

October 28<sup>th</sup>, 2016

**To:** Students' Council 2016 – 17

**From:** Fahim Rahman, Students' Union President 2016 – 17

**Re:** Students' Union Council Report #13

Hi Council,

The past few weeks have been rather packed. I'm sure we're all looking forward to Fall Reading Week! Here is an update on my duties:

### **1. Tuition Freeze**

I was approached by the Ministry of Advanced Education to MC the tuition freeze announcement that occurred last Wednesday at SUBstage. It was a pleasure to speak at the event and introduce the Minister of Advanced Education, Biological Sciences student Hacheem El-Sayed and Provost and VP Academic Dr. Steven Dew. Thank you very much to the Councilors and executives from SAMU who attended and helped make the announcement a success!

That being said, the tuition freeze wasn't positively received by all. President David Turpin was critical of the funding implications for a tuition freeze, mainly because it came without any backfill in funding. I believe if the tuition shortfall isn't covered, we will be looking at a \$4 million cut here.

### **2. Exec Retreat**

We had a very productive executive retreat where we covered our workload and progress on items in our platforms. We also discussed our social media strategy, methods of informing students about the services and work the SU provides, and our presence and relevancy to students this year.

### **3. Board of Governors**

Our Board meeting was quite packed, and President Turpin had a lengthy report where we covered his recent report to China, the passing of U of A alumnus and former Premier of Alberta Jim Prentice, his thoughts on the tuition freeze, and an update on the Strategic Plan "For the Public Good".

Movement is being made on quite a few "For the Public Good" initiatives, including national student recruitment, developing a U of A story, and taking an inventory of our current suite of experiential learning opportunities. The hope is that the reporting structure of "For the Public Good" is robust enough to become the report that is sent to government annually.

The Chancellor had some interesting comments on noting the strategic plan as FPG versus "For the Public Good". Finally, the Provost will be taking the lead with developing and identifying emerging signature areas within the U of A, both on the research and teaching side.

#### **4. Student Groups**

VP Ghossein led a meeting between our services unit, the Graduate Students' Association and the Dean of Students office around the administration of student groups. It was an introductory meeting where we outlined research done on how student groups are administered in other Canadian universities.

Only the U of A and U of T campuses require student groups to have their events be approved by the University offices, while all other (12/14 universities surveyed!) campuses' Students' Unions approve events and handle most student group administration. We seem to be an outlier, which has resulted in some odd historical decisions or actions from the Dean of Students' office in the past.

#### **5. Academic Governance**

VP Banister and I attended a meeting with the Provost, where we learned there may be some movement on international student tuition this year. Sadly, they were not included in the tuition freeze, so I am quite concerned if their fees rise significantly.

The Provost seemed receptive to supporting VP Banister's proposed interdisciplinary learning conference, which is excellent to hear. I also ran through some of the student concerns on the meal plan, as he will see it at quite a few committees we sit on together.

At the Academic Planning Committee, there was a report of the President's Visiting Committee review done within the Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry, a budget update, a presentation on the expanded national student recruitment strategy, and the statements on student equity and equity in hiring processes at the U of A.

#### **6. CAUS & Provincial Advocacy**

VP Sandare and I met with the Chief of Staff for Deron Bilous, the Minister of Economic Development. She had a fair number of questions on our asks around student financial aid and the Student Temporary Employment Program. It seems there isn't a philosophical opposition to the majority of our asks, more so that a budgetary shortfall that is hindering movement.

We also had a CAUS teleconference where we talked a little bit about our plans for the upcoming Lobby meetings in Edmonton and our all-exec meeting. The last item we discussed was the transition plan for our Executive Director, who will be on maternity leave starting in January.

#### **7. Residences**

The work of the Residence Life Task Force is progressing, as we're almost ready to meet with a vendor capable of providing independent research on the state of residences at the U of A.

The meal plan proposed for Lister is also approved its approval deadline of December by the Board of Governors, so VP Ghossein and I have stepped up our advocacy on this current plan, which is lacking in quality and accessibility for students.

## **8. Alumni Council**

I sit on the Community Relations committee of Alumni Council, which met a couple of weeks ago. We quickly covered the mandate of the committee, which is to determine partnerships, targets and outcomes for community visits alongside the Senate. Hosting a targeted campaign around a social issue is on the table, potentially in collaboration with student groups and/or faculty at the U of A.

## **9. International Students' Association**

VP Banister, VP Ghossein and I met with the International Students' Association to see what support the SU can offer in helping them establish a presence on campus, as well as if they can be recognized as a representative group down the road for international student issues.

## **10. Presence and Relevancy**

We had three dinners with our Faculty Associations: The Physical Education and Recreation Council of Students, the Native Studies Students' Association and the Organization for Arts Students and Interdisciplinary Studies.

The full executive were involved in quite a few projects: we all got vaccinated and had our photos taken to promote flu immunity, spoke about the SU at Open House to some prospective students, had lunch with the Academic Staff Association executive, the Academic All-Canadian Breakfast for our athletes, and finally the luncheon with the Board of Governors after our Board meeting. I also attended a Board dinner the night prior to our Board meeting.

VP Banister and I attended the SCI5 forum for the renewal of the ISSS membership fee. VP Ghossein and I recorded a segment of the Voice of the Union last week as well, which should be live any day at <https://itunes.apple.com/us/podcast/voice-of-the-union/id1156533908>.

That's all from me folks! Looking forward to the next report,



Fahim Rahman

President

[University of Alberta Students' Union](http://University of Alberta Students' Union)

2-900 SUB | (780) 492-4643 | [@UASUpresident](https://twitter.com/UASUpresident)