



Michigan State University
International Relations Organization

Annual Report
2023-2024 Academic Year

Table of Contents

Introduction	3
Executive Board	4
Growth	6
Membership Data	7
Achievements	7
Boston Area Model United Nations (BarMUN)	8
National Collegiate Security Conference (NCSC)	9
University of North Carolina Model United Nations Conference (UNCMUNC)	10
McGill Model United Nations (McMUN)	10
University of Chicago Model United Nations Conference (ChoMUN)	11
Graduating Members	12
New Initiatives	13
Financials	14
Challenges	16
Vision	17

Introduction

The Michigan State University International Relations Organization (MSUIRO) is a non-profit organization registered in the state of Michigan with 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status. In addition, MSUIRO maintains status as a registered student organization within Michigan State University. The organization's faculty advisor is Dr. Yael Aronoff, a professor in James Madison College. This report concerns the organization's activities for the 2023-2024 academic year.

Purpose

Michigan State University International Relations Organization is a nationally ranked Model United Nations program that strives to promote the understanding and recognition of global issues, international relations, diplomacy, and the official United Nations organization through debate and discussion. Members role-play as diplomats, corporate board members, cabinet members, and more in simulated sessions of United Nations bodies, regional organizations, corporate boards of directors, and cabinet meetings. Members research a country and/or time period, take on roles as specific diplomats, investigate international issues, debate, deliberate, lobby and ultimately develop solutions to world problems.

Mission Statement

MSU International Relations Organization seeks to educate the next generation of Spartan leaders by providing a venue to discuss, debate, and explore solutions to international issues through teamwork, diplomacy, and collaboration, as well as engaging in competition at intercollegiate Model United Nations conferences.

Michigan State University Model United Nations (MSUMUN)

MSUMUN is MSUIRO's sister organization, a Model United Nations conference for high school students that is staffed by Michigan State students, including many MSUIRO members. MSUMUN was founded in 2000 by students from James Madison College. Hoping to create a conference that was fun, educational, and delegate-friendly, these students watched their dream become a reality at the first conference in 2001. MSUMUN hosted its 23rd iteration this year on March 15-17, 2024 at the MSU Union.

Executive Board

The Executive Board oversees executive management and legal status of the organization. The duties of the board include representing the organization to outside entities, maintaining corporate status, raising funds, managing finance, recruiting members, training members, and organizing conference travel and accommodations. Each Vice President may hire up to two (2) Assistant Vice Presidents (AVPs) to assist in the performance of their duties.

Ethan Biederman

President

Ethan is a senior studying International Relations, Comparative Cultures & Politics, and Arabic with a minor in Applied Development. He has been doing MUN since his junior year of high school and is a crisis director for MSUMUN. Outside of MUN, Ethan enjoys playing the violin and piano or reading a book.

Margeaux Labadie

Vice President of Finance and Operations

Margeaux Labadie is a senior who is studying accounting in the Broad College of Business, and is also a member of the Honors College here at MSU. Margeaux is from Brighton, MI, and began her MUN career at MSU in 2019 as a freshman. She is also a staffer for MSUMUN. Outside of IRO Margeaux spends her time reading romance novels, playing with her cat Betty, listening to Taylor Swift, and watching British TV shows like Downton Abbey.

Assistant Vice Presidents: Max Levanduski and Kate VanderWeele

Cassidy Lynn

Vice President of Development

Cassidy Lynn is a junior studying Social Relations and Policy at JMC. In her free time, she enjoys reading romance novels, playing Stardew Valley with her friends, or eating sushi. Cassidy is thrilled to be the VP of Development for the 2023-2024 year and is excited to see how IRO flourishes.

Assistant Vice Presidents: Jacob Cox and Roman Wing

Anna Rehm

Vice President of Membership

Anna is a senior studying International Relations, Political Theory and Constitutional Democracy, Arabic, and German, with a minor in European Studies. She is originally from Fort Collins, Colorado. This is her third year doing MUN, and she is also a chair for MSUMUN. In her free time, Anna enjoys hiking, baking, and swimming.

Assistant Vice Presidents: Niall Martin and Alex Opalikhin

Nik Didocha

Vice President of Conference Preparation

Nik is in his 4th year studying majors of Sociology and International Relations with minors in European Studies, Latin America and Caribbean Studies, as well as Peace and Justice Studies. After 3 years of MUN in high school, Nik joined MSUMUN and then MSUIRO. Outside of MUN, Nik enjoys MSU Hockey, Football, and Baseball, as well as wandering around campus, especially to the horticulture gardens.

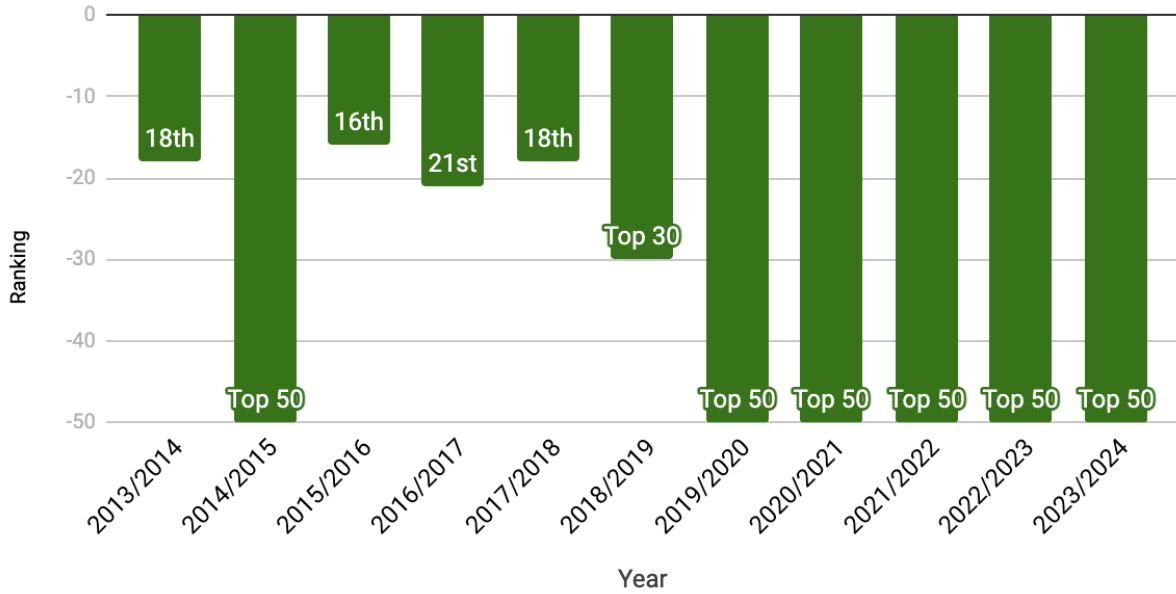
Assistant Vice Presidents: Malerie Birkel, Elliot Cayabyab, and RJ Schoen

Due to a resignation and a subsequent special election in which no candidate received a majority of votes cast, the second Vice President of Conference Preparation was vacant for the 2023-2024 academic year. As a result, the Executive Board approved the hiring of a third Assistant Vice President of Conference Preparation.

Growth

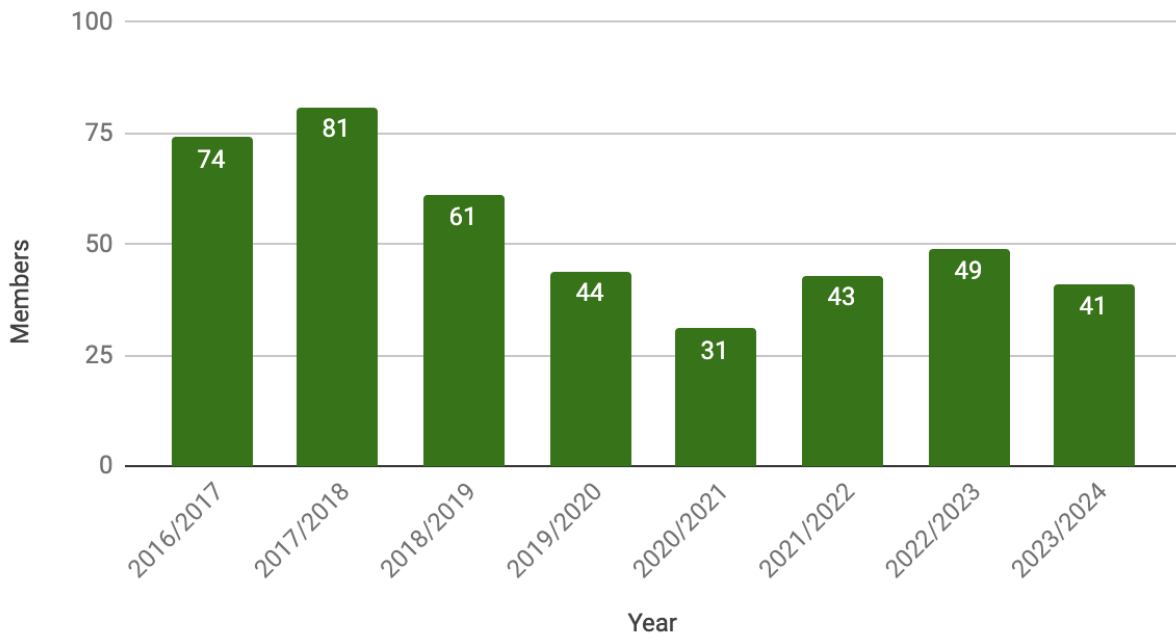
Team Ranking

Best Delegate North American Rankings



Rankings are taken from bestdelegate.com

IRO Membership



Numbers reflect dues-paying members, except for the 2020-2021 year as dues were not assessed due to the pandemic. Members attending 1/5 of meetings were counted for the 2020-2021 year.



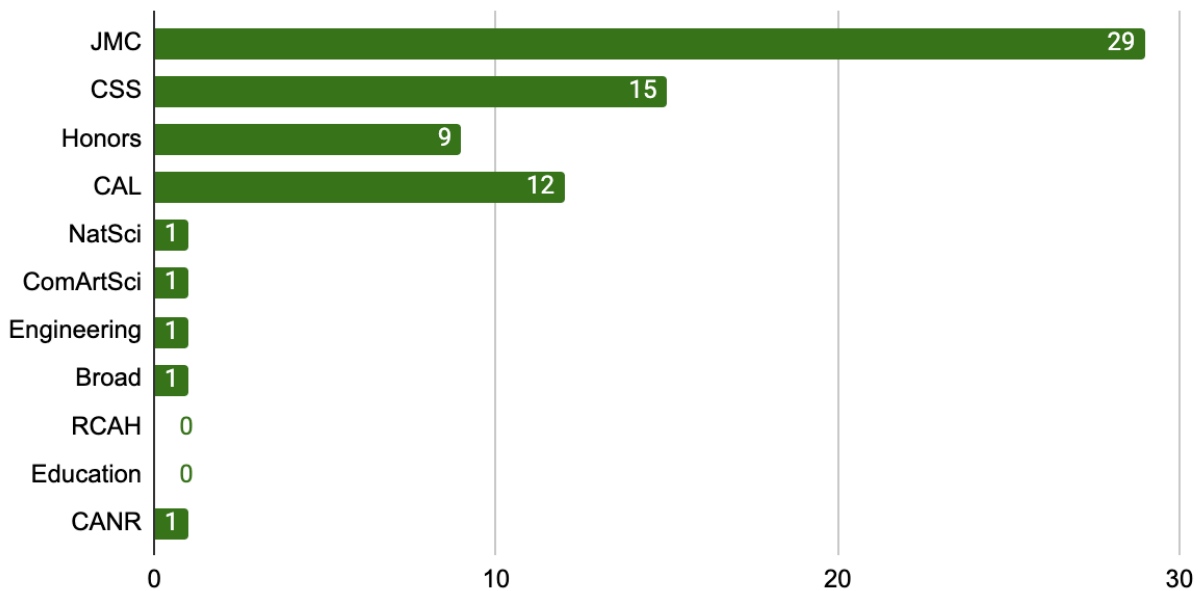
Membership Data

This academic year, MSUIRO had a membership of 41 dues-paying members. IRO's members come from numerous different colleges and residence halls across MSU's campus. 17 of our members were new, and 24 were members returning from previous years. 22 of our dues-paying members were also members of MSUMUN, our sister organization.

Membership by College

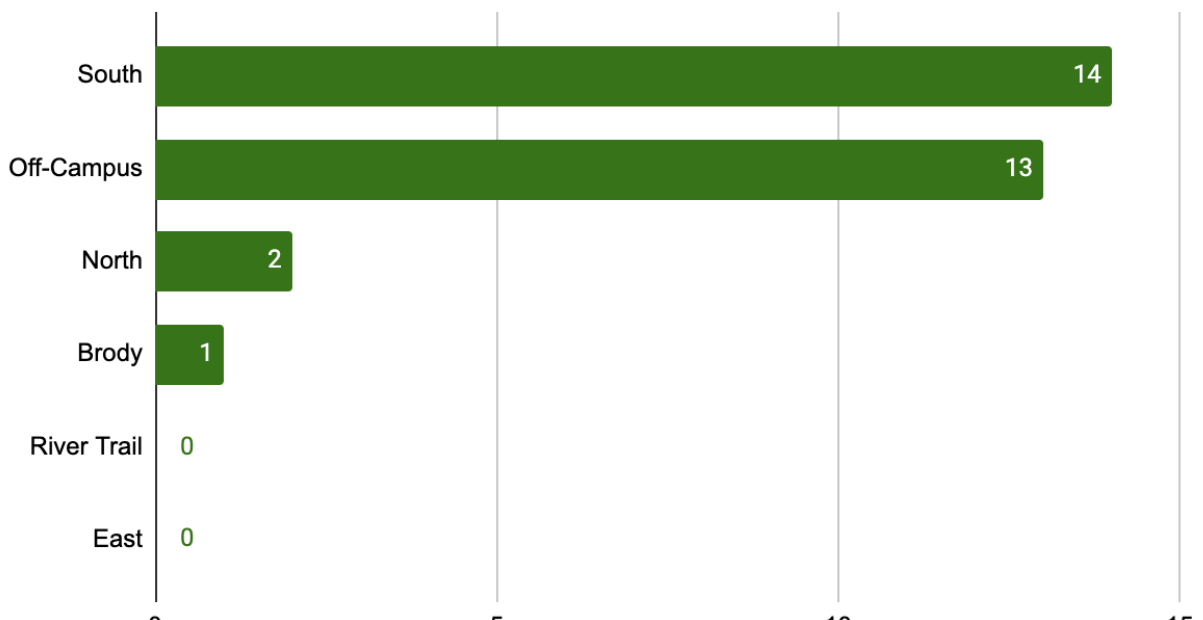
Membership by College

Members holding a major or a minor in each college



Membership by Residence

Membership by Neighborhood



Achievements

This year was very successful for MSUIRO. The 2023-2024 travel season marked an outstanding year for MSUIRO on the Model UN circuit. MSUIRO attended 5 conferences this year, offering 82 roster spots in cities in the United States and Canada and won numerous awards.

Boston Area Model United Nations (BarMUN)

October 12-15, 2023

Boston, MA, USA

Hosted by the Boston University International Affairs Association, BarMUN prides itself on being a premier crisis conference in downtown Boston. Given that BarMUN is one of the first conferences on the circuit, it provides a fantastic opportunity for growth and skills development that sets the tone for future conference performances. This year, MSUIRO brought a delegation of 12 members. The delegation was made up of 12 returners who had previously attended conferences. Additionally, the delegation included members from various grade levels with 2 seniors, 3 juniors, and 7 sophomores. Our delegation drove from East Lansing to Boston in 2 rented vans, traveling through Canada to shorten the trip, and had a tremendous time visiting the city of Boston and participating in BarMUN XVI.

BarMUN Financial Information

Item	Assets	Liabilities
Conference Dues	\$1,800.00	
Vouchers		\$250.00
School Fee		\$95.00
Delegate Fee		\$1,080.00
Hotel		\$3,552.90
Rental Cars		\$1,452.15
Gas		\$396.50
Tolls		\$52.40
Parking		\$329.16
Border Crossing		\$14.80
Totals	\$1,800.00	\$7,222.91
Net Assets	-\$5,422.91	

With 12 delegates paying \$150 in conference dues, IRO generated \$1,800 dollars in assets for BarMUN. The net assets for this conference were -\$5,422.91. Despite taking less delegates, the cost to the club remained about the same from last year. This was because the conference cost for BarMUN was reduced for a second consecutive year. With the purchase and use of EZ passes, we reduced the amount paid in tolls by \$200. However, this difference was offset by a near doubling in costs for rental cars and other expenses.

National Collegiate Security Conference (NCSC)

November 2-5, 2023

Washington, DC, USA

Hosted by Georgetown University's International Relations Association, NCSC prides itself on facilitating debate regarding modern, realistic, and security-focused topics. Our delegation of 16 members consisted of 6 returners who had previously attended conferences, 2 returners for

whom this was their first conference, and 8 new members. Additionally, the delegation included members from all grade levels with 4 seniors, 1 junior, 3 sophomores, 6 freshmen, and 2 international exchange students. MSUIRO's members drove down to Washington, DC in three rented cars and had a wonderful time exploring the city before the start of the conference.

NCSC Financial Information

With 16 delegates paying \$150 in conference dues, IRO generated \$2400 dollars in assets for

Item	Assets	Liabilities
Conference Dues	\$2,400.00	
Venmo Fees		\$30.21
Kraef Scholarship		\$150.00
Scholarships		\$880.00
School Fee		\$60.00
Delegate Fee		\$1,520.00
Hotel		\$3,172.44
Rental Cars		\$2,333.23
Gas		\$443.62
Tolls		\$342.29
Parking		\$379.80
Totals	\$2,400.00	\$9,311.59
Net Assets	-\$6,911.59	

NCSC. The net assets for this conference were -\$6,911.59. Like BarMUN, E-Board was able to keep the lower cost to members for NCSC. While this increased the loss taken by the club, it was covered by fundraising efforts and allowed MSUIRO to make conference attendance more accessible to members. Compared to last year, our loss for NCSC was much higher; however, this is due to the higher number of delegates brought by IRO, which increased expenses in every category. Meanwhile, conference dues were lower, so our income did not increase in kind.

NCSC Award Winner

Alex Opalikhin (So., JMC '26)

Outstanding Delegate – Marco Divonte, *The Times They Are A-Changin'*: Moscow Music Peace Festival, 1989

University of North Carolina Model United Nations Conference (UNCMUNC)

November 16-19, 2023

Chapel Hill, NC, USA

Hosted by the Carolina International Relations Association at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, MSUIRO returned to UNCMUNC for the second consecutive year. Our delegation of 12 members marked an increase from last year's roster of 8 and had a wonderful time visiting Chapel Hill. Our delegation consisted of 8 returners who had previously attended conferences, 1 returner for whom this was their first conference, and 3 new members. Additionally, it included members from numerous grade levels with 3 seniors, 6 sophomores, 2 freshmen, and 1 international exchange student. UNCMUNC was a wonderful conclusion to our fall slate of conferences!

UNCMUNC Financial Information

With 12 delegates paying \$150 in conference dues, IRO generated \$1800 dollars in assets for

Item	Assets	Liabilities
Conference Dues	\$1,800.00	
Venmo Fees		\$22.23
School Fee		\$80.00
Delegate Fee		\$1,080.00
Hotel		\$1,238.76
Rental Cars		\$1,776.80
Gas		\$375.89
Tolls		\$79.75
Parking		\$66.60
Restaurant	\$219.80	\$240.80
Totals	\$2,019.80	\$4,960.83
Net Assets	-\$2,941.03	

UNCMUNC. The net assets for this conference were -\$2,941.03. While the loss to the club has increased since last year, this is due to the increased roster size, increased number of rental cars, and other associated expenses. This loss is also covered by other fundraising incentives undertaken by IRO throughout the year. Additionally, IRO decided to get three smaller cars rather than two vans to facilitate easier movement around Chapel Hill, which lacks the same public transportation network or walking abilities as our conferences in major cities have.

UNCMUNC Award Winners

Malerie Birkel (So., CSS/Broad '26)

Best Delegate – Nepotian of Asturias, Reconquista: Christian States

Josephine Froman (F., JMC '27)

Best Delegate – Zbigniew Jaworowski, Panic in the Exclusion Zone: the Chernobyl Disaster

McGill Model United Nations (McMUN)

January 25-28, 2024

Montréal, QC, Canada

Hosted in the heart of downtown Montréal, Quebec and the team's favorite conference, McMUN is the most prestigious conference in Canada and the third largest in North America. As a conference, McMUN offers a large variety of committees ranging in size, topic, and time period from the large 300-delegate General Assemblies to medium-sized ECOSOC and Specialized committees to intimately small crisis committees. Our delegation of 22 members consisted of 16 returners, 5 new members who had previously attended conferences, and 1 new member for whom it was their first conference. Additionally, the delegation included members from all grade levels with 4 seniors, 2 juniors, 6 sophomores, and 6 freshmen. As always, our members enjoyed the traditional IRO McMUN McFun Bar Crawl and our use of public transportation, taking the train from Windsor, ON to Montréal.

McMUN Financial Information

Due to good fundraising, MSUIRO was able to maintain lower conference costs for McMUN at \$150, matching last year and the lowest on record for that conference. This generated \$3,300 in

Item	Assets	Liabilities
Conference Dues	\$3,300.00	
Venmo Fees		\$46.37
Registration		\$2,116.46
Hotel		\$3,063.97
Transport		\$5,594.72
Gas		\$136.70
Border Crossing		\$63.40
Parking		\$166.09
Foreign Trans Fee		\$476.72
Exclusivity Fee		\$2,420.45
Team Dinner	\$669.88	\$671.70
Totals	\$3,969.88	\$14,756.58
Net Assets	-\$10,786.70	

assets for McMUN. The net assets for the conference were -\$10,786.70. Just as it has historically been, McMUN was the most expensive conference of the year, although the loss was completely offset by fundraising. For the first time, McMUN imposed an exclusivity fee on delegations not staying in the conference hotel. This additional fee accounts for almost the entire difference in cost to the club between this year and last year's McMUN. We recommend that the next E-Board carefully review the math to ensure that IRO is getting the best deal on hotels given the new exclusivity fee.

McMUN Award Winners

Josephine Froman (F., JMC '27)

Verbal Commendation – Fumiaki Ushio, Caught in a \$1.2 Billion Lie: Toshiba's Board of Directors, 2015

Alex Opalikhin (So., JMC '26)

Verbal Commendation – Suella Braverman, 49 Days of Chaos: Liz Truss' Cabinet

University of Chicago Model United Nations Conference (ChoMUN)

March 28-31, 2024

Chicago, IL, USA

Hosted by the University of Chicago, ChoMUN prides itself on its inventive and historical crisis committees, spanning across the globe and time periods from modern to ancient. As always, ChoMUN provided a fantastic sendoff to our graduating members and a crisis tune up for returning MSUIRO members before the summer. This year, IRO initially intended to bring a roster of 20 delegates to ChoMUN, however we had a late minute drop, so we only brought 19 to the conference. Our delegation was more heavily weighted towards underclassmen, with 1 seniors, 3 juniors, 9 sophomores, and 6 freshmen. We were able to win five awards as a delegation, with 1 Outstanding, 2 Honorables, and 2 Verbals. As we did last year, the team utilized Amtrak's Blue Water service to travel to Chicago, allowing us to rest during the journey.

ChoMUN Financial Information

Item	Assets	Liabilities
Conference Dues	\$2,000.00	
Scholarships	\$ (325.00)	
Venmo Fees		\$34.70
School Fee		\$115.00
Delegate Fee		\$2,280.00
Advisor Fee		\$90.00
Amtrak		\$1,872.00
Hotel		\$3,504.40
Totals	\$1,675.00	\$7,896.10
Net Assets	-\$6,221.10	

This year, ChoMUN represented our lowest-ever conference cost to members at \$100, which gave IRO \$2,000 in assets from our 20 delegates. The net assets for this conference were -\$6,071.05. We again utilized Amtrak services to travel to Chicago, which saved us on travel costs, both financially and logistically. As a result of exclusivity fees, we had to stay in the conference hotel, the Palmer House Hilton. This cost us significantly more in hotel costs than usual. However, we did not have any unforeseen costs, which helped our financial situation tremendously.

ChoMUN Award Winners

Marek Jaros (J., JMC '25)

Outstanding Delegate- Julia A. Beveridge, How the Sausage Gets Made: Armour and Company Board of Directors, 1906

Malerie Birkel (So., CSS/Broad '26)

Honorable Mention- Sandra Olson, Nothing Natural About This: A Night at the American Museum of Natural History 2024

RJ Schoen (J., JMC/ComArtSci '25)

Honorable Mention– William I. Pardee, All's Well That Ends Well(s Fargo): The Creation of Wells Fargo, 1852

Aldo Mujaj (Fr., CoE '27)

Verbal Commendation- Aradus Zet, Sally Sells Seashells...: Phoenician Maritime Council, 1200-800 BCE

Alex Opalikhin (So., JMC '26)

Verbal Commendation– Deborah Hyde, Mom, I'm in Love With An Alien: CSICOP, 1978

Graduating Members

At our last meeting of the fall on December 4th, IRO held a mini senior night to recognize members who graduated this fall.

- Gavin Trostle (2020-2023)

At our last meeting on April 15th, IRO held its annual senior night to recognize our members who are graduating this spring. Congratulations to all of our seniors!

- Ethan Biederman (2020-2024)
- Nik Didocha (2022-2024)
- Chloe Pottenger (2021-2024)
- Margeaux Labadie (2019-2024)
- Anna Rehm (2020-2024)



New Initiatives

Alumni Engagement

This academic year, IRO made a concerted effort to reconnect with our alumni network in a number of ways. Firstly, in June, we launched the first edition of our alumni newsletter, known as The Crisis Drop. The intention is for this newsletter to be released two times per semester with recent news and conference performances of IRO to continue to inform alumni of our activities. Over the summer, we also made a concerted push to reestablish the Alumni Scholarship Initiative. We worked with numerous alumni to acquire over \$1,500 in funding going directly to members to help cover their conference dues. Finally, IRO held an Alumni Dinner during NCSC in Washington, DC to enable alumni to reconnect and meet our current members. IRO hopes to continue to maintain connections with our amazing alumni network well into the future. As the Model UN Alumni Club (MUNAC) continues to reestablish itself, IRO hopes to facilitate events to connect IRO members with alumni to provide career advice, tips for grad school or law school applications, and other information.

Social Media Minute

Beginning in the fall semester, E-Board started having a “social media minute” on the agenda each week. This has allowed us to plan out our social media presence more efficiently and collectively. While the responsibilities of creating and posting content have largely remained with the VPs of Membership and Con-Prep, the social media minute has allowed all E-Board members to be engaged in brainstorming content. Through this, IRO has become more intentional about our social media presence.

Go Bags

Building off of last year’s Go Folders, the Finance & Operations team developed the Go Bags for car travel to conferences this year. Each bag contains the Go Folder, which has recordkeeping measures that are critical for financial accountability, as well as the car’s E-Z Pass, snacks, hand sanitizer, and other helpful items for a road trip.

College Fundraising Changes

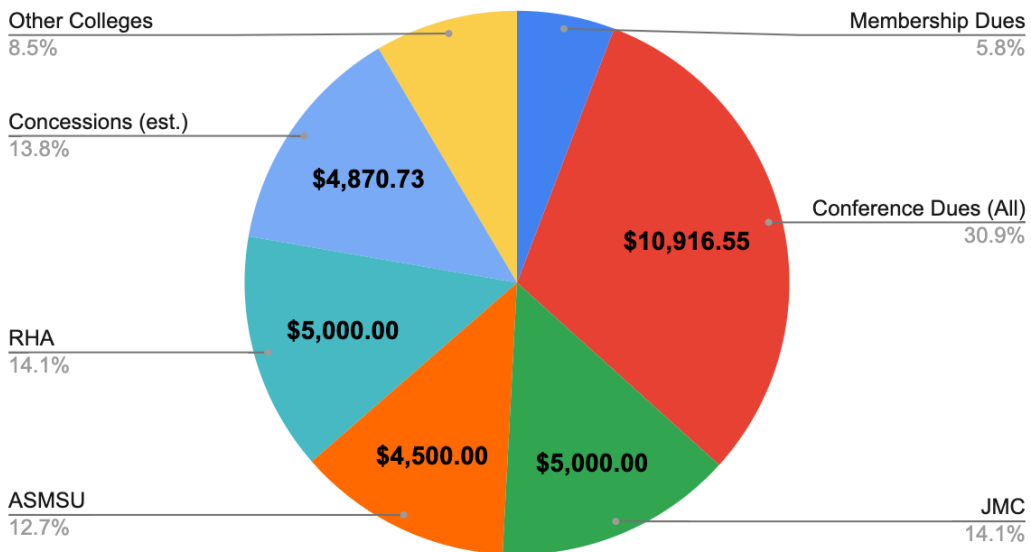
In previous years, IRO has used a standard letter to all colleges at MSU asking for funding. This year, the Development team personalized each letter for the colleges, using language about their goals from their websites. This approach was far more effective and allowed IRO to secure funding from many more colleges than in previous years.

Financials

Revenue

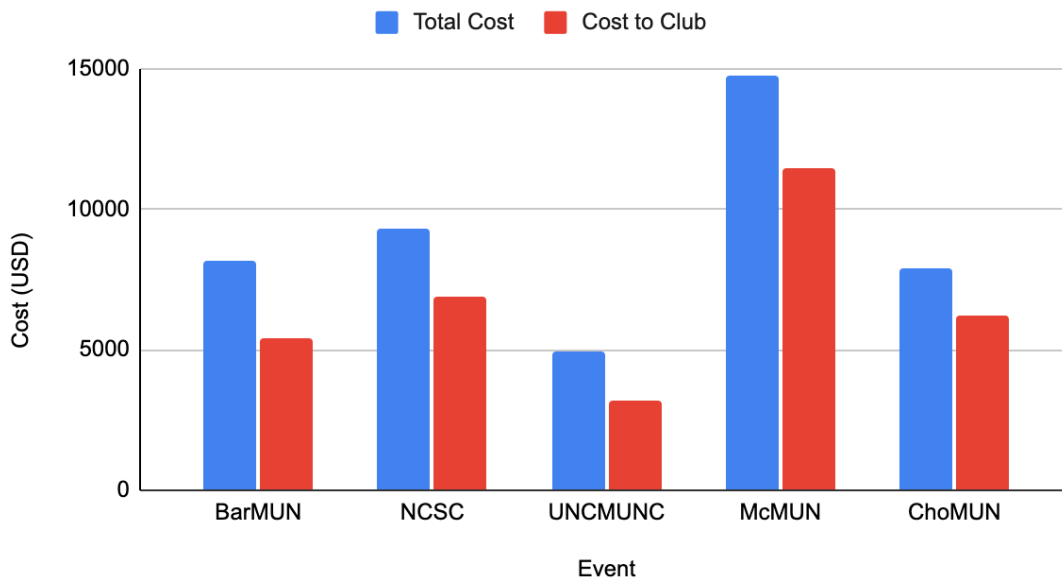
It should be noted that Membership Dues, Conference Dues, and Other Event Dues are paid by our club members. The “Other Development” category consists of merchandise sales.

Revenue by Source



Expenditures by Conference

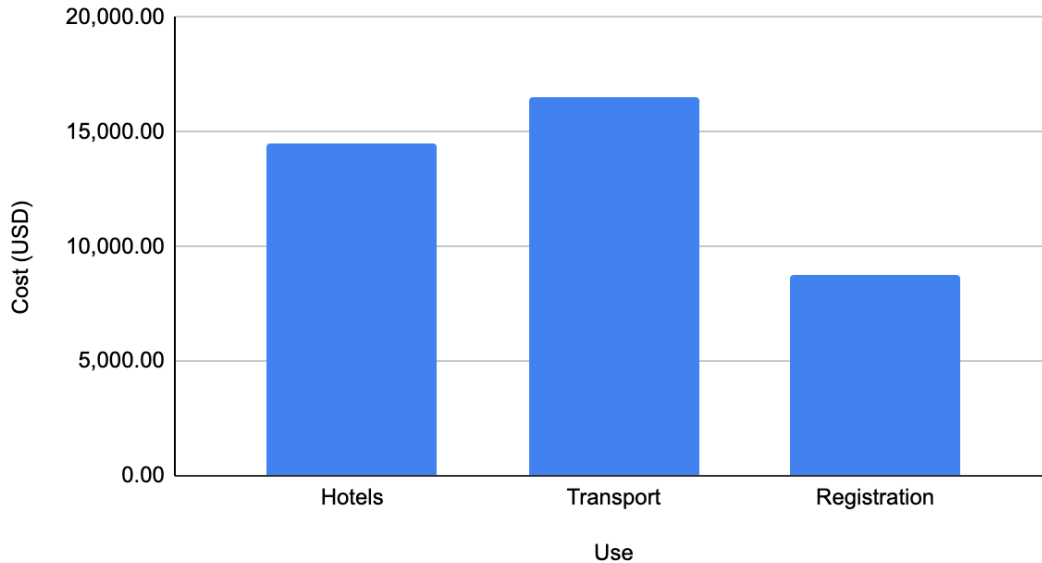
Expenses by Conference



Expenditures by Function

Transport costs include associated costs such as gas, tolls, and parking.

Expenses by Category

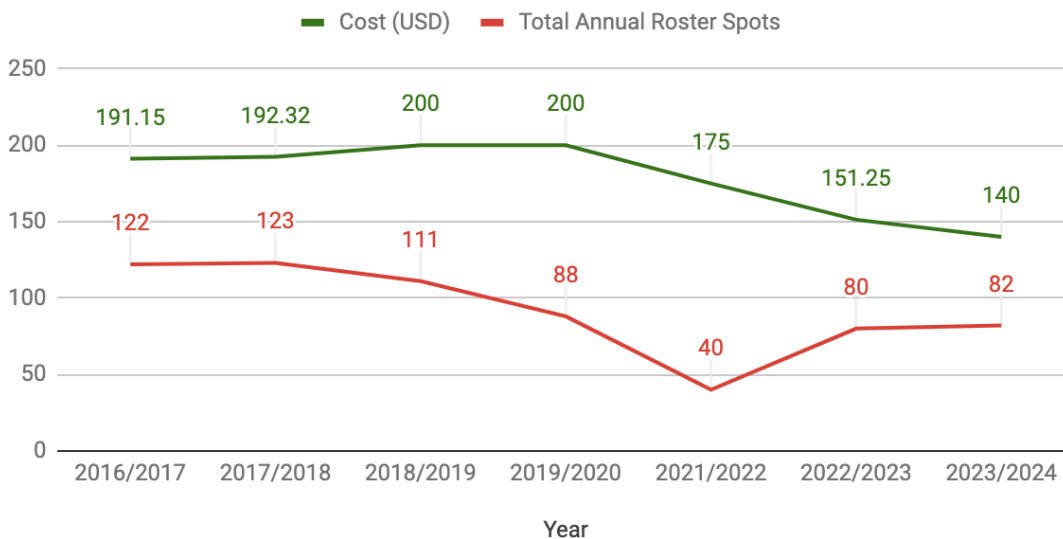


Average Conference Cost to Members

The average conference cost statistic only applies to in-person conferences; therefore, there is no data for the 2020-2021 school year. Additionally, the 2022 New Member Retreat is not included because it was not a conference.

Average Conference Cost to Members

In-Person Conferences Only



Challenges

Finance & Operations

This year had new challenges for the Finance and Operations department, the largest being the rising costs necessary to support conference travel. Due to combining factors of inflation and vendor policy, rental car costs nearly doubled causing an overall increase in travel costs. Fundraising allowed us to maintain low conference dues and combat these rising rates. The FinOps team this year also focused on streamlining financial and logistical information to both membership, Eboard, and for future holders of this role. We hope the advent of the Go-Bag becomes a staple of conference logistics just as the Go-Folder from last year did, and that future VPs keep thinking of new ways to make this role more efficient.

Development

The Development position saw some unforeseen challenges this academic year. This year, we were able to receive substantial funding from alumni donors, which provided members with scholarships for conferences. A struggle with this new scholarship system was having substantial applicants. The scholarships were often presented during meetings, and reminders in the GroupMe chat, yet applications were few. If alumni scholarships are to continue, it is vital to understand reasons behind reluctances to apply in order to allow more people to obtain these opportunities. Another struggle this year was the concessions schedule, as there were not many dates that worked for us towards the end of the semester. In the future, more consistent forms of fundraising would be helpful, in case we are unable to do concessions opportunities.

Membership

This year, the biggest problem faced by membership was a stagnation in recruitment. Even while attending more activity fairs and more flyers than ever before, we did not notice a large increase in membership, and have actually struggled with retention. Going forward, it would probably be best for membership to focus primarily on retaining members year-to-year, and while recruitment should not be forgotten about, retention should take a bigger spotlight. Furthermore, although changes such as POE training have been beneficial, membership needs to continue to observe club dynamics to make sure that everyone feels safe and welcome in IRO.

Conference Preparation and Training

The year of MUN from ConPrep had many ups and downs. The biggest hurdle to being ConPrep is accepting the fact that you will not please everyone. The balance between fun and Model UN training is difficult. The key to remember is that general membership meetings are the only ones required for conference. The easiest way is to focus on details, depth, and advanced topics in pre-meetings. General membership meetings can focus on everything else. Once you accept that someone will always want more or less, it becomes easier to train. Detailed planning and calendar tracking aids in making sure that nothing is missed. Play to the strengths of yourself as a delegate for teaching, including from AVPs. Expanding the use of ConPrep AVPs has smoothed this crazy term, I urge the next ConPrep team to do so as well.

Vision

Upon the start of this E-Board's term in February of 2023, IRO was in the midst of the first complete conference schedule since the COVID-19 pandemic. The club had continued to grow in terms of both membership and finances and was a wonderful and positive community for our members. We sought to maintain these massive benefits to our organization and to our members throughout the 2023-24 academic year, despite the challenges of the 2023 spring semester and their lasting impacts.

After the MSU community was impacted by the tragic events of February 13th, just two days after our election, IRO came together to heal, supported by IRO and MSUMUN alumni. This made us realize the importance of fostering and growing connections with our extensive alumni network. We created the Alumni Scholarship Initiative, launched The Crisis Drop, IRO's twice-semesterly alumni newsletter, and are working to set up professional development and advice sessions for IRO alumni to help current members through the processes of starting their careers or applying to graduate and law schools. Through these efforts, we have worked to maintain connection with our alumni in a way that benefits them and our members.

Moving forward, IRO has reached a turning point in its history. Since the COVID-19 pandemic and the return to campus, the organization has been adhering to a growth mindset. Each year, we seek to increase our membership numbers, grow our finances, and offer more roster spots on conference. During this year, it has become apparent that a shift is occurring. After the heaviest recruitment push in years during the fall, our membership remained approximately the same as last year. Larger rosters for fall conferences were much harder to fill, with many members only applying after being explicitly asked to do so by E-Board members. These difficulties indicate that IRO must shift from a growth mindset to a maintenance mindset. The next E-Board must be cognizant of the fact that continuing to grow roster sizes may expose the club to significant financial risk, especially if membership numbers continue to plateau.

A contributing factor to this issue may have been burnout on the part of members. Numerous events, both in IRO and MSUMUN, during the spring of 2023 led to a lot of conflict and hostility between members and pushed a lot of administrative proceedings into the summer break. This could have deterred some members from returning to the club or from going back on conference. While IRO continues to seek to win awards on the circuit and be competitive, it must also remain an on-campus community based on values of inclusivity, camaraderie, and acceptance. Future E-Boards must ensure, to the best of their ability, that petty drama related to elections and other issues do not affect the club's culture. Overall, IRO continues to be both competitive on the circuit and a positive community for students on campus. For the club's continued success, the organization's culture of acceptance, teamwork, collaboration, and learning must be maintained into the future.