

August 4th, 2014

To: University of Alberta Students' Union Students' Council 2014-2015

From: William Lau, President 2014-2015

Re: Report to Students' Council (for August 5th, Meeting)

Dear Council,

Apologies for this gross delay – I totally forgot about writing a council report – I was on vacation all of last week! I'll share a little bit about that too, but first I'll give you a couple updates from the week of July 21st.

Immediately after the July 22nd Council Meeting, our executive team left to Calgary for a team meeting with our counterparts from MacEwan University, University of Calgary, University of Lethbridge and Mount Royal University. While Vice President Khinda and myself took part in a Council of Alberta University Students (CAUS) meeting, the other Vice Presidents met with their counterparts to share best practices.



When we returned back in town, I attended the first meeting of a group we are tentatively calling the “Edmonton Students’ Associations”, to connect with other post-secondary institutions in Edmonton: Norquest, Kings, Concordia, NAIT and MacEwan. Areas of collaboration over the upcoming year will include and not be limited to:

- Event planning
- U-Pass Advocacy
- Residential Property Tax
- Municipal Work and Internships
- Collaborative Research Development
- Mental Health Supports

Vice President Diaz and myself also met briefly with Dean Mummery of the Faculty of Physical Education and Recreation to seek his support in planning Break The Record for this coming March ;)

That’s about it for my few days in office since last Council meeting. I’ve been on vacation for the past week and it’s been quite the trip. I took this opportunity to take a roadtrip and visit my past employers – Heather and Gary - at Granite Creek Estate Wines, where I haven’t visited since I worked for them seven years ago! Upon graduating grade 12, I thought I would either strive to be a doctor or perhaps a *winemaker*. I thought I wanted to be a doctor since my early childhood, but at this stage of my life, I wanted to look past the job description, the salary, the status and all– I wanted to assess the lifestyle I would want to lead. Opening a winery sounded like a pretty good idea - I loved the idea of crossing the arts and the sciences – and maybe even running a business I could call my own. Not to mention, having a combination of vineyards, lakes and mountains make up my backyard.

Anyways, at the end of that summer, I was pretty sure I didn’t want to spend my youth out in the vineyards – it was hard work – but it is definitely something I would consider as an “out” if I have a mid-life crisis. I strongly recommend you to gain experience in multiple fields while you’re young: service to learn how to please, sales to learn how to listen, and labour to learn how to simply *work*.

One thing I still remember to this day though is how olive oil worked as a decent shield against the vibrant sun. My partner in the vineyards, Trevor, told me he learned this trick from the Greek gods ;)

I was really looking forward to the visit this summer – I wanted to show up at their doorstep and give them a pleasant surprise, while updating them on what I’ve been up to over the past seven years.

Unfortunately, I arrived on Tuesday morning seeing the “Open” replaced by a “For Sale” sign.

I drove in to see if anyone was around and was welcomed by silence. I approached their doorsteps and was greeted by an unfamiliar pup – I later learned that her name was Cinder. Shia had died from cancer about five years ago.

I left a note on their front door, and decided to stop by to visit their neighbor, Recline Ridge Winery. After a few complimentary tastings, we toured their shop and came across this article, where I found out that the winery at Granite Creek had burned down in January 2013. I couldn't imagine how devastated Heather and Gary must have been.



I returned to Granite Creek later on the evening and was welcomed with open arms. They had seen the note that I left at the front door and had been cleaning up to greet me. Just kidding – they weren't cleaning up to greet me, they were actually cleaning up because they were moving out. I learned that getting the winery back to the state it was at pre-fire would take at least six years; Gary and Heather were getting a bit old for this. They had sold their property: house, wine shop, winery and a small vineyard to Chinese-Canadian family from Red Deer, and they were happy that the family agreed to hire on the current winemaker as a consultant to get the business back up and running.



We were all so grateful that I decided to visit at this time. If I had decided to visit any later, they would have already moved away. The fire was both a curse and a blessing. Gary and Heather had put their heart and soul into the Winery, winning regional and international awards for their wines. However, working 60-70 hours a week at their age wasn't best for their health. No amount of red wine can repair that harm. They are looking forward to spending more time with their grandchildren, gardening, and helping around the community where necessary. The one piece of advice they left me was to self-insure any future properties or businesses.

They still have the primary vineyard on hand and are looking for a buyer; 40 acres of vines and a house perfect for a family of four. If any of you are interested, I would love to make the introduction.

Cheers 🍷

William Lau

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