

samru



students' association  
of mount royal university

# ANNUAL REPORT 2022-23

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# A MESSAGE TO OUR MEMBERS

At the Students' Association of Mount Royal University (SAMRU), we're all about making your life as a student better. We're here to listen, support, and advocate for you, and we're proud of what we've achieved together in the 2022-23 academic year.

When we reached out to you through our surveys, you told us that physical and mental health, financial strain, and social interaction were top of mind, and we took that to heart. Now, let's rewind and reflect on the challenges we faced, the strides we made, and how SAMRU remained your unwavering advocate every step of the way.

**Helping ease inflation's bite:** We understand the financial burdens inflation placed on students' shoulders. Because of this, SAMRU lobbied for increased student financial aid and affordable housing options, working tirelessly to ease the pressure and ensure education remained accessible for all.

**Launching the SAMRU Care Cupboards:** Responding to student need, we introduced the SAMRU Care Cupboards — offering free snacks and hygiene items to help students who face hunger or hardship due to financial challenges. Paid for entirely by fundraising efforts, the cupboards provided over 102,560 items to students in need!

**The joy of reconnection:** In-person events returned, and students were keen to connect with one another again. The excitement at the Wycked House Party, the spirit of community at our Round Dance, and the lively student performances at Gender Bender were just a few moments from many that fueled our collective spirit, reminding us of the value of community and shared experiences.

**Fostering community and support:** Our volunteer program saw over 200 students contribute over 1,000 hours, demonstrating the power of involvement! Events like the SAMRU Open House and Stress Less Week, and services like the Free Tax Clinic and the Peer Support Centre, have been instrumental in fostering a supportive and inclusive environment.

**Advocating for your needs:** The Representation Executive Council (REC) was instrumental in advocating for student interests. From tuition advocacy to promoting gender inclusivity and voter engagement, REC's initiatives reflect our collective commitment to positive change.

**Empowering student voices:** Our Student Governing Board, led by dedicated student volunteers, continues to champion SAMRU. From overseeing SAMRU operations and representation, to setting SAMRU's strategic direction, and getting involved with initiatives like the SAMRU Awards ceremony, their commitment to principled governance is steadfast.

As we reflect on the past year, we are proud of our achievements and grateful for the opportunity to serve you. We remain committed to enhancing your university experience and advocating for your needs.

# WE CARE ABOUT YOUR CHALLENGES



SAMRU conducts two key surveys each year to gather insights from students. The Fall Member Check-In Survey is designed to understand the concerns, interests, and expectations of our members, which helps in setting organizational priorities and shaping our future initiatives.

Last year's survey was conducted in the context of two significant factors: pandemic recovery and inflation. 2022-23 marked a return to in-person classes and on-campus activities, and inflation in Canada reached a 40-year high. These unique circumstances may have influenced respondents' answers and the resulting trends observed in the survey.

Our Fall Member Check-in Survey had over 1500 responses, up from 1000 in 2021-22. Our Winter Student Satisfaction and Awareness Survey had fewer responses at just over 700, but still provided excellent information about students' experiences with SAMRU services.

The Fall Member Check-In Survey revealed students' top concerns as physical and mental health, financial strain, and social interaction. In addition to being a top concern, financial security also showed a continued increase from the previous years' survey responses.

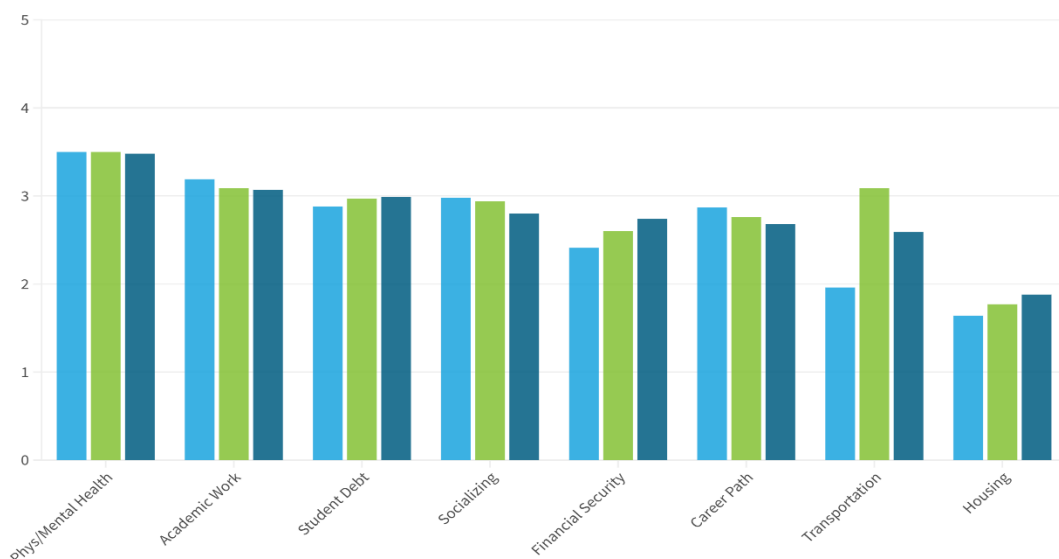


"OVERALL, SAMRU HAS BEEN PRETTY GOOD AT HELPING STUDENTS EASE THEIR ANXIETY ABOUT THEIR CLASSES."

- 2022 FALL MEMBER CHECK-IN SURVEY

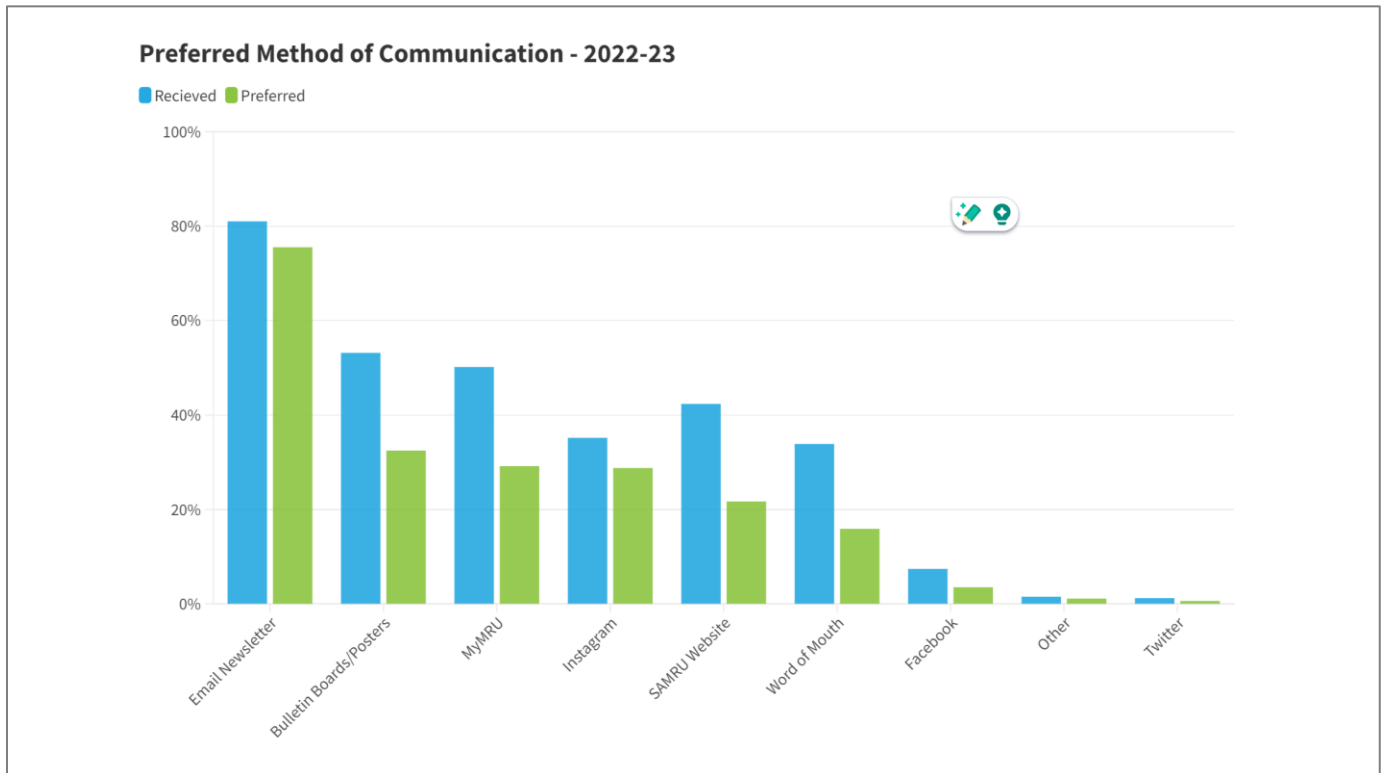
**Average Reported Concern (out of 5) - 2022-23**

■ 2020-21 ■ 2021-22 ■ 2022-23



# Member Awareness

As SAMRU focuses on engaging with members, the Student Satisfaction and Awareness Survey showed how members actually received and preferred to receive information:



As we've seen in the past, the email newsletter continues to be the most effective method of communication, and also student's most preferred method to receive information from SAMRU. This also shows up in the data we receive when we send email messages, with an average email open rate of 81% — significantly above the overall industry average opening rate of 34%.

**Email open rate: 81%**







## GOVERNANCE

The Student Governing Board is comprised of 14 elected students who together oversee all elements of the Students' Association's business and affairs, including student representation. The Board also determines the strategic direction of the organization and is the official channel of communication between the student body and MRU.

### 2022-23 Student Governing Board Highlights

One of the Board's main priorities this year was to increase members' understanding about the purpose of the Board and the importance of governance at SAMRU. This was achieved through targeted communications about the Governors and the Board's work, and increased participation by Governors in events like the SAMRU Awards ceremony.

The Board had an unprecedented number of candidates run for SAMRU's governor elections in Winter 2023 and hosted the most attended Annual General Meeting (AGM) in SAMRU history with almost 300 attendees.

The Board revised many of SAMRU's policies throughout the year, and presented the membership with multiple recommendations to further refine the SAMRU Bylaws which were subsequently approved at the AGM by the membership.

The Board also undertook many other projects by establishing Board work groups this year, including: the Governor Recruitment Work Group, Board Highlights Work Group, Board Development & Governor Recognition Work Group, ED Review Work Group, REC Review Work Group, and the REC VP External Hiring Work Group.



2022-23 Student Governing Board (SGB) from left to right: Taylor Amy, Andrea Barlaan, Sundus Baig, Angel Castillo, Tristalyn GiVogue, Rafael Hernandez-Alacorn, Kyle Joseph, Emma Maguire (Speaker), Prairie Morgan, Akash Parmar, Nic Savage, Orion Tigley, Nancy Tran





# REPRESENTATION

The Student Governing Board achieves its objectives for representation and communication with MRU, the government, and external student groups by hiring student employees and delegating authority for this work to them.

Representation Executive Council (REC) members are the student employees selected by members and hired by the Student Governing Board to carry out these important representation duties under the direction of the Board.

Here are some representation initiatives from 2022-23:



## Tuition and Fees Advocacy

- ✓ Participated in MRU's Tuition and Fees Consultation Committee by providing student perspectives
- ✓ Negotiated an extra \$200,000 be allocated to the MRU Tuition Bursary (an overall increase of 20%)
- ✓ Voted against proposed tuition and fee increases for the 2023-24 academic year

## GENDER INCLUSIVE WASHROOMS & FREE PERIOD PRODUCTS

- ✓ Advocated for MRU to expand the network of all-gender washrooms on campus
- ✓ Supported a proposition from MRU's Wellness Services, which resulted in free menstruation products being supplied in campus washrooms





## GET OUT THE VOTE (GOTV)

- ✓ In collaboration with the Council of Alberta University Students (CAUS), the REC team launched their Get Out the Vote (GOTV) campaign in January 2023
- ✓ MRU achieved the highest student pledge count of any post-secondary institution in Alberta

## MRU POLICY REVIEW

- ✓ Voted to approve new versions of: the Grades Policy and Examinations, Policy, the Code of Student Community Standards, and the Code of Student Academic Integrity policy
- ✓ Pushed to increase the grades shown by the final day of classes from 25% to 50%. This benefits students because:
  - Students must be able to make informed decisions about whether they want to remain in the classes by the withdrawal deadline
  - Students will not be able to successfully study for their final exams if they do not know their standing on the topics tested beforehand



## INTERNAL COMMITTEE WORK

- ✓ Participated in MRU hiring committees for several executive roles at MRU. Some of the roles that REC had a hand in hiring included:
  - Dr. Moussa Magassa, Associate Vice-President of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion
  - Alena Boczek, Director of Student Success and Learning Services
  - Mustansar Nadeem, Vice-President of Finance and Administration
  - Dr. Chad London, Provost and Vice-President Academic

## STRENGTHEN COMMUNICATION WITH MEMBERS

- ✓ Hosted a Fall Town Hall to discuss MRU's grading and examination policy, MRU's budget, and health and wellness initiatives
- ✓ Published monthly advocacy update blog posts to ensure members could stay informed about all the important advocacy REC was working on throughout the year





# SAMRU IN THE MEDIA

## UCP to cap post-secondary tuition hikes at two percent

Joseph Nguyen, REC President: "We've been advocating to the government in terms of affordability, having conversations with the minister and his office to talk about inflation and advocate for all the things that have been announced today, so we at SAMRU and CAUS (Council of Alberta University Students) are very happy to see these changes."



## SAMRU tackles food insecurity on campus through accessible cupboards

"The Student's Association of Mount Royal University (SAMRU) has started an initiative called SAMRU Care Cupboards where students can acquire free snacks and hygiene supplies through pantries displayed in different areas of the campus."



## Mount Royal students first to take reading break next week

"Joseph Nguyen, ... supports the idea as a way to set students up for academic success. "They gathered lots of data and they found out that the earlier students have a break, the more it sets the



## Mount Royal students can choose a COVID-19 pass or fail again this term

REC President Joseph Nguyen: "Whether it's a one percent increase or seven, students don't like rising costs. We are happy about the \$200,000 that MRU has allocated to increase the student bursary fund that will help students."



## Calgary Journal - The Solutions podcast (Episode 2)

"This episode aims to give money management solutions through the financial services provided to students through the Student Association of Mount Royal University (SAMRU). There are many resources available that students can access through SAMRU to overcome financial burdens."





# MEMBERSHIP SERVICES



## SAMRU Care Cupboards

Responding to increased food insecurity among MRU students, SAMRU worked with the University to construct and implement five new food and hygiene pantries across campus, known as the SAMRU Care Cupboards. These pantries, which are stocked twice a week, offer both refrigerated and non-perishable food, as well as essential hygiene products — providing anonymous and convenient access to support student success. The initiative, inspired by student research and local community projects, and supported by the University's provision of space for the cupboards, showcases a collaborative effort to meet a crucial need without depending on student fees.



102,560 items  
given away

SAMRU's Representation Executive Council (REC) President, Joseph Nguyen, noted that: "this effort to increase food security and access for all students couldn't have been realized in this way without MRU agreeing to provide space for the cupboards, and for that we are grateful."

Nguyen continues, noting that the program was not funded by student fees: "The SAMRU Care Cupboards are currently 100% funded by organizational fundraising efforts, and our aim is to continue this funding model into the future."

## Volunteers

SAMRU would not be able to serve our members without the generous support of our volunteers. To support students who are interested in volunteering, SAMRU categorizes its volunteer opportunities into three broad areas: Programs & Services, Governance, and Representation Committees. From there, students can decide which areas interest them most and find opportunities that best suit their interests. From sitting on a committee to helping to run an ongoing service or program, there's something for everyone.



218 volunteers



1,115 volunteer  
hours

## SAMRU Open House

The SAMRU Open House welcomed students into Wyckham House in the fall, providing an interactive and engaging platform for new students to learn about SAMRU's initiatives, connect with student leaders and staff, and discover the many ways they can get involved and make a positive impact within the Mount Royal University community.



Over 700 students  
attended



176 tax  
returns filed

## Free Tax Clinic

SAMRU's free tax filing service had 26 trained student volunteers to help students file their tax returns. The 2023 Tax Clinic marked the return of in-person and online appointments since the program moved fully online in 2020.

## Stress Less

Stress Less Week emphasizes the importance of student self-care and healthy lifestyle habits as essential tools for managing stress and promoting overall well-being, especially during final exams. Winter 2023 saw the addition of new Stress Less programs, including the Indigenous cultural tradition of Smudging, an Oxygen Bar, and a Sound Bath Experience in addition to all our regular Stress Less programs.



3,388 students served during both  
semester's stress less weeks



420 attendees  
both semesters

## Sex Toy Bingo: Building Healthy Relationships

Sex Toy Bingo is held in both the fall and winter semesters, and aims to create an atmosphere of fun, judgment-free exploration of sexuality, consent, and healthy relationships. In addition to the popular bingo games and prizes, there were burlesque and pole dancing performances, information booths, and educational activities.

## Peer Support Centre: Free Breakfast

Running for over 16 years now, SAMRU's Free Breakfast program removes barriers to students accessing nutritious food, helping promote well-being, academic success, and a thriving campus environment where all students can succeed.



12,544 students  
served



87 recipients  
\$49,750 total

## Experiential Learning Fund

As a component of SAMRU's scholarship fund, the Experiential Learning Fund (ELF) is available to provide funding to help eligible students take advantage of unique learning and growth opportunities outside their experience at MRU.

## SAMRU Awards

For over 60 years, SAMRU Awards has recognized students who have inspired and enhanced the lives of their fellow Mount Royal students. This year, SAMRU was proud to present 25 students with awards such as the Inspiring Culture Award, Citizenship Award, and Committed Learner Award, among others, with financial awards totalling over \$40,000.



110 attendees



25 awards



\$41,000 given away

## Clubs

SAMRU clubs are student-led and student-driven, providing opportunities for members to take on leadership roles, organize events, and shape their club's activities and initiatives. Clubs are an essential part of the student experience, where students' hands-on involvement fosters valuable skills in organization, communication, teamwork, and project management while creating opportunities for building communities and making social connections on campus.



294 in-person activities



70 ratified clubs



6 virtual activities



## Student Advocacy Resource Centre

The Student Advocacy Resource Centre provides confidential services, support, and options for students experiencing academic and/or non-academic concerns and questions. This service offers guidance on university policies, procedures, and student rights. It aims to empower students to navigate their academic journey successfully and address any issues they may encounter.



163 students served



## Cultural Inclusion Centre

As a dedicated space for students from diverse cultural backgrounds, our Cultural Inclusion Centre provides support, resources, and programming to foster intercultural understanding, dialogue, and community engagement while creating opportunities to make social connections on campus. Ongoing programming included the Indigenous Crafting Circle, International Eat and Greet, Tea and Bannock Talking Circle, Drum, Dine and Discuss, and the BIPOC Support Network.

## Round Dance

The SAMRU Round Dance celebrates Indigenous culture and community, fostering unity, connection, and healing through the power of traditional dance, music, and ceremony. SAMRU has been hosting the Round Dance since 1999.

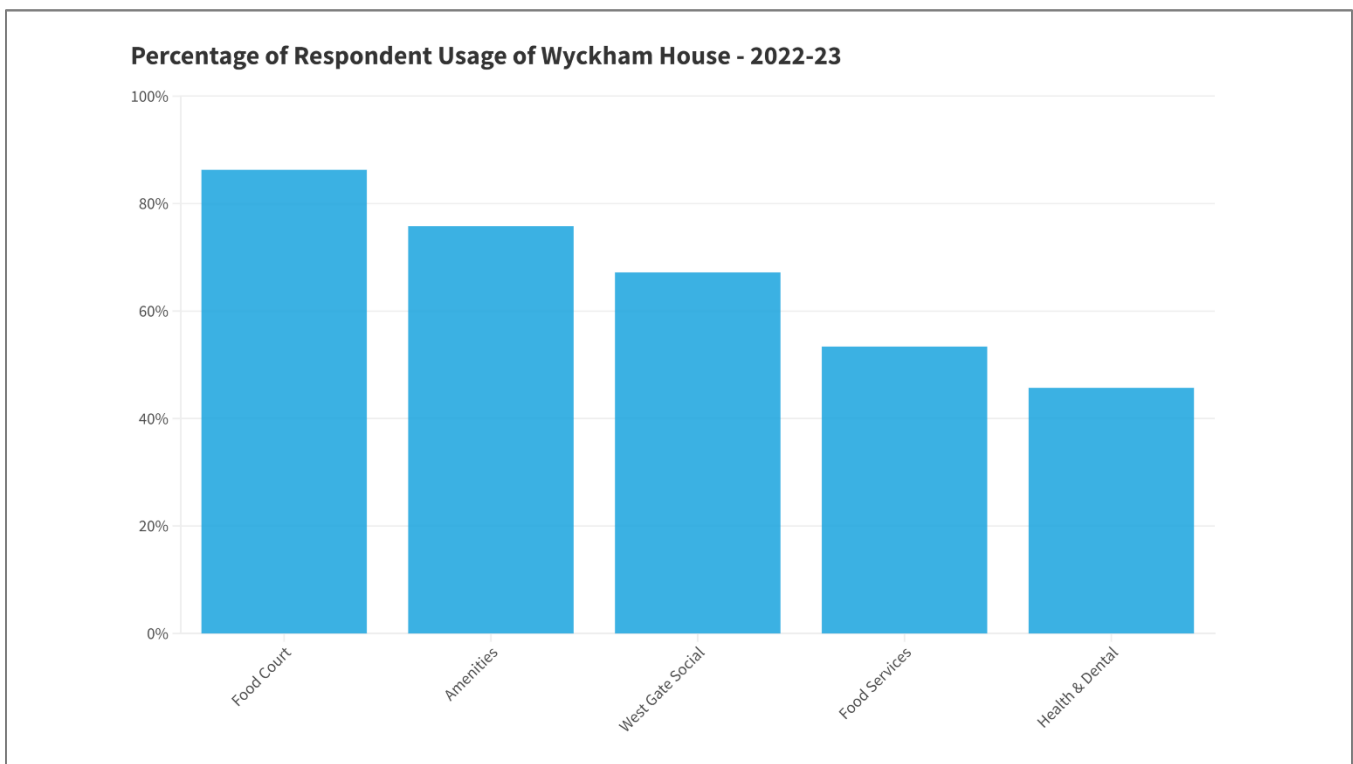




# OPERATIONS

## Wyckham House

Wyckham House is a central hub for student activities and services. It's a gathering place for students, providing spaces for students to connect, socialize, and build a sense of community. Whether it's grabbing a meal, studying, or attending events, our vibrant student center fosters interaction.



[Percentage of Respondent Usage of Wyckham House - 2022-23](#) by SAMRU

## Foot traffic average per week



WYCKHAM HOUSE: 18,900



WEST GATE SOCIAL: 2,800

### West Gate Social

West Gate Social is your campus pub and student lounge, offering students exceptionally low prices and excellent value for both food and drinks. In addition, lively entertainment and regular programming make West Gate Social a great place to socialize and meet new friends. With the return of its full food menu, West Gate Social's popularity with students continues to grow.

### Food Court Kiosks

SAMRU has many food court options for students in Wyckham House, including Subway, Good Earth, Dairy Queen, Booster Juice, Wycked Deli (since re-named Wycked Korean Grill), Cultures/Mr. Souvlaki, Zen, Mucho Burrito, Chatime, Thai Express and Edo Japan.

### Other businesses

Other businesses available to students in Wyckham House include the INS Market convenience store, Wyckham Pharmacy, Old Street Optometry and Dental Choice.

### Amenities

In addition to everything else offered in Wyckham House, there are also amenities which include tables and seating, lounge spaces, microwaves, cellphone charging stations, bank machines, vending machines and washrooms. SAMRU also provides the campus-wide Lost & Found service through the Wyckham House reception desk on the second floor.

## SAMRU Online

### Website & Rentals Website

Fall 2022 marked one year of the new SAMRU website, re-designed to provide a user-friendly platform for our members, the MRU community, and external stakeholders. The addition of a rental website showcased the value and versatility of SAMRU's available rental spaces.



43K website hits

### Top social posts

**samrubuzz**  
2,624 followers [View profile](#)

[View more on Instagram](#)

141 likes  
**samrubuzz**

It's #PrideMonth, and we're taking a look back over the past year at some of the ways we celebrated the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, gender expression and identity, and helped create safe spaces around campus! Stay tuned!

Add a comment...

**samrubuzz**  
2,624 followers [View profile](#)

[View more on Instagram](#)

40 likes  
**samrubuzz**

Your Representation Executive Council (REC) team stayed busy in December and January!

Taking on projects such as advocating for additional on-campus support, launching a Get Out The Vote (GOTV) campaign, and looking into ways to improve transit service to MRU, they are well underway towards achieving their goals for the term! 🍀

Check out our latest blog post by following the link in our bio to December and January REC Updates to read more about how your student representatives advocated to improve the MRU student experience in December and January!

Add a comment...

**samrubuzz**  
2,624 followers [View profile](#)

[View more on Instagram](#)


65 likes  
**samrubuzz**

We're introducing your 2023-24 Representative Executive Council (REC) team - who have officially begun their terms as your representatives!

Read our new blog post (link in bio) to learn more about your REC team and what they're looking forward to this year!

Add a comment...

**samrubuzz**  
2,624 followers [View profile](#)



[View more on Instagram](#)

358 likes  
samrubuzz

Introducing SAMRU Care Cupboards!

Re-stocked twice a week and featuring both refrigerated and non-perishable food storage, microwaves, and essential hygiene and sanitation products, this service is free to all SAMRU members (MRU credit students, that's you)!

We encourage you to take what you need, keeping in mind the needs of others, and to refer to SAMRU's Peer Support Centre (Z210) main Care Cupboard for more comprehensive support.

View all 13 comments

Add a comment...

**wgsocial**  
1,178 followers [View profile](#)



[View more on Instagram](#)

53 likes  
wgsocial

Food is back at West Gate Social! Come on by when we reopen on September 6th to grab a bite or a brew, or just to hang out!

- 🍏 All appies & mains - \$7.25
- ☕ Coffee & Pop - \$1.00
- 🍹 Highballs - \$2.75
- 🍸 Cocktails - \$3.75

Add a comment...

**samrubuzz**  
2,624 followers [View profile](#)



[View more on Instagram](#)

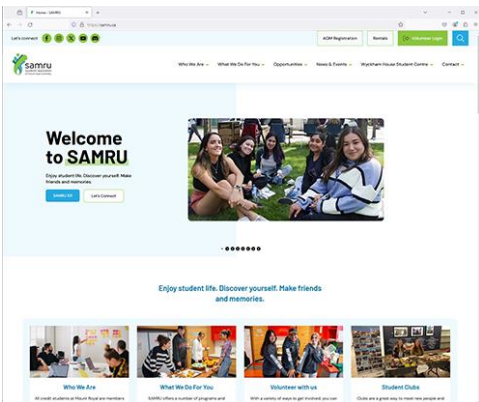
69 likes  
samrubuzz

We hope everyone had a ~wycked~ time at the Wycked House Party! A big thank you to @djstephenyc @jefecj and @joeswellmusic for the amazing beats 🎧

Check out the full photo album on the SAMRU Facebook page!

Add a comment...

## Top web pages



Navigation: Home, What We Do For You, Opportunities, News & Events, MySAMRU House Student Centre, Contact

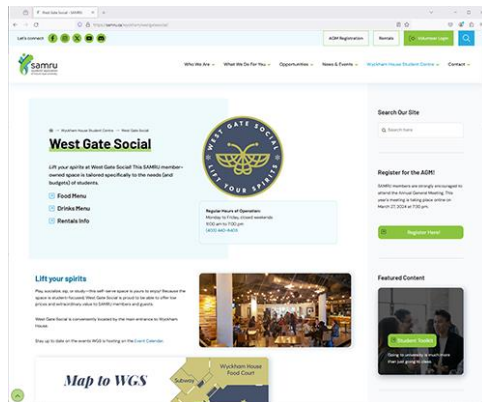
# Welcome to SAMRU

Enjoy student life. Discover yourself. Make friends and memories.

\*\*\*\*\*

Enjoy student life. Discover yourself. Make friends and memories.

- Who We Are
- What We Do For You
- Volunteer with us
- Student Clubs



Navigation: Home, What We Do For You, Opportunities, News & Events, MySAMRU House Student Centre, Contact

## West Gate Social

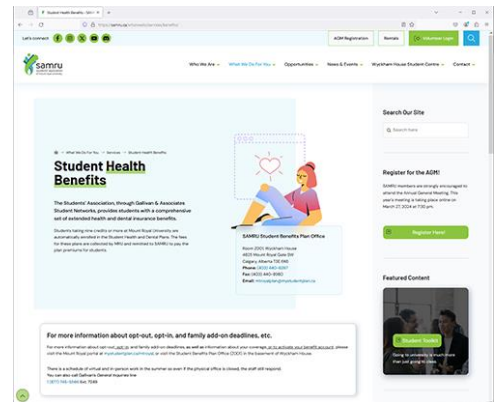
Lift your spirits at West Gate Social! This SAMRU member-owned space is tailored specifically to the needs of our students.

- Food Menu
- Drink Menu
- Restara Info

Register for the AGM!

Lift your spirits

Map to WGS



Navigation: Home, What We Do For You, Opportunities, News & Events, MySAMRU House Student Centre, Contact

## Student Health Benefits

Register for the AGM!

For more information about opt-out, opt-in, and family add-on deadlines, etc.



# FUNDRAISING & SPONSORSHIPS

The Students' Association of Mount Royal University engages in various donation and fundraising activities to support its programs, services, and initiatives aimed at enhancing the student experience and addressing student need.



\$4,745 grant from Canada Jobs to hire a summer student



CNRL - \$15,000 to support SAMRU Care Cupboards & grocery gift cards for students



I Can for Kids donated 36 Grocery gift cards valued at \$1,800



Online Giving \$1,203



Total donations: \$18,003

[Donate Now!](#)

## FINANCIALS

[AUDITED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS](#)

[PREVIOUS ANNUAL REPORTS](#)

The Students' Association of Mount Royal University (SAMRU) represents and serves Mount Royal University students to help them succeed.

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