

October 18th, 2013

To: Students' Council

From: Petros Kusmu, President 2013-2014

Re: Report to Students' Council (for October 22nd, Meeting)

Hello Council!

I've submitted my Council Report on the Late Additions so that I can report on some items (primarily on the Letters of Expectation changes) from the Board of Governor's meeting that took place on today (Friday, October 18th). Here's a brief update on what I've been up to since October 8th.

- **Fall Reading Week (FRW)**

Like I've said in previous Council reports, the FRW file is really picking up speed. Vice President Academic Dustin Chelen and I had the opportunity to present to the Association of Academic Staff University of Alberta's (AASUA) Council a FRW option. After presenting to AASUA's Executive Council meeting, we went back to the drawing board and amended our FRW proposal to make it more favorable to academic staff (i.e. try to prevent the semester starting earlier and ending later). We presented the reworked proposal and got some positive and constructive feedback on our attempts to make it more receptive to academic staff.

After that, we had the opportunity to present to the Acting Provost an update on where we were at and he was impressed with our progress. The Registrar's Office raised some concerns with the presented FRW options – the pre-AASUA Executive Council FRW option (i.e. Late October) and post-AASUA Executive Council FRW option (i.e. Remembrance Day). As a result, we made a third option which is a slightly different version of the Remembrance Day FRW option that doesn't include day-swaps – i.e. treat a Tuesday (and sometimes a Thursday) as a Monday to remedy the instructional minute imbalance between M-W-F and T-R classes. Currently, we're planning of presenting this option to a Dean's Council and GFC meeting as a discussion item in late November. Right now we're continuing to build support and buy-in from the other stakeholders, such as a couple of Deans and non-academic staff, and refine our FRW "pitch".

- **International Differential Fees (IDF) and Mandatory Instructional Fee (MNIF) Increases**

At the Tuition Budget Advisory Committee and the Mandatory-Instructional Fee Budget Advisory Committee (TBAC-MBAC), VP Chelen, Vice-President External Adam Woods, and I also received some information surrounding IDF and MNIF increases. The Acting Provost Martin Ferguson-Pell and Vice President Finance & Administration Phyllis Clark told us that they are still doing further research on where our IDFs compare with other institutions.

Furthermore, the Dean of Physical Education and Recreation Faculty, Dr. Kerry Mummery, wants to have an increase to the Athletics and Recreation Fee in effect for September 2014 – meaning that the Board will have to approve this sometime in February/March. However, with that being said, Dean Mummery is willing to have this go as a plebiscite question, which is legally non-binding. Even though this isn't going to a referendum, I'm at least happy to see that the Dean is willing to give students a chance to vote on this and I'll consider this a small "win". But, I'm not entirely sure what will happen if students vote against the fee increase in the plebiscite. That's the real question here. Will keep you folks

posted on this matter.

- **Budget 2013-2014**

At TBAC-MBAC, VP Chelen, VPX Woods, and I also received some information surrounding the University's budget data. Our hard advocacy this summer on the University increasing its transparency has been successful in that the institution is now claiming to focus greater on transparency and communication. Point in case is two-fold. First, the University will be releasing a one-pager spreadsheet that will breakdown this year's budgets compared to last year's on a Faculty-by-Faculty basis. This data and its related notes will be released relatively soon. Second, the Board Chair has recently released his formal correspondence with the Deputy Premier/Minister of Enterprise of Advanced Education. This includes information on the University's plan to go from a three-year deficit plan to a two-year deficit plan. Furthermore, it also includes information on the external financial consultants that was supposed to visit the University.

Furthermore, we have been told that the Deans have received their budget letters on Tuesday for next year's budgets. It is important to note that these letters are indicative on the provincial government's budget for post-secondary education, which will be released sometime in the Winter semester. That means these budget letters are draft until the university actually knows what they'll be getting from the provincial government. In the meantime, as the Acting Provost said, it is really up to Faculty Associations to truly engage with their Deans on what their budgets will look like for next year.

Also, at the Board of Governor's meeting, President Indira Samarasekera restated her Change Agenda. While this isn't new news (she made it very clear what her Change Agenda is during her Presidents Address in September), I thought it'd be worthwhile to restate some of the things she will be prioritizing during her last year at the University. President Samarasekera stated that one of her largest priorities is ensuring that the institution adopts strong performance measures and accountability. She really wants to see that there is academic reform when it comes to promotion and tenure of academic staff and there are strong reviews of faculties and departments. Furthermore, she has a deep frustration with the state of the graduate student education here, primarily on the support that they receive to attract greater research funding.

- **International Students**

Just another reminder that the Students' Union is planning of hosting town hall/forum for international students on **Friday, October 18th at 6PM on SUBstage**. The purpose of this forum is to inform international students some important budget-related information and how they'll be impacted and, more importantly, to hear back from them on what are some of the pressing international student issues. Be sure to mark this off in your calendar and spread the word about this with any students who may be interested in this venture. For more information and to stay up-to-date on these developments, email istuitiondiscussion@gmail.com for more information.

- **Residences: 2013 Lister/Residence Changes and SU Student Group Bylaw Changes**

As part of the agreement that prevented the SU from fully pursuing its judicial review of the University due to the 2013 Lister/Residence Changes, the SU and Residence Services agreed that it'd exchange a series of reports to discuss the changes that took place and our thoughts on it. In the summer, the SU sent Residence Services our thoughts on their alcohol changes in all of the residences and their staffing changes in Lister by consulting with a series of residence student representatives and doing extensive

academic research. Residence Services has recently sent us their report on our report based off of various survey data and anecdotal evidence. The SU will be publishing a report to follow-up with their report on our report. (Yes, I did have fun typing that sentence out.) We plan on sharing all of these reports to Students' Council relatively soon.

On another note, the Executive Committee and I are having conversations on including Residence Student Groups a part of the SU's Bylaws. Some of the benefits of this are that the SU will be able to collect a fee on behalf of these student groups and they'll be able to have greater autonomy from Residence Services – the group that they have to advocate to and work with. These conversations will hopefully reach the Bylaw committee relatively soon.

- **Letters of Expectation (LOE)**

As mentioned last time, at the last General Faculties Council (GFC) and Academic Planning Committee (APC), I worked hard to include the SU's recommendations to the institution's LOE – primarily on having the LOE reference “attributes and competencies” as something they value. Despite my amendments failing at both GFC and APC, I got some recent success at the Board of Governors' (BoG) Board Learning and Discovery Committee (BLDC) where that particular amendment surrounding attributes and competencies passed. My concern was that this part of the LOE would be removed when the Board approved it today. But luckily, despite a small number of Board members, the amendment had a fair amount of support from other Board members and, I'm glad to say, passed in the final version of the LOE. Yay, success! ☺

In conclusion, I made five proposals to amend the LOE and two of them were successful. The language that passed including wording on attributes and competencies and on how students should have mentorship, not simply access, from instructors and researchers. But the amendments that failed surrounded language on “increasing” student participation in governance, stating that all program areas should be excellent and not simply “major” programs, and including the importance of enhancing digital learning and resources to students.

- **Council of Alberta University Students (CAUS) Executive Roundtable**

Last week CAUS hosted a meeting in Calgary (of which I had to miss due to my FRW AASUA presentation) and an executive roundtable where the executive teams from the U of A, U of L, and U of C SU met with their counterparts to discuss various things from their portfolio. The Presidents' Roundtable had a robust conversation on a variety of topics and gained some new ideas, as well. For instance, the U of L has an International Students' Association that's a student group, the U of C President and Vice-President Student Life met with the 20 largest student groups on campus to ask for general feedback on all things related to students and student groups, and the U of C printed each of its Councillors 10 posters that contained their name, picture, and contact information for them to post it around campus so students can know who their representatives are.

- **Master of Arts in Women and Gender Studies Program**

Interesting news update: the Ministry of Enterprise and Advanced Education rejected the University's proposal for creating a new Masters of Arts Program in Women and Gender Studies. VP Chelen found out this information at a GFC subcommittee. I asked for greater clarification as to why this happened and if it has happened before at the Board. The Acting Provost stated that this proposal got rejected apparently because the University of Lethbridge offers a similar program (i.e. duplication) and it has low

enrollment. As to when this has happened before, the President said that this has never taken place. Interesting stuff.

- **Personal Update**

The past two weeks have been unbelievably busy with my personal life. From volunteering to studying for midterms, I'm kind of behind on everything. (Especially my inbox, which has now gotten out of control.) Just wanted to keep you folks updated in case you found that I've been relatively unresponsive lately. Lots going on.

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

Signing off,



Petros Kusmu

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