

WUUSA 2023-2024 IMPACT REPORT

WATERLOO UNDERGRADUATE

WUUSA
STUDENT ASSOCIATION



MESSAGE TO MEMBERS

Dear University of Waterloo community,

I hope that this message finds you well. While reading this Impact Report, I reflected upon my time as President of the Waterloo Undergraduate Student Association (WUSA) and would like to thank everyone who made it possible.

This report provides a glance into the work undertaken by WUSA on behalf of its membership. WUSA is a large organization with many operations including advocacy, marketing, operations, governance, events, clubs, and many more, all of which will be highlighted in this report.

Thank you to the stakeholders who WUSA works so closely with. Your continued connection and collaboration have been invaluable in supporting our mission and improving the lives of the undergraduates at the University of Waterloo.

Our 2023/24 Board of Directors was composed of many dedicated individuals who brought diverse experiences and insights to their role. Their passion and commitment allowed WUSA to thrive and serve the undergraduate community. I wish them all the best in their future endeavours and thank them for the time, energy, and heart that they poured into their roles.

The work outlined in this report would not have been possible without the contributions of Stephanie Ye-Mowe, former WUSA President, student senator, and WUSA Board member. They were a close mentor and friend to me when I was first getting started at WUSA. We are all deeply saddened by Stephanie's passing last fall. Their commitment and unwavering support of students was evident through their fearless advocacy in areas like housing, affordability, accessibility, and their 5+ year tenure with WUSA. One project that Stephanie was passionate about was the installation of a goose statue outside the SLC. The statue is now finished, and a commemorative plaque will be installed before the official unveiling. Stephanie's presence is deeply missed by their friends, colleagues, classmates, and the broader Waterloo community. This statue serves as a permanent reminder of Stephanie's spirit and dedication to improving the student experience at Waterloo.

Lastly, thank you to our incredible undergraduate student members who make this all possible. Your energy and passion make this community so unique and define both the University and WUSA. On behalf of myself and the 2023/24 Board of Directors, thank you for reading this report. I wish the 2024/25 Board of Directors good luck and am excited to hear about what they will achieve.


Sincerely,

Rory Norris
WUSA President 2023/2024



WHO WE ARE

The Waterloo Undergraduate Student Association (WUSA) is a not-for-profit organization which serves as the official collective voice and legal representative of undergraduate students at the University of Waterloo. Since 1967, our student-led organization has provided undergrads with the services and support they need to reach their academic goals and make the most of their university experience. We advocate for our members to ensure that they receive an accessible, affordable, accountable, and high quality post-secondary experience. By bringing recommendations to the University and all levels of government, we ensure students' voices are prioritized among decision-makers. For more details on how we support students, check out our website.

 <https://wusa.ca/>

“The fact that WUSA is within the university opened up a lot of doors for me to meet new people and connect with them along with understanding how the organization works to help students”.

(Student Staff Survey, Spring 2023)



OUR 2023-2024 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

This group of dedicated individuals are the elected students that represent undergraduates to all levels of government, committees, and advocacy alliances. Board members hold the fiduciary responsibility and set the strategic direction of the organization, while staff oversee the day-to-day operations.



Rory Norris (He/Him)
2A Biotechnology / CPA



Katie Traynor (She/Her), 2B
Urban Design



Matthew Athanasopoulos (He/Him),
2B Nanotechnology Engineering



Alex Chaban (He/Him), 3A
Knowledge Integration



Ahmed Elmahi (He/Him),
3B Kinesiology



Amanda Adam (She/Her),
4A Biomedical Science



Chevin Jeon (She/Her), 1B
Computer Science



Tham Sivakumaran (She/
Her), 3B Psychology



Ailin Jalili (She/Her), 4B
Health Studies



Anshul Ruhil (He/Him), 3B
Computer Science



Jeff Zhu (He/Him) 3A
Computer Engineering



Jay Lan (He/Him), 3B Math
and Business Administration



WHAT WE ACCOMPLISHED

Our accomplishments this year can be organized into five major themes: (1) mental health, belonging, and safety; (2) housing and transit; (3) gender equity and inclusion; (4) accessible governance, and (5) student space and services.

Mental Health, Belonging and Safety

Listening to Students

The first step when developing programs or engaging in advocacy is listening to student opinion on the topic. This is especially important for issues that are sensitive in nature such as mental health, belonging and safety. We put out two surveys through our Representative Survey Platform this year to help understand student experiences in these areas. The [Student Connectedness Survey](#) looked at how connected students feel to the University of Waterloo and what could make them feel more connected. The [Student Safety and Mental Health Survey](#) examined student experiences of safety on campus and how this impacts mental health.

Comfort Through Cooking


For many students, both domestic and international, it's difficult to be away from home. To provide reminders of the tastes and smells of home, the Student Advocacy Support team collected recipes from students that remind them of home and put together a cookbook called Global Kitchen: Tastes from Home.

Mental Health Programming

In partnership with community organizations, we introduced various programs to reduce student stress and improve mental health. In collaboration with Laurier, we launched a five-part art therapy session called Art Hive. Other activities included hula hooping, Qi Gong, Laughter Yoga, and Mindful Creations, which were all designed to help students manage stress and enhance their wellbeing.

Campus Community

In a bid to foster a greater sense of community and increase student engagement, WUSA launched a **community-wide photography contest** in 2023. The photo contest themes encouraged students to engage with their campus and community with themes like showcasing their favourite study space to align with the opening of the new Lounge on 3. The photography contest, with its low barrier to entry, not only encourages a wide participation but also deepens students' connections to campus life and ongoing university initiatives.



“One of WUSA’s most significant strengths that could benefit from increased focus is its ability to foster a sense of belonging and inclusivity among the diverse undergraduate student population.”

(Student Staff Survey, Spring 2023)

Housing and Transit

Housing Playbook

Coming to university often means living alone for the first time and being unaware of your legal protections and obligations as a tenant. WUSA's Board recognized that some landlords and property management companies take advantage of students who are unaware of the laws and regulations around renting. To mitigate this, WUSA launched the [Housing Playbook](#), which provides students with information and resources to help them navigate renting, signing lease agreements, and find legal support when they need it.

Stratford Bus Pilot Project

Focus groups conducted with Global Business and Digital Arts (GBDA) students last year revealed significant challenges with transportation to the Stratford campus. To address this, we partnered with the Stratford campus to pilot a bus program that demonstrates the need for on-going transportation between Waterloo and Stratford. In the Fall 2023 term, 146 GBDA students participated in the program and in the Winter 2024 term, 135 did.

Gender Equity and Inclusion

Menstrual Equity

WUSA worked with the Women's Centre and the University's Equity Diversity Inclusion and Anti-Racism (EDI-R) office to improve Waterloo students' access to free and sustainable menstrual products. While the long-term sustainability of this initiative depends on funding, it is filling gaps in students' access to menstrual products by ensuring all students have access to free, sustainable products while they're on campus.

Free Legal Advice Programming

WUSA partnered with Waterloo Region Community Legal Services (WRCLS) to host a series of educational sessions that inform students about their rights as tenants and offer one-on-one free legal consultations. WUSA has continued to work with WRCLS to promote their monthly Virtual Housing Legal Drop-in Sessions, which are available for free to University of Waterloo students.

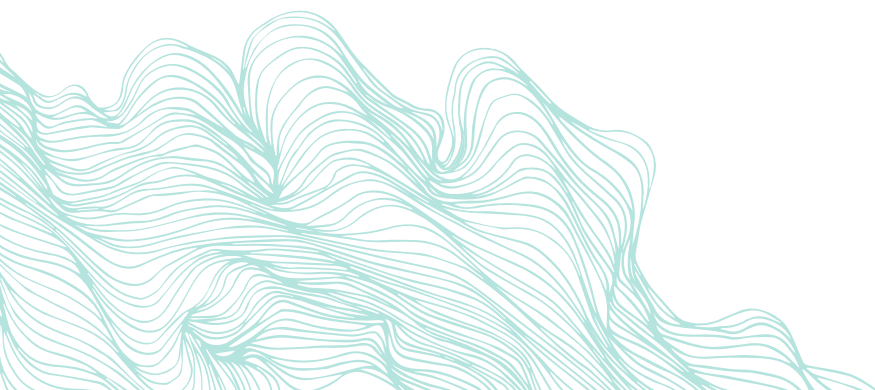
"I think WUSA is doing great, but they need to make themselves more visible. There's so many things they do that people don't know about!"

(RSP Survey, March 2024)

Promoting Consent Programming

In response to heightened risks of sexual assault during the Red Zone period from September 1 to October 10, WUSA launched an educational campaign to raise awareness and foster a safer campus environment. In collaboration with University Relations, the Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Office (SVPRO) and the Women's Centre, we offered awareness programming and took to the streets on September 21 for the Take Back the Night Rally, where we stood united against sexual violence.

WUSA also partnered with SVPRO to create the Consent Calendar, which features original art pieces by Waterloo undergraduate students that capture what consent means to them. These beautiful calendars were distributed throughout the year.



Accessible Governance

Accessible Governance

To ensure that student leadership and governance is accessible to all undergrads, WUSA Advocacy engaged in consultations with students with disabilities. These discussions aimed to identify the barriers that exist for students with disabilities who run and serve as WUSA board members.

We also began livestreaming the Board's regular meetings on our YouTube channel! Students can tune in to watch the meeting live or watch the recording at a time that best suits them. This ensures our Board proceedings are transparent and accountable to our members.

Election Turnout

The 2024 WUSA General Election marked a significant milestone for WUSA, with the highest number of candidates running and the greatest number of voters in our history!

Over 25%
of students voted

**with 8,876
of 35,325**

eligible voters casting
their vote.

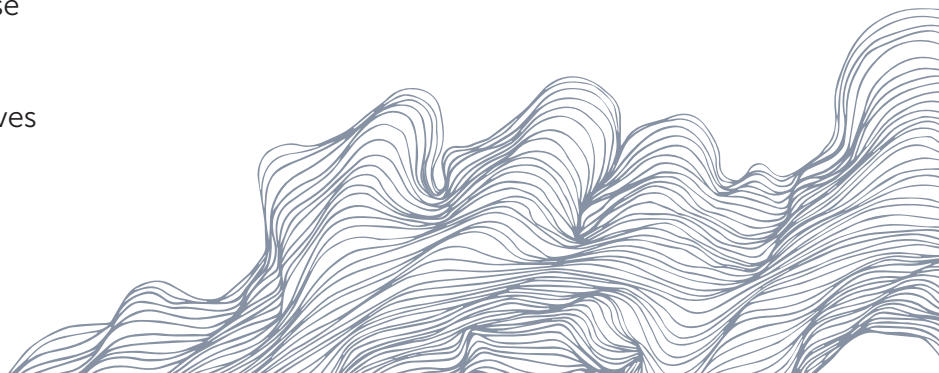
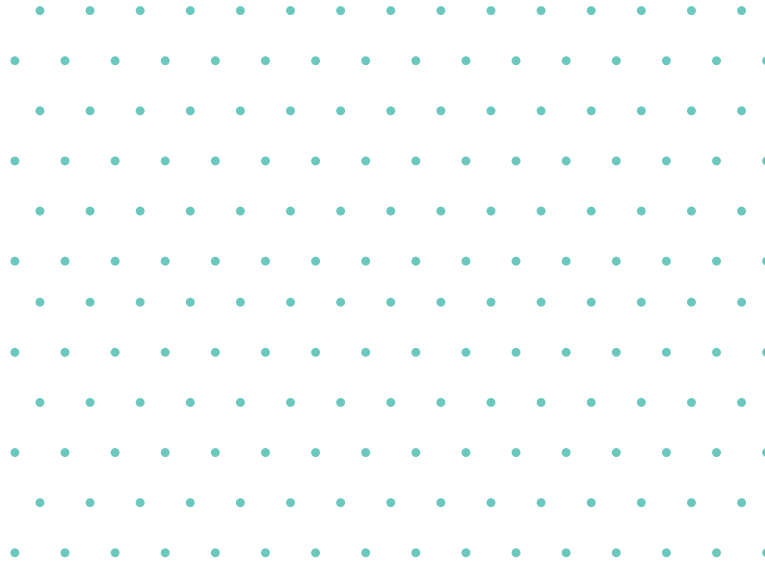
This is a direct reflection of our efforts to enhance leadership development, streamline governance processes, and cultivate a diverse and engaged candidate pool. Additionally, finding efficiencies, like digitizing the voting process, makes participation easy and removes barriers to democratic participation in our campus community.

Promoting Student Leadership

We launched the Student Leadership Mailing list which sends targeted e-mail communications to students who are interested in receiving more information about governance, student leadership, and to prepare them to run for a board position. This initiative aligns with the 2020-2025 Long Range Plan's goal of developing student leaders and increasing student engagement in governance. Over 500 students are signed up for this list.

If you're reading this report and are interested in enhancing your leadership skills, sign up for the [Student Leadership Email List!](#)

WUSA also created a Governance spotlight page on LinkedIn, which serves as a positive space to highlight the achievement of WUSA Board members. It also enhances the professional online presence of our student leaders and fosters a supportive, positive online community to build student connection and engagement.



Student Space and Services

New Spaces for Students

We opened two new spaces for students to study and hang out on main campus: the Lounge on 3 in the SLC and the former Bombshelter space was transitioned into the Student Lounge.

We also opened a burger pop-up, SmashBites, as a temporary way to use the Student Lounge space. It also provides students with another affordable food option on campus. We also completed renovations to the Turnkey@DC desk, meaning when students are across campus and need Turnkey's services, they have somewhere to go.

Legal Protection Program Review

The WUSA Legal Protection Program by StudentCare is a service provided to WUSA members for a small termly fee. Our contract is up for renewal this year, so it was important for us to review the program and determine if it was effectively serving students. We did so by launching a survey in February which received a total of 650 responses from students. The results of this survey will be used by Board to make a decision about the future of this service for students.



Lounge on 3



SmashBites

ADVOC

Q

FA

Q

K



Student Advocacy Support

The introduction of six Student Advocacy Support positions was crucial in bolstering our advocacy initiatives over the past year. These students were instrumental across a wide range of activities, including helping with research, assisting with programming, drafting articles and stances, creating resources and engaging in awareness campaigns. Their contributions greatly enhanced our ability to support and empower the student community.

Advocacy Stance Development

Clearly articulating our beliefs on specific subjects helps guide our advocacy work and communicate our positions to others. Through extensive research and consultation, the Student Advocacy Support team developed five stances on Experiential Education, Local and Regional Transit, Off Campus Housing, Gender Based Sexual Violence and Mental Health. These stances, which will be reviewed annually and retired after five years unless renewed by the board of directors, act as a roadmap for future advocacy efforts.

Provincial & Federal Advocacy

WUSA engages in advocacy at the provincial and federal levels as well. This year, WUSA representatives participated in the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance (OUSA) Lobby Week and the [Undergraduates of Canadian Research Intensive Universities \(UCRU\) Lobby Week](#) to advocate for better support for post-secondary education.

OUSA Consultations

As a member of OUSA, WUSA is responsible for consulting with undergraduate students to inform updates to provincial-facing policy papers. This year, these consultations covered a range of topics including **Gender-Based Sexual Violence Prevention and Response, Housing, Transit and Community Development, Rural and Northern Students, Student Health and Wellness**. These consultations ensure that concerns specific to the University of Waterloo are adequately represented in the advocacy work that OUSA engages with.

OUSA General Assembly

In October and March, WUSA sends a delegation to the OUSA General Assembly where students from all OUSA's member schools come together to determine the policies that will guide the organization. This typically involves four intensive days discussing and approving student-written policy papers. These policy papers represent the interests and voices of 160,000 students across Ontario.

Government Relations

With the goal of advocating for our members, WUSA's student leaders connect regularly with external stakeholders such as politicians and government officials to discuss student-facing concerns locally, provincially, and federally and to highlight WUSA's annual priorities. Over the 2023-2024 year representatives from WUSA met with more than 20 external stakeholders directly, including local MPs, MPPs, Mayors, City Councillors, and the Chair of Waterloo Region. They also attended dozens of stakeholder events locally, in Toronto, Ottawa, and elsewhere across Canada.



YEAR AT A GLANCE



Student Involvement



54 student elections throughout the year



1 in 4 students voted in our General Election



Employed up to 13 co-op students and 165 student part-time staff per term

“Working with WUSA, specifically in my role, helped me meet a lot of people and make new friends!”

(Student Staff Survey, Fall 2023)

Building a Community

Societies

- Supported over 1000 unique events put on by societies
- Revised the Societies’ How-To Manual
- Supported over 100 student society executives
- Introduced a full-time staff member to support societies

Orientation

- 900 volunteers were involved in our 2023 Orientation programming
- 6300 unique students attended over 100 first-year orientation events across 8 days
- Completed leader training retreats for 600 students

Clubs

Number of registered WUSA clubs each term

148

Spring '23

195

Fall '23

185

Winter '24

4000+

unique events held

1000+

student leaders trained

Events



+43%

WUSA event participation compared to last year



25,000+

students experiences through events

- Introduced several new events such as an Esports Lounge, Taylor Swift Dance Party, Roller Disco, Snow Tubing and Blue Jays Opening Day in an effort to continue adapting programming to fit what students are interested in
- Membership approved a fee increase for this upcoming year to bring more events to campus

“It has been a good experience working with WUSA so far. I especially appreciate my manager as she contributed to making me feel welcomed, comfortable and encouraged my professional growth within the team and for my personal professional development.”

(Student Staff Survey, Winter 2024)

Student-Run Services

It has been a full year with the services in their new locations in the Student Life Centre. Since this move, the services have increased their efforts in collaborating and connecting amongst each other. Although there has been an increased number in opportunities for events and collaborations, there have been a few events, both globally and on our University campus, that have had an impact on service provisions amongst many of our services and those who run them.

Off Campus Community

- Hosted 8 events during Orientation Week
- 1318 first-year, off-campus students attended Orientation programming
- Hosted 22 events throughout the Fall 2023 and Winter 2024 terms
- 907 off-campus students signed up to receive OCC communications
- The Plant and Paint event had 100+ attendees and the Blooms and Bouquet event saw \$637 in sales for this event

RAISE

- Hosted 8 events, with over 400 visitors and attendees

Food Support Service

- 1641 food hampers given out, including halal and kosher options

Glow

- We gave out over 10,000 pronoun pins this past year
- Over 3000 visitors and attendees to the Centre and the roughly 200 events it hosted

WUSA Thrift

- In Spring of 2023, they had over 1300 visitors to their store and sidewalk sales. They sold 1260 pieces of clothing and accessories and \$5512 in revenue.

Co-op Connection

- Spring 2023 was the last term with WUSA before being transferred to Co-operative and Experiential Education with the University of Waterloo

Women's Centre

- Hosted 40 events throughout the year with over 650 attendees total
- Successfully published another edition of [Voices](#)
- Secured funding to launch their Menstrual Hamper Campaign to provide students with free access to menstrual products
- Gave out more than 50 menstrual hampers intended to last a full menstrual cycle and more than 500 pads and tampons. This includes reusable menstrual products such as reusable pads and cups, aligning with their goal to offer sustainable products

Mates

- Implemented SafeTalk training for volunteers
- 625 peer support hours and 138 visits throughout the year

ICSN

- Hosted more than 20 events both on and off campus, with over 1000 attendees.

Bike Centre

- 309 items sold with \$4700.25 in revenue, and 39 bike rentals. In Spring 2023, they had over 900 visitors to their centre.

CAPS

- Supported over 150 students with guidance on petitions, grievances, and policies.



Communications

@yourwusa Instagram analytics

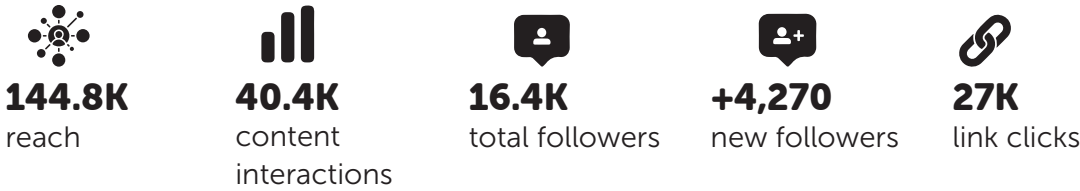
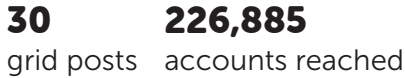
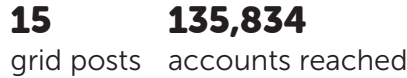


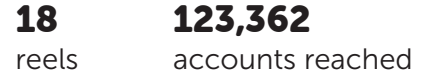
Photo Dumps



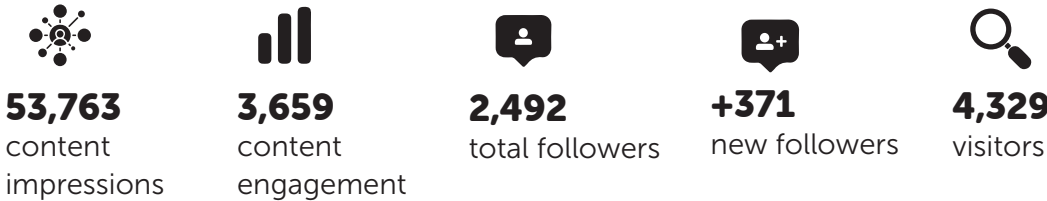
Intercept Reels



Promo Videos



WUSA LinkedIn



Email Newsletter

In August 2023, WUSA launched a strategic new effort to enhance communication with our members through the introduction of a membership update email system. These e-mails go out at the beginning of each month and communicate to students how they can make the most of their WUSA membership each month. It includes information on upcoming events, governance highlights, exclusive member-only deals, feedback opportunities, how to get involved with WUSA and more.

Providing Services

Saved students **\$54,055.68** on 3rd party processing fees as well as platform fees by providing students with a ticketing system on our website.

In September 2023, we began a new program providing students with AV equipment such as projects, speakers, and portable screens. This saved students approximately **\$1,000** per month in rental costs.



13,230
Fedbus Ticket Sales



11,771
GO Transit trips



\$96,278
GRT Sales outside of UPass Program



35,363
SLC study room bookings

Commercial Operations



407,918
total transactions at Flock Stop



18,758
total transactions at the Dispensary

Student Voices

Research & Consultation

Representative Survey Platform (RSP) Overview

- As the organization representing all undergraduate students at the University of Waterloo, it is important for WUSA to keep a pulse on what services and supports students want and need and their opinions on various topics. The RSP allows us to do this and serves as the go-to for student opinion and feedback and have quality data ready to advocate and make decisions for the organization and to share with campus partners.
- The 2023-2024 year marked the first full year of utilizing the RSP, proving to be a highly successful tool as it enabled us to collect data from students on a variety of topics.
- Students are randomly selected, representative by faculty, to join the program and are sent an email invite at the beginning of each term asking them to participate.
- We sent out 6 Surveys through our RSP on the following topics [[visit the research and consultation page on wusa.ca](#) to view the full reports]:



Physical Health and Wellness



Student Connectedness



Student Academic Success



WUSA Yearly Planning



Student Pulse



Student Safety and Mental Health

RSP Program Benefits and Wins

- Increased response rates (65-80% compared to 3-10% for at-large surveys)
- Better quality answers with less incomplete responses
- Access to data to help inform advocacy work. For example, by being able to use our Student Safety and Mental Health data to help inform conversations with university administration after the June 2023 attack related to gender identity and expression

“I think this was a really great opportunity for students to give feedback and say what impacts us most.”

(RSP Survey, February 2024)



1 Intercept Survey

- Transit



4 different Focus Group opportunities

- Accessibility in Governance
- Gender Based Sexual Violence Prevention and Response
- Addressing Racism and Religious Discrimination
- International Students and International Education



1 At-large Student Survey

- To support a review of the Legal Protection Program

Imprint: Your Stories, Your Voice



81%

pick up rate



241,000

website views

- Underwent a rebrand and launched a monthly magazine in August 2023.
- Switched from majority student volunteers to majority paid student staff-responsible for all the creative and behind-the-scenes work.
- Won the Canadian University Press John H. McDonald Awards for Excellence in Student Journalism for best Op-ed. – [It happened. What are we going to do about it?](#)

Ongoing Feedback

- [WUSA Incident Reporting Form](#) - a place to report instances of equity-related injustice to help inform broader advocacy on the matter.
- [Feedback Form](#) - a place to leave us a note on experience or satisfaction levels on a product, service or positions WUSA may be taking.

Campus Conversations: A WUSA Roundtable

- We hosted a roundtable in November 2023 to provide students with an opportunity to talk to the Board of Directors and support staff directly to understand how the organization operates and ask any questions they have.
- This event not only gave students the opportunity to connect with the student leaders who provide direction to WUSA, but also allowed them to learn what WUSA is doing currently and how they are dealing with important issues that affect all students.
- We plan to host more of these types of events in the 2024-25 year.

Behind the Scenes

WUSA's impact is made possible by a strong team of support staff that work in the background to improve our processes. Here are a few things we changed this year that while not obvious, have significant impacts on how we operate and serve students efficiently and effectively.

- To streamline the **cheque request process for WUSA clubs**, we created a digital platform for submitting, reviewing, and approving cheque requests. This significantly streamlines the process for clubs so they can spend less time on administrative tasks and more time building community and offering social opportunities and events.
- All front-facing supports for students like the Food Support Service, cheque pick-ups, and other administrative supports for students and student groups are available through the Turnkey Desk in the SLC, which is open 24/7.
- Our IT team **modernized the check-in process for WUSA events** to now include a QR code system that seamlessly allows us to track attendance. This helps us collect data on what events are most popular so we can continue to offer the programming that students want to see. Our IT team continues to provide in-house service to deliver a modern digital experience to our members, to ensure data security, and to provide cost savings to students.
- We added a **Societies Relations Coordinator** position to better support our student societies.



Challenges & Looking Forward

There has been no shortage of challenges this year that have impacted our members directly and presented obstacles for us to continue to provide the services and supports students rely on.

The hate-motivated attack on campus pivoted our attention towards student safety and findings ways to work with the University to **ensure everyone, especially the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, feel safe on campus**. We directed a lot of time and resources this year to safety, including our RSP on safety, which gathered student perceptions of safety on campus. Looking forward, we are pleased that **we now have the results of that survey** to share with stakeholders, which will give them additional insight to student perceptions of safety on campus and **recommendations for how it can be improved**.

We continue to navigate what students want and need when it comes to events and programs in a post-COVID world. As with every year, we have the challenge of adapting to a new generation of students who have different preferences to previous generations. **We are continuously pivoting to ensure we offer programming that students are interested in and want to engage with**. This continues to be a challenge as students are presented with opportunities from various areas on campus, and as students are spread out across the region, province, country, or even the globe while on co-op terms. Moving forward, we hope to collect more data on events to continue to **integrate student feedback into our planning**. We also plan to review our involvement in **New Student Transition** to improve how we welcome and support new students with our campus partners.

Commercial operations also presented difficulties, with delays to the opening of the Student Lounge and to the opening of Chaska, the quick-service Indian street food restaurant. **We are looking forward to opening Chaska this fall** to provide another food option for our members in the SLC. We are also quickly outgrowing our space in the SLC and are **exploring ways to maximize the use of the space** we have so we can best serve students.

With respect to our advocacy work, our provincial advocacy with **OUSA** is continuing to go well. A lot of our advocacy work occurs at the provincial level, as the province makes many of the decisions affecting post-secondary education. Moving forward, we are looking to **improve our federal advocacy** and are **exploring partnerships** that would allow us to effectively advocate at the national level. We hope to have an update on the progress in this area at the end of next year.

Student engagement with governance continues to be a challenge, although we saw a **significant increase in voter turnout in 2024 General Election**, with 1 in 4 students voting. We hope to continue the momentum of the 2024 General Election and **help students understand the importance of selecting the best students to represent them**. We also hope to continue to drive students to be involved with Board and other areas of governance, including by continuing our **Student Leadership e-mail list** for a second year.

We are also running a **referendum** this fall, after receiving a member-submitted petition earlier in the year. Our focus for the fall will be on driving students to vote in the referendum so we can effectively advocate to the University based on what our members want. We look forward to seeing the results of the referendum to learn more about the direction that students want their association to take.

The **Long-Range Plan** is also up for renewal in 2025, which will set the direction for the organization for 2025-2030. The 2024-25 Board will be responsible for developing the long-range plan for the next 5 years and we will share more information once the plan is finalized. **Overall, we're looking forward to the 2024-25 year and are excited to see the direction that our 2024-25 Board of Directors sets for the organization.**



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YouTube
[@yourwusa](#)



Email for
Inquiries



C^D CAMPUS DENTIST

University of Waterloo
Ballroom & Latin
Dance Club

UNSD

TRACES

ELMER'S
Tri-Fold
Display Board

LVINIS
WLOOSERV
SESS

CLIMBING CLUB

UW QUADBA

WATERLOO UNDERGRUATE
WUSA
STUDENT ASSOCIATION