

# VPA Students' Council Report

By: Emerson Csorba

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## INTRODUCTION

Seeing the school year back in full swing is awesome, and things are really picking up. In particular, graduate student attributes is gaining steam. Orientation was also phenomenal, and I will report on the success of faculty associations in September 7 FA sessions. I hope that you're all having a wonderful start to the year, and I look forward to fielding your questions.

## GRADUATE STUDENT ATTRIBUTES

Earlier today, I attended the first GFC Committee on the Learning Environment meeting of the year, where I presented on graduate student attributes. As a co-chair of the CLE subcommittee on attributes and competencies, I provided a report on the committee's progress to date, with particular focus on the committee terms of reference and membership. Overall, the committee features three members of the Students' Union and three members of the Graduate Students' Association, which shows that the initiative is student-driven.

Additionally, I've met with 12 members of Students' Council so far, to discuss a set of five questions related to graduate attributes. After interviewing every member of Council, each faculty association and students at-large, the groundwork for the Graduate Attributes Plan will have been created, and the writing of the plan can commence.

## ORIENTATION: FACULTY ASSOCIATIONS

Back in April 2011, the ISSS and CBAS moved a motion at the Council of Faculty Associations to have the VPA look into possibly including faculty associations in Orientation. This was accomplished, and many months later, I am proud to say that a handful of FAs participated in Orientation with their own sessions. I only managed to catch the last minutes of an ISSS presentation, but from what I hear, the sessions were a hit. A big thank you goes out to the Assistant Manager of the CSD, Tim Ira and each faculty association and TF that participated (the ISSS, CBAS, ESS, NUA, PERCS, Jessica, the Phys. Ed. TF and Kelsey, the ALES TF).

Additionally, my congratulations go out to the CSD and hundreds of volunteers that made Orientation a huge success. The President's Address showcased student engagement in full force.

## FALL READING WEEK TASK FORCE

Rory, members of the SU Advocacy Department and I met to discuss the fall reading week task force report, which is near completion. After a highly-productive summer of meetings, the report is on track and almost ready to be sent to the Provost.

#### GLOBE AND MAIL INTERVIEW

I was fortunate to sit down for an interview with Jennifer Lewington of the Globe and Mail. Although the interview was initially about undergraduate research, the discussion shifted to graduate student attributes, and there is the possibility for a follow-up interview later on in the year. The interview was for the Globe and Mail's university report card, slated for release in October.

#### UNIVERSITY GOVERNANCE

With the fall semester here, GFC standing committees are heating back up. In addition to the CLE meeting referenced above, I attended an ASC SOS meeting. Dr. Bill Connor, the new Vice-Provost Academic, is chairing ASC SOS, ASC and CLE.

#### WEEK OF WELCOME

I've been involved in bits and pieces of WOW, though the majority of this is left to Colten and the Programming staff.

#### PEOPLESOFT SUPPORT SERVICES MEETING

Colten and I met with two representatives of PeopleSoft, which provides support to BearTracks. We discussed a few key points: the importance of notifying students well in advance of maintenance that could prevent student access to BearTracks, including a calendar for students somewhere on BearTracks, reducing the non-access update period in the wee hours of the morning, including a "current GPA" tab next to the grades section on BearTracks and including more direct links to methods of payment options for financial holds.

Moreover, the university will soon review its information technology (IT) strategy through the establishment of an IT strategic planning committee. We discussed the importance of a student voice on this committee. When this committee is up and running later in the fall semester, undergraduates will have a seat on the committee.

#### TEACHING AWARDS

I've met on a few occasions with Andy and Sirina, the Manager of SFAIC, about expanding the teaching excellence awards offered by the SU. Before we undertake such a change, I'll be meeting with the Director of the Centre for Teaching and Learning, Dr. Heather Kanuka. Dr. Kanuka knows much more than me about teaching appreciation, and I would like to hear from her before we move with anything within the SU.

## SU CORPORATE TEAM

Two more SU corporate team events are scheduled: a soccer game on September 11 and then another one on September 25. I'm hoping to increase the attendance at these events to over 15 people, building off the success of the first SU staff/volunteer event.

## THE INTERDEPARTMENTAL SCIENCE STUDENTS' SOCIETY

I've participated in a handful of ISSS meetings. It is safe to say that the ISSS is making remarkable progress, building off what was a tremendous first year in 2010-2011. The upcoming year looks to be just as – if not more – productive.

## BLOGGING

I've maintained the blog writing despite a hectic last few weeks. I recently penned an entry that addresses what the VPA actually works on. About two weeks ago, I wrote a “ten university tips” entry for incoming U of A students. I hope that these are useful.

## BUDGET ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Rory, Farid and I attended the first Budget Advisory Committee meeting of the year, which was chaired by the Provost. The discussion surrounded tuition, the changes to the university's upper-level administrative positions, and mandatory non-instructional fees (MNIFs). MNIFs will be the topic of discussion at the next BAC meeting.

## ACCESS COPYRIGHT

I have sat down for a few interviews pertaining to Access Copyright, highlighted by one with the Metro.

## CONCLUSION

Overall, the last few weeks have been non-stop, but arguably the most productive of the year. With September here, I'm feeling fresh and energized by Orientation, and am eager to keep pushing forward toward increased student engagement. If you ever have any questions, feel free to give me a call at 780.492.4236 or stop by SUB 2-900 to chat.

Cheers,

Emerson Csorba