

June 14th, 2013

To: Students' Council

From: Petros Kusmu, President 2013-2014

Re: Report to Students' Council (for June 18th, Meeting)

Hello Council!

Hope all is well on your end. The past two weeks has been a nice pace for the rest of the executive team and I. I had the opportunity to attend two convocation ceremonies (one for my partner and the other for my little brother) and congratulate a bunch of students for graduation. Sitting on the stage for convocation is definitely a nice perk of the job.

With that being said, in the past two weeks us executives finally wrapped up some of our transitioning by completing the in-depth Governance 599 sessions we received from the Advocacy department. Additionally, I had the opportunity to proxy for Dustin and William's committees when they were away from the office. Furthermore, I finally had the opportunity to take some time off. (It was nice having my first weekend off in over month!)

Before I jump into my report, let me say thanks to Councillors Speakmen and Hodgson for attending the Pride Parade with Vice-President Le, President emeritus Yamagishi, and I! Being in the parade was definitely one of the coolest experiences I've ever had.

I. Budget Cuts – Meeting with the Acting Provost, PSE Advocacy Campaign, Centre Collégial de l'Alberta, and International Student Tuition

Last week Vice-President Chelen and I had the opportunity to chat with the Acting Provost – Martin Ferguson-Pell – on the budget cuts the institution is facing. VP Chelen and I continued to insist that the associations – the SU, Graduate Students' Association, the Academic Staff Association at the University of Alberta, the Non-Academic Staff Association, and the Post-Doctoral Fellow Association – be privy to the information surrounding the Dean's letters. We continued to receive resistance from the Acting Provost but he offered to provide the association's leadership (i.e. its executive teams) a deeper understanding of the budget. However, the nature of this conversation would be confidential. I'm trying to arrange a meeting between the associations so we can figure out how we should approach this invitation.

Speaking of the associations, something that we have been considering is kicking-off an advocacy campaign for importance of post-secondary education (PSE) investments. (This would be similar to the 2004/2005 "I love Albertan PSE" campaign – view the image below.) However, with that being said, if the associations are going to commit themselves to expend a tremendous amount of financial and political capital doing this campaign, we feel that we should be greater involved in the budget moving forward. How can we defend the institution if we don't have the best understanding of its budget and how its going to be shaped moving forward? The executives and I met with the University's University Relations Vice-President – Debra Pozega-Osburn (DPO) – to discuss this and (quite obviously) she loved the idea. I'll keep Council posted on how this idea will progress.

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Additionally, in our meeting with MFP and DPO, myself and the other executives raised the question that Councillor Champagn asked last Council meeting in regards to Campus Saint-Jean's (CSJ) Centre Collégial de l'Alberta (CCA) closing down. While I'm still waiting for more information from the University and the opportunity to ask CSJ's Faculty Association (AUFJSJ) on how involved it was in the CCA's closure, we received some information from our meetings with MFP and DPO. From my understanding, prior to the CCA's announcement that it would close, it only received eight applications to its program last year with only one of its applicants eligible for the program. The problem with this, according to the University, is that this individual wouldn't have been able to have a rich academic experience if they were the only person their program. Furthermore, from my understanding, the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology (NAIT) was a partner in the CCA's establishment but withdrew their support earlier this year – leaving the University with the financial burden of solely running this program. The combination of sustainably low demand, high costs of solely running the program, and the largest budget cuts the University has faced in the past twenty years led to this program being closed. Furthermore, from my understanding, closing this program meant that it would be easier for CSJ to deal with the unbelievably tough budget that it faces this year. But a large concern is what process the University undertook in the closure of the CCA and how involved the AUFJSJ was. We're currently investigating this.

Going back to Councillor Champagne's, the SU doesn't have a particular stance on this issue since our political policies don't really relate to this at all. With that being said, what are *your* thoughts, Councillors? How should the SU respond to the University making tough financial decisions, especially when they try negatively impact as little students as possible? As a SU, how will we be able to seen as valuable contributors to the budget if we don't draw the line between supporting any cuts? Furthermore, trade-offs have to be made in working with this budgetary shortfall – what are we willing to give? I obviously don't have the answer to these questions but I'd love to hear what you folks think. These are some tough questions we need to start reflecting on.

Another worrisome result of the budget cuts is the potential for international students to see large tuition increases. The SU received a memo from the University's Vice-President Finances & Administration – Phyllis Clark – regarding tuition increases for 2013-14 to 2016-17. In Vice-President Clark's letter, she stated the following:

"International differential fees (IDF) fall outside of the tuition fee regulation but are linked to the underlying base tuition fees through the application of an IDF multiplier. In order for the University to achieve its budget on international differential fees, for 2013-2014, it will be increasing the IDF multiplier for both undergraduate and graduate international students to offset the loss of the 2.15% increase on general undergraduate and graduate tuition fees."

This poses a number of questions, such as, how much will this multiplier be increasing by and does this mean international students will be paying significantly more for their tuition *in spite* of the government stating that there will be no tuition increases next year? I plan on following immediately with Vice-

President Clark on this issue and will keep Council briefed on any developments.

It's unfortunate to see that the University is grasping for any straws available to resolve their \$65+ million budgetary shortfall but, with that being said, tough choices have to be made. If the SU wants to be greater involved in the University's budgeting process we need to start portraying ourselves as collaborators in dealing with this budget meaning we need to pick and choose our battles or else we can lose a lot of ground.

II. Residence Discipline Statistics

As part of the agreement the Students' Union (SU) signed with the University to resolve the Lister Judicial Review case in May, the University had to provide the SU with residence discipline statistics. We requested information on the number of residence incidents involved students resulting in EMS, EPS or UAPS responses and reports summarizing discipline occurrences in the last three years. With this information and our own research, we will provide the university our feedback on the University's July 2012 alcohol rule changes.

The challenge we're facing right now is the fact that the University's Residence Services collected their statistics differently each year, which makes it difficult to track trends. With that being said, a surprising observation is the fact that from the 2011-2012 academic year to the 2012-2013 academic year, the number of incidents involved outside agencies spiked from 68 to 139 (that's a 104.4 percent increase in one year). The SU's original concerns surrounding the changes the university made to residences was that this would in fact cause more harm than good to residents so it's unfortunate to see this spike in incidents. I'll continue to keep Council posted on this file.

III. Fall Reading Week (FRW)

In the past two weeks we made strides towards the establishment of a FRW. The Acting Provost has put Dr. Bill Connor to lead this file – a past Dean of Students who has a reputation of being very student friendly and a person (as MFP says) “who gets stuff done”. He's been excellent in helping us navigate the complex political landscape of establishing FRW. Dr. Connor requested that we present a variety of different options for establishing a break – not necessarily a full-week – in Fall. He responded very positive to one of our options – a full-week off at the end of October. But we notified Dr. Connor that the SU would be unable to endorse any FRW option but the one that's currently represented in our political policy – post-Remembrance day – until its amended. Additionally, Dr. Connor commended our efforts in being flexible with our political policy and thought we'd gain a lot of political capital from Deans for doing so.

IV. Council of Alberta University Students (CAUS) Executive Director (ED) Hiring and Student Senate Selection Process

CAUS is hiring a new ED and I'm on the selection committee. By Friday, the selection committee will have completed its telephone interviews and will select three candidates to proceed to the next phase. Furthermore, Vice-President Woods and I finally selected the three student senators for this year.

V. Executive Goals – Student Entrepreneurship, SUBtv Expansion, and SU Newsletters

In addition to finalizing my executive goals document, I've been able to make some progress on the goals that I have listed. One of my projects this year is trying to explore ways to better support students in their entrepreneurship and non-profit pursuits. I'll be meeting with the Vice-President Advancement and the Alumni Association's Executive Director to talk about the University's new Venture Mentoring

Service (VMS) – a service dedicated to providing mentors for student entrepreneurs. Furthermore, I'll be meeting with individuals from TEC Edmonton to talk about start-up programming with undergraduate students.

Another stride towards my goal is the expansion of SUBtv to Augustana and Campus Saint-Jean. The SU's excellent Marketing Department currently has plans on expanding the number of SUBtv's on campus to 45. This expansion includes Augustana and possibly, Campus Saint-Jean. Furthermore, I've been in chats with individuals from the Advocacy and Marketing department on the possibility of establishing a monthly newsletter.

That's it for now folks! Till next time!

Signing off,



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