

AY 2022-2023

# Board of Visitors SGA Report

## End of the Semester, Spring 2023

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Presented by Joey Zeldin, SGA President, 2022-2023

*Presented at the Board of Visitors' fourth meeting of the 2022-2023 Academic Year on April 21st, 2023.*

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## 2023-2024 SGA

We recently concluded our Spring Elections, and as of April 13th, our newest SGA officers will take up their positions when they are sworn in at our annual Transition Ceremony. Our newest officers are:

- Jaylyn Long, SGA President
- Kaylah Lightfoot, SGA Vice President/Senate President
- Tonia Attie, SGA Senate Vice President
- Shadwick Yoder, University Relations Chair
- Nahjah Wilson, Diversity & Unity Coordinating Chair'
- Jenny Wolfe, Class of 2024 Senator
- Conner Rogers, Class of 2025 Senator
- Martina Pugh, Class of 2025 Senator
- Will Thompson, Class of 2025 Senator
- Katherine Armstrong, Class of 2026 Senator
- Amira Said, Class of 2026 Senator
- Josiah Schlechty, Class of 2026 Senator

In addition, Jaylyn Long, the SGA President-elect, will be picking people to serve as members of her cabinet. Positions in the SGA President's cabinet are the Director of Administration, Director of Communications, Director of Finances, and Executive Secretary. President-elect Long will share these appointees with the Board of Visitors once she writes her first Board report in early Fall.

Our Vice President-elect, Kaylah Lightfoot, will also be selecting a Senate Secretary and Parliamentarian for the Senate's efficient operations. President-elect Long will also include these members in the report once they have been selected.

I am more than excited for these people to serve in SGA, and even more excited to hand off the reins of the SGA to President-elect Long and Vice President-elect Lightfoot, as I have full faith and confidence they will take the SGA to new heights and make the organization better than ever, especially as the first ever pair of Black women leading the UMW SGA.

## What Have We Done This Year?

This year, our SGA had two periods of work: our legislative revival period and our legislative work period. The first semester, we focused on reviving the SGA as a legislative body and figuring out how we could better serve students and create meaningful processes to operate more efficiently. The second semester, we got to work and started focusing on creating partnerships, executing business, and finding purposeful ways to serve students. Some initiatives we've started to create or have made significant progress include:

- The creation of ASPIRE Week, a weeklong project founded by Jaylyn Long, SGA Vice President, to reinstill our ASPIRE values around campus and ensure we all hold ourselves to the highest standards as UMW students. ASPIRE week will take place on the week of April 10th and run until April 15th, with hopes to continue it next academic year.
- A study headed by Class of 2025 Senator Martina Pugh to look at contraceptive access around campus in partnership with the Young Democratic Socialists of America chapter at UMW.
- An investigation taken on by the University Relations Committee headed by Chair Shadwick Yoder to understand how parking management and ticket issuance affects students.
- An investigation and initiative to increase our partnership with University Dining as well as make sure students are accommodated during religious holidays, an effort made possible by Class of 2026 Senator Tonia Attie.

These are just a few of the notable projects we have and will continue to work on. By creating and rekindling our partnerships with groups across campus, we not only legitimize the power SGA has to make great change for students, but also continue to form meaningful relationships with the very people we are elected to serve.

## **Benchmarking Our Progress**

This report also serves as a means to benchmark myself and the entire SGA from our previous three reports that I had the privilege to author. Our reports have had a range of proposals, ideas, and goals that have set-up the priorities and structure of the SGA. While we haven't met every single goal, there are certainly some that we prioritized and made sure to accomplish in order to be as successful as possible.

### **Transparency For Students**

Transparency was not only important to the SGA as a whole, it was of personal importance to myself and one of the pillars that I ran on when campaigning as a candidate for SGA President. I believe we have helped to extend transparency among departments across campus through dialogue and events. Through meetings with UMW administration, meetings with students, tablings, and events like our upcoming Budget Forum with President Paino, we have increased how much information gets to students as well as how that information is relayed and ensures that students get the information they deserve. We are proud to also continue the important rule within SGA of keeping all of our meetings open to the public, as well as holding office hours for all students to attend and voice concerns openly with the SGA President.

### **SGA's Campus-wide Presence**

One of the biggest challenges the SGA faced coming out of the Pandemic was recreating our presence and reclaiming our bargaining power on behalf of students. However, in the past year, we have partnered with a multitude of clubs, held multiple events, and had multiple non-SGA attendees at a multitude of our meetings. It is always important to have student engagement to center our focus around what they need, and we have been incredibly fortunate to receive a diverse array of student opinions from meetings and tablings that we've been able to hold. We will continue to host public and open meetings for all of the UMW community to be a part of, and hope to bolster our community presence

with more individual events promoted by Senators, Committees, and the SGA as a whole in the next academic year.

We also hope to partner with more organizations to put on more student-centered events. We receive a small budget that is funded via the UMW Foundation and Giving Day, so we hope that this money will be utilized to assist other organizations with their events, as well as continue our own events that coordinate with multiple organizations and offices, such as ASPIRE Week.

### Internal Expansion

The SGA has been focused on internal expansion this year, looking towards ways to improve the operations and efficiency at which we assist students. We've had an exceptional amount of improvement within the organization. Some improvements include:

- **Updated Website:** Our SGA website was recovered earlier this year after being lost, and we've updated it to grant more information to students, provide resources, and even act as a host for other organizations to use. We utilized it as the hub for elections during our Universal Student Elections, providing information on how to vote, providing the ballot link when it went live, and providing resources for candidates running. We hope to not only evolve it to become a resource center for students, but also grant it a place on the official umw.edu website for students to easily access it.
- **Constitution Review:** As stated in the last report, we recently completed a constitution review. This constitution review will address a variety of oversights and flaws that our constitutional structure has had, including a revision of committees, checks and balances on various positions, and expanding our seats to include more members.
- **Member Enrichment:** One of the biggest things that we had the pleasure of doing this year was visiting the U.S. Capitol on an SGA delegation trip. The point of the trip was to provide our members with a trip that gave them insight into the legislative process on a much grander scale. We hope to increase our enrichment trips to not only educate our members, but also help them grow professionally, as some of

them received the chance to network with Hill staffers directly, an experience not commonly found at many other universities and colleges.

- **Communications:** We sought to improve our communications across campus, both via social media and events. We have made consistent postings on our instagram and have found that students have received information based upon our posts, as well as provided a space for students to easily reach out with questions or comments about certain things. We've also ramped up our instagram engagement to further intertwine ourselves back into the UMW community, and we hope to create more collaborations with organizations to get important information out to students.

## Student Services

We were incredibly pleased to see the instating of multiple student services back to pre-pandemic, and we believe this would not have been done without multiple SGA members advocating to groups across campus to reinstate these services to accommodate student desires. The library has expanded hours, the Campus Recreation gym not only has expanded hours but also a variety of new equipment and initiatives, and we've seen an uptick in student engagement at various SAE events.

## Recommendations for Next Academic Year

As we wind down this academic year, we always look ahead at what we possibly can do to create a better SGA. This includes making formal recommendations that we believe administration and the Board of Visitors can take to improve the student experience here at UMW. The following are recommendations that are based upon student request and concern:

- **Hiring More SAE & Student Event Professional Staff:** Much of our events and programs on campus are largely student run, organized, and procured. Devil Goat Day, Big Spring Concert, Glowzone, and large parts of New Student Orientation have all been successful because of the work of students and a few SAE staff members. The hiring of more staff such as graduate assistants would not only help to make events more successful, it would also help increase student engagement within elected student groups. Students who serve in these groups often experience an alarming amount of burnout because of the responsibility placed on them, and hiring staff dedicated to assisting with putting on events would help alleviate this burnout, and allow for students to focus more on being students first and elected leaders second.
- **An Expanded Budget for Student Activities:** When the weekends come, the campus is often seen empty and lacking students. An expanded student activities budget could not only create more opportunities on the weekend for students, but also entice future students to come to UMW if opportunities present themselves consistently for students. We often see too many students visiting other universities consistently. Expanding the activities budget can help provide a more engaging campus for students.
- **Continuing to Increase University Transparency:** The messages that we receive monthly from President Paino are an excellent start to increasing university transparency, as students get to hear directly from President Paino on the issues that matter most. In addition, we also have the privilege to host a forum with President Paino regarding the budget on April 10th. Forums like these are the perfect way to increase student input on campus, and we encourage UMW administration to partner with the SGA more to create forums, events, and other



types of activities to better understand how students are feeling. By increasing transparency, students better educate themselves and can take that information to help make their communities better aware of certain policies that other students may have not been aware of in the first place.

## Thank You

On a more personal note, it has been an honor to be able to serve as Student Government Association President. I have appreciated the humility, hard work, and passion that comes with the position, and I have enjoyed being able to write these reports that help give you, the Board of Visitors, a feel for what is happening in SGA as well as on campus. I am a bit melancholy to be writing my final report, but even more excited for President-elect Jaylyn Long to take my place and continue the good work that the SGA has done this year. I am incredibly excited to set off on my own journey, but have enjoyed being able to get to know you all further and share the concerns and desires of our student body. Without these important reports, the work for students cannot be done, and with that, I give you my thanks for being able to allow me to be the envoy for our student body and accept my reports with honor and truth. Thank you for a great year, and I look forward to formally presenting you with this report in-person in just a few weeks.

With Thanks,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joey Zeldin". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "Z".

Joey Zeldin, SGA President 2022-2023