the movements occurring on that land, visit www.native-land.ca or CUSA's Mawandoseg Centre located at 426 Nideyinàn (formerly University Centre).

Letter from the President

Dear Students,

I want to start by thanking you for electing me as Carleton University Students' Association **first Muslim Women President**. As your President, it is my privilege to share this operational update, reflecting both the challenges we've faced and the progress we've made.

Over the past year, we've worked tirelessly to address financial hurdles, improve transparency, and enhance the services and opportunities available to you, the students of Carleton University.

Our businesses and initiatives exist to enrich your university experience, and while we've encountered obstacles such as high operating costs and evolving student needs, these challenges have provided valuable lessons. By focusing on smarter planning, modernized processes, and aligning our efforts with your feedback, we are building a stronger, more sustainable future for CUSA.



I want to thank you for your continued engagement and trust. Together, we are shaping a vibrant, inclusive, and supportive campus community. I invite you to share your thoughts, get involved, and join us in making CUSA an organization that truly reflects and serves the needs of every student.

Sarah El Fitori
President & CEO
Carleton University
Students' Association



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Introduction

CUSA, the Carleton University Students' Association, is dedicated to enhancing the undergraduate student experience through student-run initiatives, service centers, businesses, and advocacy. Since my inauguration on May 1, 2024, I have discovered and addressed significant financial and structural challenges within the organization. This report:

- Provides an overview of CUSA's governance and recent democratic reforms.
- Describes the role and responsibilities of each executive position.
- Details of the precarious financial situation we faced, including potential bankruptcy.
- Explains the challenges within CUSA's businesses - Haven, Ollie's, Rooster's, and The Wing - and the strategic measures taken to mitigate losses and improve operations.
- Outlines our staffing structure, associated costs, and proposed efficiencies.
- Presents current and future goals designed to strengthen accountability, sustainability, and student-centered services.

While transparency has been our goal from the beginning, the information discussed in this report has been the culmination of months of rigorous research in a fact finding mission to ensure the information presented is accurate and complete.

By documenting these changes in a transparent manner, this report aims to keep the Board of Directors, CUSA Council, and the broader student body fully informed about CUSA's ongoing evolution.

About CU SA

Mission:

To represent and advocate for the needs and interests of Carleton University undergraduate students by providing accessible services, programming, and a platform for meaningful participation.



Service
Centres



Clubs



Events



Health +
Dental



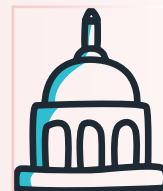
Support



Awards



Food +
Retail



Governance

Values of CUSA

Accountability:

CUSA leaders are students who are elected by the undergraduate student body. They must be accountable to the students who elect them and serve their best interests.

Service:

CUSA provides services to serve student interests and needs. CUSA provides services to students in the form of businesses, services centres, health and dental plan, clubs, printing services, and more.

Community:

One of CUSA's goals is to build community through a variety of avenues. CUSA fosters participation through programming, student spaces, major events, clubs, and service centres.

Diversity:

CUSA celebrates diversity by supporting students of diverse backgrounds to participate and work towards a unified community. Culture and diversity are the cornerstones of CUSA's service centres, advocacy and programming.

Development:

CUSA encourages any measure that works to develop the skills and proficiencies of the students it serves. CUSA provides this through student jobs, governance, leadership opportunities, and volunteer roles within the organization.

GOVERNANCE & LEADERSHIP



The Carleton University Students' Association (CUSA) operates as a student-run, not-for-profit organization that represents the interests of all undergraduate students at Carleton University. The organizational structure ensures efficient governance, clear roles, and responsibilities for all stakeholders.

Judiciary Bodies:

CUSA has certain bodies that manage conflicts within the organization. These include the Clubs Oversight Commission and the Appeals Board.

Committees:

CUSA has multiple committees managed and composed of both councillors and board directors. For Council, the standing committees include: University Affairs; External Affairs; Student Life; Finance, Fees, and Funds; and the Governance and Council Operations Committee. The Board's standing board subcommittees are Agenda, HR, Finance, and Governance.

Staffing:

CUSA employs over 100 dedicated staff including 22 full time who work alongside executives to oversee operational tasks, student services, and special projects. Student staff work part-time at CUSA's on-campus businesses and service centers enriching CUSA's culture and ensuring smooth operations and administrative functions.

CUSA-Council

Councillors are integral to the legislative arm of CUSA. Each councillor represents either a faculty constituency or the special student constituency, ensuring that all students' voices are heard and considered in the decision-making process. They participate in meetings, propose motions, and vote on key issues.

- Comprises 5 Executives (President, 4 VPs) + 32 Councillors, representing diverse academic programs and student groups.
- Responsible for generating, amending, or repealing policies related to student life and advocacy.
- Approves the annual budget, ratifies Directors to the Board, and receives the annual audit report.

CUSA-Board

The Board of Directors is a vital component of CUSA's governance structure. Directors serve two-year terms, ensuring continuity and a sustained focus on CUSA's goals. This group represents diverse perspectives from within the student body and is committed to advancing initiatives that enhance the undergraduate experience at Carleton.

- Includes 8 Board Directors, the President/CEO, and the VP Finance/Treasurer as an ex-officio member.
- Holds fiduciary responsibility for the organization's assets, ensuring financial, legal, and reputational stability.
- Focuses on high-level decision-making and ensures that CUSA remains compliant with policies in accordance with provincial laws and guiding bylaws, while aligning with the organization's strategic goals.
- The board occasionally makes key decisions separately from Council when it pertains to business or corporate matters.

By highlighting the critical work of the Board, we aim to foster a deeper understanding and appreciation of their efforts among students and stakeholders. Their dedication ensures that CUSA operates in alignment with its mandate while maintaining transparency and accountability.



Executive Team

The Executive Team consists of elected/appointed student leaders responsible for implementing CUSA's strategic objectives, managing daily operations, and advocating for students. The Team includes the President, and four Vice-Presidents Internal, Finance, Student Issues, and Student Life, and supports the effective functioning of the organization.

Role of the President/CEO

Elected at-large by the undergraduate student population every year, the President/CEO:

- Serves as the primary spokesperson for undergraduate students, advocating for their interests in all strategic decisions.
- Chairs or co-chairs various committees (e.g., Executive Council, HR Subcommittee).
- Oversees staff (including approximately 22 full-time and 120 student staff) across the main office, service centers, and CUSA businesses.
- Engages regularly with University administrators, external stakeholders, and government officials to advance student priorities.
- Remains accountable for ensuring CUSA complies with its mission, vision, and legal obligations.

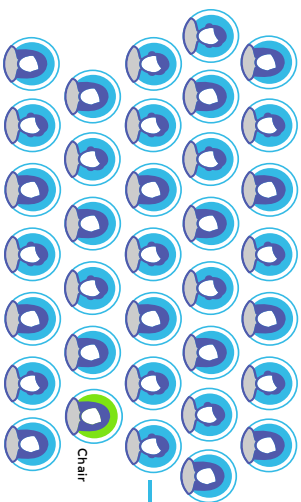


CUSA ORGANIZATIONAL CHART

Not-for-profit Corporations Act 2010

Articles of Incorporation / Letters Patent

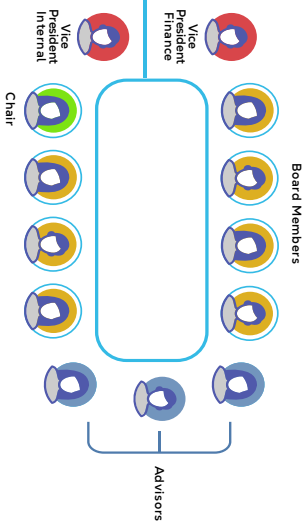
Councillors & Committees



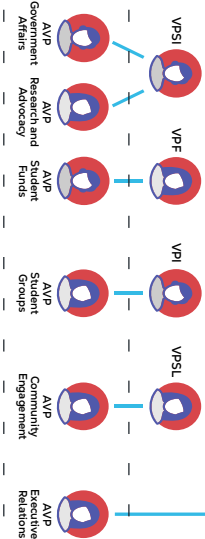
By-laws

CUSA Council

CUSA Board

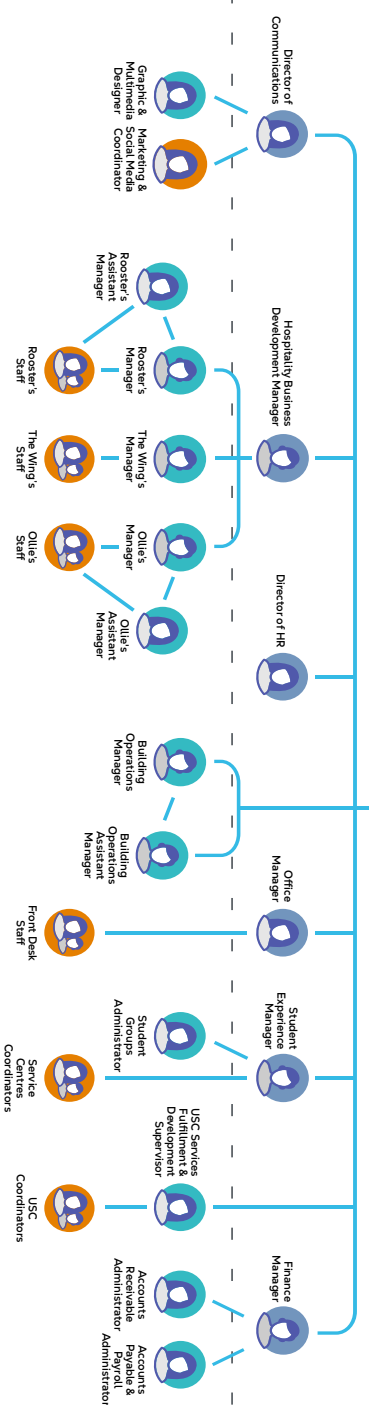


VPs



AVPs

Senior Management



CUPE 3011 & CUPE 1281



Meet Your Student Leaders

Executive Team & Associate Vice Presidents



Sarah El-Fitori

President and CEO



Sam Easby

Vice President Finance & Treasurer



Aiden Rohacek

Vice President Internal



Artur Estrela da Silva

Vice President Student Issues



Akua Antwi-Adjei

Vice President Student Life



Jahnelle Woldegiorgis

AVP Executive Relations



Meet Your Student Leaders

Executive Team & Associate Vice Presidents



**Kiara
Gibbs-Cawker**

AVP Student Experience



Lauren Tham

AVP Community Engagement



Om Maradia

AVP Student Funds



Aidan Kallioinen

AVP Government Affairs



Clara de Oliveira Borba

AVP Student Groups



**Ana Clara Miranda
Guimaraes**

AVP Research and
Advocacy

Meet Your Student Leaders

Board of Directors



Noah Goodgie

Board Chair



Emma Mantler

Board Vice Chair



Sarah El-Fitori

President and CEO



Sam Easby

Vice President Finance &
Treasurer

Meet Your Student Leaders

Board of Directors



Kathryn Jajo-Yacoub

Director



Ruth Nobossi

Director



Allan Buri

Director



Georgina Walsh

Director



Mohamed Genidy

Director

Executive Summaries

Vice President of Finance (VPF)

The VPF ensures financial compliance, resource allocation, and transparency. This role supports CUSA's financial goals by collaborating with executives to align budgets with student interests.

Key Achievements (2024-25):

- Launched the Student Discount Card, offering savings at local businesses.
- Achieved budgetary efficiency with expenses under projections and enhanced financial transparency with organizational audits.

Ongoing Initiatives/Next Steps:

- Develop a balanced budget prioritizing fiscal responsibility and student engagement.
- Continue improving transparency and accessibility of financial reports.

Vice President of Internal (VPI)

The VPI manages club operations and internal communications, ensuring effective governance within CUSA. This role supports the organization's reforms and club-based initiatives.

Key Achievements (2024-25):

- Opened the Clubs Hub and introduced independent storage lockers.
- Restructured funding periods for greater accessibility and introduced training for committee officers.
- Strengthened communication with clubs to improve their operational efficiency.

Ongoing Initiatives/Next Steps:

- Reorganize policies on the CUSA website for greater clarity.
- Explore new funding opportunities to expand club initiatives.

Executive Summaries

Vice President of Student Issues (VPSI)

The VPSI leads CUSA's advocacy efforts, developing a roadmap to address student priorities such as housing, tuition, and transit, and liaising with key stakeholders to advance student issues.

Key Achievements (2024-25):

- Advocated for **7 out of 10** roadmap priorities, including transit, accessibility, and housing.
- Created the CUSA Think Tank for improved research capabilities and presented at a federal press conference.
- Published CUSA's first International Student Welcome Guide.

Ongoing Initiatives/Next Steps:

- Finalize the Housing 101 Guide for students.
- Advocate on remaining roadmap priorities, including Indigenous reconciliation and student healthcare.
- Strengthen government relationships for smooth transitions on key issues.

Vice President of Student Life (VPSL)

The VPSL oversees events that enrich campus life, such as Frosh and Frost, and collaborates with clubs and organizations to create meaningful student experiences.

Key Achievements (2024-25):

- Coordinated Frost Week events, including Games Day, and raised funds for the unified support centre (USC) through a successful Thrift Event.
- Enhanced collaboration with clubs to improve student programming.

Ongoing Initiatives/Next Steps:

- Partner with the Black Student Alliance for a career fair.
- Host additional collaborative events with RRRRA and SEO.

DEMOCRATIC REFORM

Origins and Formation of the Committee

The Democratic Reform initiative began in January 2021 as part of the Ravens United Slate's campaign promise. Upon assuming office, the Executive Team established the Democratic Reform Committee to address governance concerns, improve transparency, and enhance student engagement.

Mandate and Goals

The Committee was tasked with:

- Reforming electoral processes to ensure fairness and inclusivity.
- Revising the governing documents to align with contemporary organizational needs.
- Overhauling executive power structures to reduce concentrated decision-making.
- Establishing mechanisms for greater accountability and transparency.

Key Reforms and Implementation

Creation of an Independent Board of Directors

Established an eight-member Board composed of independent student members and the President/CEO and the Vice-President/Treasurer. This Board oversees the long-term financial, legal, and reputational health of CUSA.

Unified Governance

Merged CUSA Inc. and the Carleton University Students' Association into a single, streamlined entity under unified bylaws, eliminating redundant structures and reducing risks associated with dual governance.

Restructuring Executive Elections

- Transitioned Vice Presidential elections to internal council elections while maintaining an at-large election for the President/CEO.
- Introduced term limits for executives to reduce nepotism and ensure continuous leadership renewal.

Operational Changes

- Introduced full-time role for President/CEO to ensure focused leadership and operational efficiency.
- Enhanced training for executives and councillors to improve institutional knowledge and governance practices.

Student Engagement

- Conducted multiple public consultations and open forums to involve students in decision-making processes.
- Updated electoral codes to incorporate online campaigning and capped campaign expenditures for equitable participation.

Outcomes and Impact

The Democratic Reform initiative has yielded significant improvements:

- Strengthened governance by diversifying decision-making bodies and reducing executive concentration of power.
- Increased student trust and participation in CUSA activities through transparent policies and accessible leadership.

Financial Overview

Bankruptcy Risk and Historical Context

Upon starting my term on May 1, 2024, I was informed that CUSA faced significant financial risk, with deficits surpassing over *\$1 million* for two consecutive years. Team morale was low, but I remained optimistic that solutions could be found with thorough research and strategic action.

Finance Office Challenges

Departing Long-Term Staff:

- Two key finance employees, who had served CUSA for nearly *40* years combined, left in recent years. Their departure created a gap in institutional memory and processes.

Lack of a Stable Finance Manager:

- Without consistent leadership in the finance department, responsibilities fell on unionized staff without sufficient managerial oversight.

Digitization Backlog:

- Much of CUSA's financial record-keeping had been paper-based, causing delays while new staff worked to update historical records.
- Combined levy income of approximately *\$3 million*.
- Without identifying new revenue streams, the staffing expansion has strained CUSA's budget, leaving little room for other expenditures.

Revenue Sources and Budget Constraints

CUSA's primary revenue streams come from student levies paid to CUSA through Carleton University:

- **CUSA Fee:** Provides general operating funds.
- **UNCenter Fee:** Covers costs associated with occupying University Center (Nideyinàn) space.

Both revenue sources are directly dependent on student enrollment. Any decline in enrollment results in an immediate and significant reduction in revenue.

In addition:

- Expanded staffing since democratic reforms increased costs, pushing staffing expenses to **\$2.9 million** annually, nearly matching CUSA's main combined levy income of approximately **\$3 million**.
- Without identifying new revenue streams, the staffing expansion has strained CUSA's budget, leaving little room for other expenditures.

Key Takeaways

- **Enrollment Dependency:** CUSA's financial health hinges on maintaining or growing student enrollment numbers.
- **Budget Imbalance:** Current expenses are nearly at par with revenues, leaving no cushion for unforeseen challenges or new initiatives.
- **Need for Diversification:** To ensure sustainability, CUSA must prioritize developing alternative revenue sources.

Implementing Monthly Reconciliations & Reporting

One of the core problems was a lack of real-time financial tracking. Departments often overspent, only discovering the extent of budget overruns at year-end audits.

To address this I implemented:

Monthly Reconciliations:

Track expenditures in real time, preventing costly overages. The finance office is currently developing a project which will implement a new Purchase Requisition Form to ensure that no purchases will be made without a manager's approval. This project will integrate the Purchase Requisition Form, Monthly Budget, and reimbursement process. The goal is to reduce overspending by allowing the managers to see the provisional balance and assess the impact of each purchase approval to their department's budget prior to purchase. Additionally, it will allow executives and senior management to track the purchase approval history prior to approving the reimbursement cost.

Departmental Reports:

Each department will now receive monthly statements detailing spending and remaining budget allocations.

Contract Roles:

Hired a Finance Manager, Operational Manager, and Business & Hospitality Manager on short-term contracts to quickly professionalize financial oversight.

Delegating Duties:

The organization stopped filling vacancies for the full-time staff and has been delegating some of the duties to the executive staff.



Financial Challenges - Summary

Disjointed Communication:

Departments historically tracked finances independently, lacking up-to-date data from the central finance office.

Delayed Awareness of Deficits:

Budget vs. actual spending gaps only surfaced during year-end audits.

External Pressures:

COVID's long-term impact on student traffic in CUSA businesses, global economic factors such as inflation, increasing cost of labour, and shifting enrollment numbers all contributed to volatile revenues.

Key financial constraints:

These include the ongoing challenges with sponsorship revenue, as well as the high overhead costs relative to the revenue generated from business activities. These issues have significantly impacted CUSA's financial performance and require strategic consideration to ensure sustainable growth and efficiency.

CUSA BUSINESSES


Overview

CUSA businesses aim to provide essential services, employment opportunities, and community spaces that enhance the student experience at Carleton University. All of our businesses exclusively hire students for part-time roles to maximize opportunities for student jobs on campus.

CUSA operates and oversees several campus-oriented businesses aimed at providing essential services, employment opportunities, and social spaces for students:

- Ollie's – A bar and event space. (Formerly known as Olivers)
- Rooster's – A coffeehouse/café.
- Haven – Originally a bookstore, then converted to a café (now closed).
- The Wing – A pop-up space intended for flexible student use.

Historically, these ventures were not designed to be profitable, but rather to break even and enhance student life as a service to students. However, the level of student enrollment has dropped and is projected to continue to decline due to the current political climate and the possibility of a change in government. This trend poses significant risks, including a potential drop in levy fees and reduced foot traffic to the university and its businesses. These challenges necessitate a proactive approach to adapt to changing circumstances and ensure the sustainability of CUSA's business operations.



HAVEN

HAVEN *Connect*



Previously a bookstore and later converted into a café, Haven served as a multipurpose community-oriented space aimed at enriching the student experience off-campus.

Financial Losses

- 2022–2023: Budgeted to lose **\$250,000** and lost over **\$550,000**.
- 2023–2024: Budgeted to lose **\$67,585** and lost over **\$200,000**.
- Current Fiscal Year: Already over **\$100,000** in the red within the first six months of the year.

Challenges

- No on-site kitchen; food prep done at Ollie's.
- High cost of goods, low resale margins.
- Limited accessibility and parking; originally designed as a bookstore rather than a café.
- Low foot traffic due to off-campus location.

Closure & Repurposing

The Haven building is CUSA's only Real Estate asset, and should be bringing revenue into the organization to support students better. Due to recurring heavy losses, we made the difficult decision to close Haven and rent the property out to external tenants.

- This move eliminates a major financial drain and provides the potential for stable monthly rental income.
- The Haven building will soon be rented out, and provide a projected **\$13,000** a month in revenue for CUSA. (Over **\$150,000** a year, making a return of over 10% what the building is worth annually.)

OLLIE'S

A vibrant bar and event space offering students a place to socialize, enjoy live entertainment, and create memorable campus experiences.



Student Benefit:

- Provides over 40 student jobs annually.
- Highly accessible, facilitating events for a broad range of student groups and external partners.
- Long time history as a student bar, with historic performers such as Prince visiting Ollies in 2002.

Financial Losses

2022-2023

Budgeted to gain:

\$21,496

Actual:

-\$243,000

2023-2024

Budgeted to gain:

\$79,084

Actual:

-\$411,000

Current Fiscal Year

Budgeted to lose \$98K but currently losing \$122K

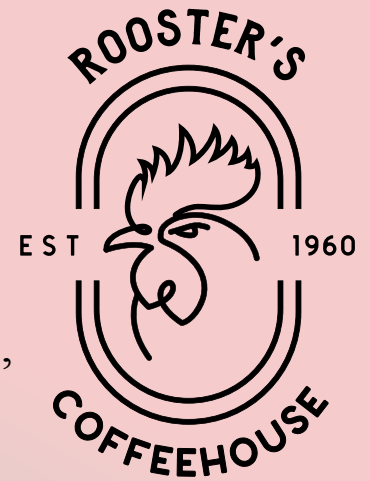
KEY ISSUES

- Largest staffing expense due to scale, extended operating hours, and individualized positions (server, line cook, security, bartenders).
- Highest rent within the Nideyinan Building compared to all other CUSA spaces.
- Outdated POS system causing bottlenecks and inaccurate reporting.



Rooster's

A cozy coffeehouse providing high-quality beverages, snacks, and a welcoming environment for study or relaxation.



Students generally have a positive view, and by implementing targeted menu engineering and streamlining workflows, we could significantly reduce deficits. Additionally, diversifying supplier options and optimizing bulk ordering processes can help lower item costs, ultimately leading to higher profit margins.

Financial Losses

2022-2023

Budgeted to gain:

\$28,140

Actual:

-\$175,190

2023-2024

Budgeted to gain:

\$7,000

Actual:

-\$242,000

Current Fiscal Year

Budgeted to gain \$15k but currently losing \$17k

KEY ISSUES

- High staffing costs, long wait times during peak hours.
- Product costs are higher than industry norms, squeezing profit margins.
- Outdated POS system, limiting data transparency and efficiency.
- Accessibility improvements are needed for full inclusivity.

The Wing



THE
Wing

The Wing is a special place on campus where everyone can hang out, eat, study and relax.

Revitalization:

Proposed a “grab-and-go” model using Ollie’s kitchen to prepare during off-peak hours.

Aim to reduce overhead while offering convenient quick-serve options for students.

Financial considerations

\$36,000/year in rent.

\$50,000 invested in furniture (in 2023).

Operational Obstacles

- Health code restrictions for on-site food prep.
- Previously lacked an efficient business plan or appropriate equipment to function independently as a food service.

COMMON CHALLENGES

CUSA's businesses faced several shared challenges that hindered their ability to achieve financial sustainability:

High Operating Costs:

Staffing expenses, rent, and inventory costs consistently exceeded revenue generation in many ventures.

Limited Accessibility:

Some businesses, such as Haven, were located off-campus or in areas with poor foot traffic, reducing student engagement and sales.

Outdated Processes:

The use of outdated systems, such as point-of-sale (POS) software, limited financial oversight and operational efficiency.

Inadequate Planning:

A lack of effective business strategies and detailed financial planning led to underperformance in several ventures.

Mismatch with Student Demand:

Product offerings and pricing were not always aligned with student preferences and affordability, impacting overall profitability.



Lessons learned



Centralized Supply Chains:

Consolidating supply chains and negotiating better bulk pricing with suppliers can significantly reduce costs and improve efficiency.

Data-Driven Business Planning:



Upgrading POS systems and implementing real-time financial tracking will enhance oversight and allow for informed decision-making.





Student-Centric Operations:

Businesses must prioritize aligning their offerings with student demand, preferences, and budgets to drive engagement and profitability.

Focus on Core Strengths:

Redirecting resources to high-traffic on-campus spaces and reducing investments in underperforming ventures can strengthen CUSA's financial stability.

By addressing these challenges and implementing these lessons, CUSA is better positioned to improve the operational and financial performance of its businesses, ensuring they serve students effectively and sustainably.



CUSA SERVICE CENTERS

CUSA currently operates or oversees several campus-oriented service centres aimed at providing a variety of programming and resources for students. Each service centre is responsible for meeting the needs of our diverse student population and enriching student life in meaningful and inventive ways.

Our service centres include:

**Carleton
Disability
Awareness
Centre (CDAC)**



**Gender and
Sexual
Resource Centre
(GSRC)**



Mawandoseg



**Racialized and
International
Student Experience (RISE)**



**Wellness
Centre**



**Women's
Centre**



Challenges

Knowledge transfer:

Limited and inconsistent knowledge is transferred between parting and incoming staff.



Management Inconsistency:

Over the past 2 years, there have been 5 managers responsible for overseeing the Service Centre Coordinators, resulting in inconsistent processes and expectations.



Budget Challenges:

Service centres were provided their budgets, but there was limited direction and expectations set for how the budget could be allocated.



On-Going Initiatives/Next Steps

Documentation:

Implemented tracking documents, coordinator handbooks, and a new events tracking form.

Budget Updates:

Presented realigned budgets, coordinated finance presentation for service centre coordinators to understand CUSA's financial position, and have provided training so coordinators are aware of expectations and standards.

Management Oversight:

Consistent full-time management. Manager meets with part-time staff and develops processes to enhance the coordinator role.



UNIFIED SUPPORT CENTER

The Unified Support Centre (USC) is a volunteer-run initiative that brings together two key services: the Food Centre, which provides on-campus food support and advocacy, and Foot Patrol, which offers safety services during the evening. The USC is committed to delivering timely, direct, and meaningful support to the Carleton community.

Our services include:

- The Emergency Essentials Assistance Program
- The Safe Walk Program
- The Walk and Talk Program
- The Guardian Program
- The Borrow a First Aid Kit Program
- Applied Suicide Intervention Training
- Food Hamper



Challenges

Funding Limitations:

Budget constraints hinder our ability to consistently provide high-quality food services to students.

System Inefficiencies:

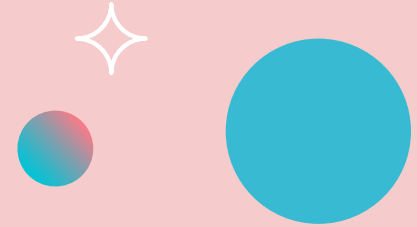
Due to the large volume of hamper requests, our back-end hamper service system often crashes. The system currently relies on a network of Google Sheets, Typeform, Calendly and various codes, which is not robust enough for the current demand.

Knowledge transfer:

Limited and inconsistent knowledge is transferred from parting and incoming staff members and volunteers, despite training efforts.



On-Going Initiatives/Next Steps



Budget Updates:

The USC conducted another FutureFunder this year and applied to several grants, successfully increasing their budget by approximately \$30,000 to enhance their Emergency Essentials Assistance Program. Among this grant they secured \$10,000 to purchase and implement permanent donation bins across campus. These bins will be installed upon receiving permission from Carleton University and developing a plan for their ongoing maintenance. Additionally, the USC was able to secure an agreement with the Graduate Students' Association (GSA) to support Graduate students using the service which has taken significant strain off our budget and allowed them to purchase dietary specific items for Carleton students.



Website Creation:

Over the past year, the USC has been collaborating with website developers to formalize and consolidate service requirements onto a single platform. The website development has been successful and recently completed its beta testing phase. The next step is to launch this website in February 2025, with plans to add a messaging system for Foot Patrol services in the future, contingent on budget availability.

Documentation:

The USC Service Fulfilment and Development Supervisor is developing 5 handbooks. These resources aim to ensure consistent, up-to-date procedures and easy accessibility during future staff and volunteer transitions.



CUSA CLUBS

OVERVIEW

CUSA oversees over **275** student clubs, **500** student leaders, and approximately **13,000** members. CUSA provides services such as club certification/recognition, funding, bank accounts, promotion, and support. CUSA Clubs are administered by CUSA staff and executives and overseen by the Clubs Oversight Commission.

Challenges

Budget & Funding Allocation:

In the past, the Clubs Oversight Commission and the Student Groups Administrator were not provided with accurate information regarding the clubs' budgets. Additionally, there have been challenges in distributing funds equitably among clubs while ensuring the overall budget is adhered to.



On-Going Initiatives/Next Steps

Revised budgeting and funding process:

The Clubs Oversight Commission, Vice-President Internal, and Student Groups Administrator are now all fully informed about the clubs' budget. A new funding model has been introduced to ensure that CUSA clubs receive equitable funding while staying within the allocated budget.

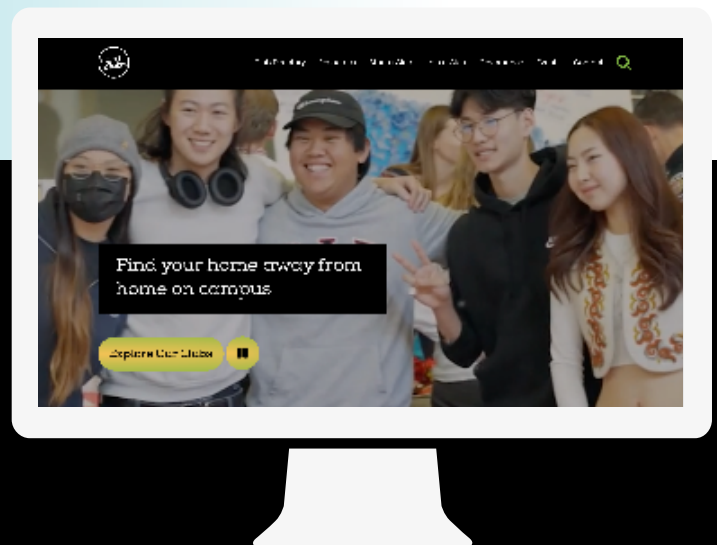
Refining policies:

The Vice President Internal and the Clubs Oversight Commission will be creating a sub-committee to review and improve CUSA Clubs procedures.



Clubs Website

Last year also marked the launch of a new CUSA Clubs website, where students can browse the club directory, learn about starting a club, and access resources for club leaders or members.



CUSA STAFFING

With executive staff leaving on an annual basis after finishing their one-year terms, it is clear that a strong senior management and permanent staff team is essential for the long-term success of the organization. After experiencing a high turnover of our full-time senior management staff this year, we realized how important it was to have documentation of their roles, connections, and responsibilities. This led to the implementation of mechanisms (handbooks) to safeguard this institutional knowledge and maintain stronger record keeping for years to come.

Even though we are facing major financial deficits, our priority this year was to fix all of the financial and reporting challenges while retaining our staff. Our staff are the backbone of CUSA, and without them, **we cannot operate.**

That said, we are working on an organizational restructuring to better suit the needs of our evolving student union, with budget considerations being a top priority in the mandate and result of the restructuring.

CUSA's main financial obstacles were due to poor overall financial and business oversight. Because of this, the decision to hire a Finance Manager, Operations Manager and Business & Hospitality Manager was essential to support the organization in creating solutions for these areas. With the organization's financial constraints in mind, these positions were hired on a temporary contract basis to avoid high costs associated with full time staffing for the time being.

Implementation of Handbooks:

Handbooks will be required for every staff and executive position for record keeping and institutionalized knowledge. These will include reporting structure of the position, responsibilities, internal commitments, external commitments, departmental staff, big projects, annual deadlines, restrictions, challenges, and FAQ's.

Haven student job guarantee: While it was necessary for the success of the organization to close Haven, it was very important to the Board of Directors that all Haven student staff were given the opportunity to retain their jobs at another on-campus business. All Haven's staff were offered alternative employment positions at CUSA.

Unionized Workforce:

- Local CUPE1281: Student staff (service centers, businesses).
- Local CUPE3011: Full-time staff (business managers, finance staff, etc.) Aside from senior management.

On-Going Initiatives/Next Steps

Organizational Restructuring:

We aim to restructure our staffing in a way that better fits with our current financial realities while focusing on long-term sustainability and maintaining essential services for students.

Student Co-op Opportunities:

To foster our financial and academic growth among students, we will introduce co-op opportunities across various departments within CUSA. These initiatives will provide students with valuable hands-on experience while supporting their financial needs and enhancing their academic journey. Presently, we have made agreements with co-op students in the Psychology undergraduate program to support the Wellness Centre.

STRATEGIC SOLUTIONS & ACTION PLAN

Closure of Haven & Focus on On-Campus Spaces

- Haven's closure significantly reduces financial losses.
- Redirecting staff and resources to Ollie's, Rooster's, and The Wing—spaces where we already pay rent—improves operational focus and on-campus student accessibility.

Upgrading Systems and Processes

- **New POS Software:** Streamlined, real-time tracking of sales, inventory, and analytics. (OMEGA software).
- **Monthly Financial Reporting:** Ensures each department recognizes potential budget overruns early.
- **Digitization:** Continuing to replace paper trails with digital documentation to speed up financial analysis.

Improving Supply Chain and Menu Engineering

- **Centralized Purchasing:** Negotiating with suppliers for better bulk prices.
- **Menu Overhaul:** Adopting culturally diverse and higher-margin products; reducing items with unsustainable food costs.
- **Student Surveys:** Regular feedback loops to align offerings with student needs and preferences.

Financial and Operational Oversight

- **Contract-based Finance & Business Managers:** Professionalizing oversight without permanently inflating staff costs.
- **Monthly Reconciliations:** Immediate identification of high-cost areas ensures timely adjustments.
- **Board & Council Collaboration:** Ongoing consultations to balance student needs with financial realities.

GOALS & NEXT STEPS

Short-Term Goals - Financial Stability

- Reduce expenditure across all departments and businesses through better cost controls and contractual positions.
- Enhance financial reporting with monthly reconciliations, preventing last-minute surprises at year-end audits.
- Reconfigure The Wing into a functional grab-and-go service, capitalizing on existing kitchen capacity at Ollie's.
- Closing down Haven significantly reduced CUSA's spending, as well as reducing losses as it was month after month failing to make a profit or break even. Renting out the building introduces a new revenue stream with minimal costs.

Long-Term Goals (Organizational Long-Term Stability)

- Increase the Profitability of on-campus Businesses by modernizing operations, updating menus, and improving marketing.
- Sustain democratic reforms to ensure transparent, student-focused governance.
- Five-Year Strategic Plan in partnership with the Board, including potential referendums for structural or fee-based changes if necessary.



Conclusion



Thank you for taking the time to read this report. My goal was to keep this update concise, providing basic yet essential information about CUSA—our background, our current situation, and the steps we are taking to move forward.

I am pleased to share that as of the end of December, CUSA achieved a total revenue of \$3.5 million and expenditures of \$3.4 million. For the first time in a long time, thanks to the dedicated efforts of the CUSA team, Council, and Board, we are in a surplus position of over **\$100,000**.

Fiscal Year	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025 (to date)
Revenue	\$ 5,122,369	\$ 5,405,838	\$ 3,548,613
Expenditure	\$ 6,329,304	\$ 6,642,358	\$ 3,421,903
Difference	-\$ 1,206,935	-\$ 1,236,520	\$ 126,709



I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to our determined team. The strongest bonds are often forged through challenges, and CUSA would not be where it is today without the dedication and hard work of the students who have supported these changes every step of the way. Our volunteers, both on the board and council, are truly the backbone of our organization, and it has been an honour to work alongside them in driving these improvements forward.

A special thank you goes to our Board Chair, Noah Goodgie, for stepping up and leading with strength during the organization's most challenging times. I also want to recognize Councillor Cass McIsaac and Councillor Nathan Bruni for their unwavering commitment and invaluable contributions toward making these changes possible.

I must also give a heartfelt shoutout to my Assistant Vice President of Executive Relations, Jahnelle Woldegiorgis. When I began my term and brought Jahnelle onto the team, neither of us could have anticipated the challenges ahead. Now, almost nine months later, I am incredibly grateful to have witnessed Jahnelle exceed every expectation, demonstrating outstanding leadership and work tirelessly alongside me on every project. Despite her vital role, she often works behind the scenes without receiving the recognition she deserves. Jahnelle, your resilience and strength are the embodiment of what it means to be a true student leader. Thank you for everything.

Last but not least, I would like to thank you, the students, for your trust and patience throughout this year's challenging process of turning CUSA around. It has been an honour to contribute and lead these changes. I am optimistic about the future of CUSA and the opportunities we can create together.

We invite you to share your thoughts, ideas, and feedback with us. We encourage you to also engage with CUSA by participating in events, joining our initiatives, or reaching out directly to our team. Your involvement will help us create a stronger, more inclusive, and impactful association.

Together, we can make a difference. Join us in shaping the future of CUSA and enriching the Carleton student experience.

Upcoming Town Hall: Your Chance to Engage with University Leaders

We're excited to announce that a Town Hall will soon be taking place, providing a unique opportunity for you, the students, to engage directly with key members of our university community. This event will feature a panel of representatives from our Board of Directors, CUSA Council, and myself, your President. It's your chance to ask questions, voice concerns, and share ideas about how we can continue improving our campus experience together.

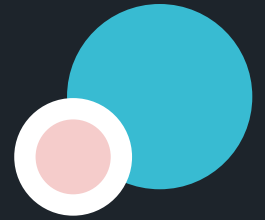
Stay Updated:

To make sure you don't miss out on any details, including the exact date and time of the event, please follow our official social media channels.

This is your chance to help shape the future of our university—don't miss it!



Appendices



Appendix A: Financial Statements & Budgets

- Year-over-Year Audits
- Detailed Departmental Budgets (2022–2023, 2023–2024, Current Year)

Appendix B: Governance Documents

- CUSA By-Laws
- CUSA Board of Directors Terms of Reference

Appendix C: Organizational Chart

- CUSA Organizational Chart

Appendix D: Business Operational Plans

- Haven Closure Financial Impact Analysis

Appendix E: Contact Information & Resources

- Emails and Phone Numbers for Key Staff/Executives
- Links to CUSA Websites or Student Support Services
- Carleton University Ombudsperson





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