**Willy Wonka’s Candy Frosh Official Report to Council, 23 September 2015**

Introduction

This report aims to give the AUS Council and members at large an overview of the planning and execution of Arts Frosh 2015, the AUS’s largest event of the year in regards to both size and exposure. This report was a collaborative effort on the part of the Arts Frosh committee. It focuses on larger overarching themes noticed throughout Arts Frosh of which the committee deemed necessary for Council and AUS members at large to be made aware. We touch upon pre-frosh initiatives, break down the Arts Frosh schedule day-by-day, highlight any notable challenges faced during the event, and conclude with recommendations to avoid those challenges for future years. The committee acknowledges that the Frosh Report of the Equity Commissioners 2015 also includes valuable information and suggestions for next year’s Arts Frosh.

Pre-Frosh

As a committee, our work began the moment we were selected, which took place in early April. First, we had to select Frosh leaders and orientation staff (o-staff). Leaders applied via a google form and were subsequently interviewed in groups of 4 by a panel of 3-4 committee members. Kevan Harris, this year’s Chief of Staff, remarked that the interview process - while long - was effective. However, the interviews took place at the beginning of finals, which was less than ideal. In the future, if the VP Social Affairs could be elected earlier in the year and could therefore choose coordinators in March, these interviews would not have to take place during an otherwise busy time for student volunteers. In addition, the committee would also recommend interviewing o-staff applicants, something that has not yet been formalized within Arts Frosh. We believe that interviewing o-staff would allow the committee to ask questions geared towards programming logistics, thereby helping rebrand the position into one of high responsibility and accountability.

Over the summer, the coordinators (the majority of whom remained in Montreal but some of whom did not) met weekly on Tuesday evenings. Meetings were deemed effective and those coordinators not present say they still felt informed of the activities of the committee.

The week directly preceding Frosh was registration. While seven days was perhaps a long time, it offered more time to check in the record-breaking number of participants Arts Frosh had this year. We had 1400 people register and pay online, meaning we collected more revenue than we had expected or budgeted for, which bolstered the buffer we had going into the event. As well, in the week before Frosh, coordinators engaged in training sessions for leaders and staff organized by Campus Life & Engagement. Trainings were generally well-received and reflected the culture shift visible in Frosh over the past four years. Frosh leaders and o-staff went through about 10 hours of training that was aimed at preparing them to be mentors for incoming first-year students. Training for leaders and staff is broken into two sections: core and skills. Core training is conceived as “mindset” training; it describes the best way for frosh positions to be conceived and approached by leaders and staff. It introduces and reinforces notions of equity, inclusivity, group bonding, and alcohol safety. Skills training delves into more specific scenarios that often arise during Frosh. Skills diverges between leaders and o-staff somewhat. Skills training offers specific team building activities to be conducted by leaders, ways in which both leaders and o-staff should contribute to harm reduction, and discusses conduct more specifically. Following these trainings, facilitated by frosh coordinators, leaders and o-staff underwent faculty-specific trainings related to Arts Frosh and run by Kevan Harris, Chief of Staff, and Daniel Chetner and Nathalie Breitshcwerdt respectively.

Frosh

Overall, the schedule this year left bigger gaps in the morning - necessitated by the schedule given to coordinators by McGill administration at the beginning of the summer. These gaps meant that Frosh, while five days long, was less tiring according to many leaders and o-staff because they could take breaks and engage in casual programming with participants.

On Wednesday, September 2nd, Frosh began with assigning first year participants to a group of frosh leaders. This assignment was done at random and participants were offered the opportunity to be in a group with their friends during registration when the committee explained the significance of having multiple Frosh bracelet colors. One issue from the old Frosh culture that was essentially been eradicated this year is the writing of inappropriate nicknames on participants’ shirts, of which there were virtually none. Once group formation ceased, there was ample amount of time for groups to play icebreaker games on Lower Field, play on the inflatables, or eat lunch. The Montreal Crawl was the next event after group formation; as is customary the crawl was done in two waves to accommodate Arts Frosh’s large size. Each route of the crawl consisted of 7 stops, 2 of which were food stops. This year the crawl was well-received by participants and staff, but the committee recommends spending more time solidifying programming for the crawl stops for the future. The evening event on Wednesday was the all-Frosh concert, attended by all faculty froshes. This was the first year that the faculties planned the concert instead of SSMU and overall it was a success. Having two venues, New City Gas and Club Soda, allowed to faculties to host a sort of music festival, with EDM at New City Gas and a live band and 90s throwback DJ at Club Soda. While there were some logistical problems, these did not have a significantly detrimental effect on the quality of the participants’ experience.

On Thursday, September 3rd, the day began at 3:00pm with a tailgate on Lower Field and moved into the Alouettes vs. BC Lions game at Molson Stadium. The football game was a new initiative for Arts Frosh this year in an effort to diversify the type of programming typically offered during Frosh. Although the committee is glad that we tried a new event, we received lukewarm feedback from participants and in the future it is recommended to better communicate the programming available at the stadium to participants.

On Friday, September 4th, Arts Frosh held the annual boat cruise on the St. Lawrence River. The boat left from a different pier than in years past which helped with line control and reduced confusion among participants as to where the boat was located. In the future, the committee recommends more signage around the Old Port to direct participants to the boat and washrooms.

Saturday, September 5th was Beach Day, attended by all faculty froshes. As it has been in the past, SSMU was responsible for planning and executing the programming and logistics of Beach Day. Unfortunately there were quite a few logistical problems during this event that had direct consequences for our committee and participants. There was miscommunication between SSMU and the bus company hired to drive participants to Pointe Calumet which resulted in buses not returning to pick up participants and Arts Frosh coordinators still downtown waiting to be taken to Beach Club. As a result, half of the Arts Frosh committee was unable to arrive at Beach Club until 4:00pm. This meant that the 7 Arts Frosh coordinators at Beach Club were each responsible for over 200 participants each. Since it was a hot, sunny day, the coordinators at the venue were constantly doing rounds making sure our participants were safe, and because we were understaffed this put us in a position of not being able to look after our participants as much as we would have liked. Another problem that occurred during the event was that although there was supposed to be a tent set up for lunch distribution, there ended up being no single distribution location. Lunch was distributed on foot by various leaders and o-staff which meant the coordinators could not direct participants to a specific location when they asked where they could find lunch. Recommendations for next year’s Beach Day are included in the Post-Frosh section of this report. The evening of the 5th was our movie night, which was well attended by multiple faculties and ran very smoothly!

Sunday, September 6th began with a breakfast on the lookout point of Mount Royal. While the committee recommends getting more water and a greater variety of food options for this event, it was overall a success and participants had a great time listening to music and getting acquainted with the famous Montreal landmark. Our event for that evening was at L’Olympia in collaboration with the faculty of Management. For next year the committee recommends brainstorming strategies to reduce the amount of participant and staff hookups on the last night of Frosh. While staff contracts don’t expire until noon the day after Frosh ends, this did not discourage a few staff from breaking their contract on the last night. Staff names have been reported to the VP Social and these individuals will no longer be welcome to participate in Arts Frosh anymore. Another issue that arose at L’Olympia was the overly-aggressive nature of the security guards, and the committee recommends for next year better communication with the venue before the event begins to agree on appropriate and inappropriate measures to be taken by security. Overall the event ran very smoothly and participants very much enjoyed their last night of Frosh!

Post-Frosh

Looking to next year’s Frosh, the AUS has some questions to consider. First, it should be noted that this year was the first year in which Arts Frosh had a Director of Inclusivity. This position proved invaluable both in the planning of events and during the execution of said events. Kat Svikhnushin was uniquely qualified for the role, being trained in Active Listening, Crisis Management, and Referrals. In the future, the committee decided overwhelmingly that this position should continue to exist and would ideally be filled by someone similarly trained in matters of equity, inclusivity, and mental health. Should such a person not be available, the position should be filled by someone willing to be trained in those areas which would be easier if coordinators could be chosen in March, rather than April.

As well, the AUS must decide to what extent SSMU should be involved in Arts Frosh. This will require the incoming VP Social Affairs to liaise with executives from other faculties (mostly VP Internals) to make a decision. The recommendation from the 2015 Frosh Committee is that while SSMU performed adequately the task of organizing interfaculty collaboration (hosting weekly meetings with all of the heads of Frosh, working groups for specific portfolios, community relations with the Milton Parc Community and the SPVM), they should not be asked to plan programming in following years. This year, the faculties took it upon themselves to plan the All Frosh Concert, which was logistically quite successful. SSMU planned a day of opt-in programming on Lower Field (inflatables, a beer tent, food trucks) that saw low attendance; most of the people who attended were coordinators. As well, SSMU coordinators took on the planning of Beach Day. Given the logistical failings of that day in particular, and how it reflects unfairly on faculties when their participants suffer due to the mistakes of other organizing bodies, it is the will of Arts Frosh 2015 coordinators that the faculties plan Beach Day next year.

On a positive note, relations between Arts Frosh coordinators and Equity Commissioners was starkly different from 2014. Equity Commissioners this year were communicative and friendly over the summer, and during Frosh they proved not only to be effective objective observers, but were positive influences on the running of events. They could be counted on by coordinators to help if needed, and their presence was noticed and appreciated by coordinators and participants alike.

One new initiative the Equity Commissioners sought to evaluate this year was the Sober Buddy (or Ally) Program. In a nutshell, this was an attempt to more comfortably integrate participants and staff who choose not to consume alcohol during Frosh. To that end, coordinators (particularly the Chief of Staff and Director Inclusivity) contacted leaders who do not drink in their regular lives and asked them if they wanted to be “Sober Buddies” for participants who also lead sober lifestyles. Kat, Director of Inclusivity, then met with the sober participants before group formation to introduce them to their sober leaders. Sober leaders did not lead entirely sober groups, but lead integrated groups where people were still free to drink should they choose to. The program saw success in offering sober froshies an example of how to engage comfortably with environments where others may consume alcohol. One note offered by Nicole Kim - one of the Equity Commissioners - is that coordinators in the future should offer further support to sober leaders as they often were saddled with a greater workload than other leaders. Sober leaders ended up with a disproportionate amount of logistical work to do because their co-leaders felt that, since they were sober, they could carry the team. Moving forward, it would be useful to have this program in mind while hiring leaders (the 2015 model was conceived after hiring was complete). As well, if there is enough interest among potential leaders, next year’s committee might look into fostering a whole sober group. Both the Sober Buddy model and Sober Group model have their merits and Arts Frosh should not be afraid to try something new if the goal is cementing the culture shift away from an alcohol-centered orientation week.

Another new initiative taken on by the Arts Frosh committee this year was the Arts Frosh bursary program. In collaboration with the Scholarship and Student Aid Office, Arts Frosh offered 4 free Frosh tickets to first year participants who demonstrated financial need. The committee recommends that this program continue for future years, as Frosh is inaccessible to some students because of its high cost.

Conclusion

As a whole, this year’s Arts Frosh was well-received by participants, staff, the SPVM, and the Milton-Parc community. While there were inevitably problems that arose during the event, the committee has taken note of what could be improved upon for next year and those suggestions will be relayed to next year’s committee through our individual exit reports. Arts Frosh has successfully eradicated much of the problematic traditions of the old frosh culture and continues to strive toward institutionalizing a more inclusive orientation experience for first-year students.

Respectfully submitted,

The Arts Frosh Committee

23 September 2015