



2024 REPORTS OF DIRECTORS AND OFFICERS

COCA Chair – Alain Cyr-Russo, Algonquin College

It has been an honour to serve as Chair of COCA the past 2 years. I am pleased to share with you the accomplishments, challenges, and future directions of our organization.

This year, we faced some initial hurdles, including my transition to a new organization soon after being chosen as Chair, which unfortunately stalled some processes. However, we quickly regained momentum, focusing on critical tasks that would strengthen COCA's foundation.

A significant achievement was the hiring of our new Executive Director (ED). The Board recommended several candidates to be part of the hiring committee, and I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to Ankit from the University of Toronto Student Union and Hibo from Mohawk Student Union for their time and dedication. Together, we reviewed the job description, advertised the role on multiple platforms, and meticulously evaluated candidates. After a rigorous selection process, we appointed Jennifer Wanke as the new ED of COCA.

Jennifer Wanke, our new ED, quickly immersed herself in her role, identifying areas needing attention that we had not previously recognized. Her expertise guided us through a thorough review and update of outdated bylaws and policies, ensuring our governance framework is robust and relevant.

It has been several months of transition between the outgoing ED and Jennifer. This period involved extensive onboarding, during which we provided historical context and insights to facilitate her understanding of COCA's operations.

During my tenure, I prioritized fiscal responsibility to ensure the organization's stability. We managed our expenses judiciously, ensuring that all essential payments, such as those for the website, organizational insurance, and Board duties, were met without overspending.

One of the challenges we faced was ensuring that our corporate documents were up to date with Corporations Canada and the CRA. Together, Jennifer and I undertook a significant overhaul of these documents to ensure compliance and accuracy.

I would like to extend my gratitude to the board members, staff, and volunteers who have dedicated their time and effort to COCA. The Board met monthly, scheduling regular 2-hour board meetings and convening for special meetings on several occasions.

Lastly, this year, the Board decided to revert to the original name of our annual conference, renaming it from the Student Life Summit to the COCA National Conference.

In conclusion, we have made considerable progress this year despite the initial challenges. Our efforts to update and refine our governance and operational frameworks will set COCA on a path of sustainable growth and success. I look forward to your continued support and engagement as we strive to achieve our mission.

Central Region Directors – Alain Cyr-Russo & Hayley Press, Conestoga College

It's our pleasure to present the year-end report for the Central region.

At last year's AGM, Hayley was voted in for a two-year director term, along with Kala Adams for a one-year term, and Alain Cyr-Russo heading into his second year of his two-year term. Within the board, Hayley was chosen as Vice-chair and Secretary, while Alain Cyr-Russo assumed the role of Chair of the Board. Unfortunately, Kala Adams resigned in February. This was a significant loss as she added immense value to all our initiatives, especially in ensuring diverse perspectives, representing smaller-sized schools, and supporting our Communications Committee. We respected her decision and wished her the best in her future endeavors. Given the proximity to our conference and AGM, the Board decided not to initiate a call for a new director at that time.

One of our first tasks was guiding the Chair in fulfilling the Executive Director role, which involved appointing a hiring committee to review candidates, conduct interviews, and ultimately select our new Executive Director. After a rigorous process, we appointed Jennifer Wanke as the new ED of COCA.

The Central region continues to communicate monthly over Zoom, discussing various collaborative efforts. While these meetings are not necessarily monitored by COCA, they demonstrate Central's tight-knit nature and willingness to work together. In the future, we'd love to include the West and East in block booking opportunities for larger artists.

We remain the biggest delegation for COCA and are committed to fostering growth within our region, as well as supporting the growth of other regions. It's also encouraging to see a few schools rejoin us this year, contributing to our collective strength. At this year's conference, we welcomed 27 schools for the Central region, 2 more than last year's conference in Vancouver, BC.

Admittedly, we are not where we had initially hoped we would be. We would have loved to present a year filled with new and exciting achievements. Instead, we've been deeply engaged in the essential work of reviewing, updating, and challenging our existing processes to pave the way for future progress. We have chosen to take our time with this review, understanding that a strong foundation is crucial for the long-term success of our organization.

The past few years have presented numerous challenges and uncertainties, from adapting to the pandemic to navigating role changes and other hurdles. Now, with some stability, we can revisit and reinforce the basics.

In closing, we want to remind everyone that we volunteer our time and efforts because we believe in the mission of the Canadian Organization of Campus Activities and its critical role in supporting Student Life professionals. The sparkle and shine will come, and we appreciate your continued belief and support as we work towards a stronger future.

Western Region Directors – Delane Howie, University of Alberta

Following the National Conference held in Vancouver last year, Geoff Gauthier and I began working diligently to bolster membership in the Western region. Unfortunately, Geoff resigned from his board position in late 2023, leaving a void in our representation. Despite efforts by the Executive Director and the Chair to find candidates from the Western region to fill the vacancy, no eligible replacement was found, resulting in me serving as the sole representative for the remainder of the term. Given the significant challenge we've had in finding any representation for our region, next year while I am completing my final year of my term, I'm eager to reassess what Western members are looking for from COCA beyond the national conference and work with our Executive Director to increase Western participation in COCA activities.

While our total membership has decreased from 11 to 8 member schools compared to the previous year, it was somewhat expected following the hosting of last year's conference in the West. Nonetheless, the overall decline is disappointing. On a positive note, we have observed a promising trend with several schools joining COCA for the first time or returning after a hiatus, which underscores growing interest in our organization.

One of the most exciting developments this year has been the appointment of Jennifer Wanke as our Executive Director. Jennifer brings a wealth of experience in COCA, event management, and strong connections within the Western region. Her leadership has already made a significant impact in fostering greater connectivity and engagement with schools in our region.

I want to extend my sincere appreciation to my fellow Board members for their dedication and collaboration throughout this challenging period. Despite the struggles our region faced in maintaining representation, our colleagues from the central region, particularly Chair Alain Cyr-Russo, have consistently supported and ensured that all regions have a voice within COCA.

Looking ahead, while acknowledging our challenges, I am optimistic about the opportunities to strengthen COCA's presence in the Western region under Jennifer's guidance and with continued support from our dedicated members across the country. Thank you.

National Conference Chair – Crystal Benn, St. Clair College

The 2024 National COCA Conference is set to take June 17th to 21st in Windsor Ontario. Delegates will be staying at Caesar's Windsor, the conference centre attached to the hotel will be the primary location for the weeklong conference.

The members will also have a chance to see both post-secondary institutions in the city (St Clair College & University of Windsor) as well as many local establishments.

This year's conference as promised at the 2023 COCA AGM, held in Vancouver BC, has both a printed manual and a digital app. The app being used is Sched, which is a user friendly and cost-effective application. Looking forward to hearing delegates feedback post conference. Additionally, as mentioned at the AGM, this year an esports stream has been added to the overall conference with 6 independent ed sessions and a keynote presentation taking place in the Nexus arena to showcase just how large collegiate esports is becoming.

Currently registration is at 154 school delegates, 33 showcasing acts and 22 non showcasing associates. This conference has been well received by the following sponsors: Big Tree Promotions, WeSpeakStudent, StudentCare, StudentVIP, OnCampusText, St Clair College Alumni Foundation, St Clair College, St Clair Student Representative Council, University of Windsor Student Alliance, Track Avenue, Prevail Activations, Pynx Productions, 55 rush, Brick and various partners.

The conference team and I are looking forward to seeing everyone learn, experience new activities, and gain that peer-to-peer mentorship in the upcoming week.

Associate Directors – Amanda Barbosa, Student Life Network

I am finishing my one-year term as the Associate Director. The Associates' Meeting will be held at the COCA National Conference on Thursday, June 20, and an election will be held to fill the position of a one-year Associate Representative for 2024-2025.

Throughout the year, I supported the board in meeting regularly (monthly) and assisted in reviewing By-laws and policies.

I supported our 2024 Conference Chair by joining the Board of Directors in January to do site visits for the National Conference hosted here in Windsor. I also supported the 2025 Conference Chair by joining our Chair of the Board to perform site visits at hotels in Mississauga for the 2025 National Conference.

Executive Director – Jennifer Wanke

I would like to thank everyone for the warm welcome I have received since accepting the position of COCA's ED. I would also like to thank the Board for their amazing support while I have been transitioning into this role. In the aftermath of a pandemic, the resignation of a 2023 Conference Chair and multiple new Executive Directors in a short period of time and the extended absence of an ED, it is this volunteer board that put in the required countless hours to produce the 2023 & 2024 National Conferences and to fundamentally keep COCA running. Their commitment far exceeded the normal workload of COCA Board members, and they did it willingly and for the love of COCA. I would like to extend a special thank you to Alain who truly went above and beyond in the support he provided as we navigated some of the hurdles COCA has faced. There is still a lot of work that needs to be done, but there is also a lot of really good work that has been done. I would also like to thank all the individuals who stepped up as volunteer committee members to help do all the things needed doing.

The transition process has not been without its issues, but significant steps have been made in identifying and remedying these issues. The prioritization of work has been led by legal obligations that COCA needs to meet to be an organization in good standing with federal and provincial regulating bodies.

Finance: COCA is currently in a reasonably stable financial position, very much due to a fiscally responsible board. There are several serious issues regarding COCA's lack of proper financial accounting for the last three years and this has been one of the main priorities that I have been trying to address since I started this job. First it took several months to get access to COCA's bank accounts and after the bookkeeper quit in the first quarter of 2021 no detailed financial records were kept.

I have set up COCA on accounting software and have been entering three years' worth of financial transactions and tracking down the details of these transaction. This has been a beast of a project and has required the help of a lot of people. The good news is that an accounting firm has agreed to work with COCA and produce proper Reviewed Financial Statements starting with 2021. These will be shared with the membership as soon as they are available.

An additional issue is that COCA has not properly filed its HST/GST returns since the first quarter of 2021 this has compounded the financial reporting issues and there will be money owed to the CRA. Determining these amounts and the filing of the outstanding GST/HST will be made in conjunction with the accountant approving the outstanding financial statements.

Administration: The transition process identified that a central COCA Drive with all of COCA's historical documentation does not exist. We have access to some of the documents through government filings and several of the documents exist on the website and others on personal drives and I have slowly been moving them to a COCA owned Google Drive.

COCA's outstanding Annual Returns have all been filed. COCA's D&O and General Liability are now current and all the CRA and Service Ontario information has also been updated.

Website: As mentioned at previous AGMs the existing website has some significant issues. We have been trying to fix these issues and work with the existing platform but without spending additional funds the current hosting company is unwilling to fix some of the broken areas and wants a significant new investment to make the website user friendly on the both the front and back end. The board agreed to move forward by changing the platform as technology has changed significantly in the last 5 years and the current company has also increased its monthly hosting costs. COCA is in the process to moving to a site hosted by WildApricot. The transferring of information from the old platform to the new platform will take some time, as will building out the functionality of the new site, however, after the financials are completed, this is my main priority. We know how frustrating this has been to the membership because it has been a daily frustration to us, and we have been very grateful for your patience and understanding.

Membership: The COCA Membership records are held on the website. Any financial transactions not made by credit card needed to be updated manually on the website and this has not happened for three years. I have been slowly working my way through bank statements trying to match off deposits against schools that attended the 2023 conference, but without any records of deposit transactions this has been a slow-going process.

The School Membership for 2024 is 42

Associate Membership is something that has been an ongoing debate in COCA for the better part of a decade. The Special Meeting should address the direction the board is wanting to take regarding Associate Members moving forward.

Governance (Bylaws): COCA has over the past few years reviewed and changed its Bylaws. However, for these Bylaws to become the Corporation's active Bylaws they must be registered with the Federal Government as COCA is a Federally registered corporation. No Bylaws have been registered for COCA since 2015. The board took this opportunity to review the Bylaws this year and that is why the Bylaws are being presented again at the Special Meeting. If a motion for the new Bylaws is passed, I will correctly register them with the appropriate federal governing bodies.

Governance (Policies): Several boards have done work on the COCA's Policies over the years, however, there is currently no clear Master Policy document that is up to date. This board has started the process of ensuring that an up-to-date suite of policies is created. The next board will have to continue this work to complete the process.

Governance (Board): Currently the COCA board has 6 active Directors. The Eastern Region does not currently have any representation on the board and the Western Region has one representative. The proposed Bylaw revisions will hopefully allow COCA to have a fully filled board of 9 members moving forward.

Engagement: First, I cannot stress enough how much the current board would like to increase and expand its engagement with its members year-round. They have fantastic ideas, passion and a strong desire to do this, however, they also have limited time and resources. The board has been active in helping in all the areas listed above and therefore have been unable to increase the engagement with its members this past 2023-2024 year. One of the first things that will be implemented in the upcoming 2024-2025 year is education and professional development online presentation for all member organizations.

Next, COCA needs more members involved to facilitate the organization's growth. There are several Standing Committees that members can join and there may be recruitment for additional ad-hoc Committees. If you want to help COCA explore its potential and grow, please sign up to join a committee.

National Conference 2024 & 2025: I joined COCA at the very end of 2023. The National Conference Committee had the conference you are now attending already well in hand. I would like to thank the Conference Committee Chairs Crystal and Devin and all their Conference Coordinators for their hard work and dedication to making this fantastic conference happen! I supported where I could, but mainly I learned a lot and asked a lot of questions. I have started working with Danny on the 2025 Conference and will continue to do that as we move forward with that planning.

One of the outstanding items for this year is the position of the 2026 Conference Chair. While learning and seeing how this National Conference was put together it was identified that a *Hosting a COCA National Conference Manual* of sorts is needed. To do this effectively I asked for an opportunity to experience this conference to compile this document. The National Conference Chair needs to be elected by the membership, so a call for applications for the position will be posted after this conference and then a Vote for ratification will be sent to the membership. If this is a position you are interested in – please let us know.

My introduction to COCA was in 2000 as a Student Programmer. I returned as a Full-Time Programmer in 2009, and now, here I am. With over 25 years of experience as an Event Producer, I've had the privilege of working internationally, participating in extraordinary events, and, most importantly I've loved my job. A significant part of my career has been dedicated to working at or with post-secondary institutions. I find immense joy in collaborating with individuals who aim to push boundaries, enhance student experiences, and even aspire to change the world. The skills I acquired through COCA and the invaluable connections I've made through this organization have significantly contributed to my success.

COCA profoundly impacts the student experience on campuses across Canada. I have already met so many dedicated COCA members who are willing to volunteer their time to build and grow this organization, which stands as a testament to its value. I believe in COCA's potential for growth and transformation, and I am genuinely thrilled to be part of growing and exploring COCA's potential.

So, in the words of Carmy Berzatto, I leave you with this: "Let it rip".