

June 4th, 2013

To: Students' Council

Re: Report to Council

Hey Council,

Before I proceed with my report, I would like to acknowledge that our university and our Students' Union are on Indigenous land. Specifically: Cree, Saulteaux, Metis, Blackfoot, and Nakota Siou.

They are faculty, staff, students, family, and friends, and they are still here. I acknowledge that we meet on treaty 6 territory. That treaty governs the relationship between first-nations and non-first nations citizens. I am thankful for this opportunity for us to meet on this land today. This statement will be included at the front of my report to council until either the time that my term ends, or Council moves to makes a similar statement available for public viewing.

I attended a meeting of the Board, University Relations Committee, and General Faculties Council over the previous two weeks. I'll provide highlights of the meeting of the Board and General Faculties Council here.

BoG Meeting

The BoG meeting on Monday was a short one, as we were meeting primarily to discuss the budget and Comprehensive Institutional Plan. They are complementary and are usually approved concurrently. Upon receiving final approval from the Board, the CIP will be presented to the Minister of Enterprise and Advanced Education.

A number of different members, including myself, expressed concern over the usage of the term 'flagship' throughout the CIP. We did not disagree that the U of A was – and is – the flagship post-secondary education institution in Alberta. Our concerns were with regards to the strategic

implications of the usage of the term given the current political climate.

It is no secret that the current Minister of EAE is not a huge fan of the way we utilize the term. Accordingly, myself and other members felt that it might have been pertinent to avoid using the term - at least in documents sent directly to the minister.

Nevertheless, other members of the Board felt that we would be betraying what we agreed upon in the Board retreat if we were to avoid usage of the term. The Board decided to continue using the term throughout the document, and both the budget and the Comprehensive Institutional Plan were approved. I'm interested in seeing what the response from the Minister of EAE will be.

General Faculties Council

I also attended a meeting of General Faculties Council the same Monday. One item of particular importance was the President's initiative to restructure GFC.

Citing concerns from students and others over the previous year regarding the operation of GFC, President Indira has decided to move forward with a comprehensive review of GFC. While I am not opposed to this idea in principle, I disagreed with how Indira intended to go about doing it.

The initial plan was to strike a committee of only two faculty members to conduct the "objective" review. Obviously, we were concerned that there was absolutely no student representation on the committee. After some lobbying before and during the meeting, Indira acquiesced and agreed to include both undergraduate and graduate students on the task force committee.

This was a win for students, but it concerned me that we had to fight for fair representation in the first place. It should be the default to include undergraduate and graduate students in governance processes – especially when it is of profound significance.

I must admit I was somewhat disappointed with Indira's justification as to why she did not want to include undergraduate students. When asked, she indicated that she was hesitant because it

would be difficult to find students to attend these meetings during the summer. Further, she argued, undergraduate students would likely have less experience in the governance process than graduate students.

Her arguments were not very convincing, because there were plenty of student representatives that very GFC meeting (during the spring/summer break) and, as President Kusmu aptly pointed out, plenty of undergraduate students have a good deal of experience with governance (Kusmu himself having 6 years, as he noted).

Needless to say, it does not bode well for the health of the institution if students are not included at all levels of governance as much as possible. I certainly hope that Indira will endeavor to proactively include students in important matters such as GFC review in the future.

That's all for now. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to be in touch at the contact information below.

In Solidarity,

Brent Kelly

Undergraduate Board of Governors Representative 2013-2014 | University of Alberta Students' Union

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