

VPA Council Report

Date: October 20 2011

Dear Council,

The last two weeks have literally been all over the place, but still very productive. From October 8-13, I was in Pittsburgh (along with VP Yamagishi) at the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE) conference. From October 14-16, I was in Saint Paul for a 100 k ultramarathon, and finally, I am back in Edmonton for awhile. With Sustainability Awareness Week (SAW) in full swing, it comes as little surprise that this report revolves around academic sustainability. Additionally, I have been chipping away at the Undergraduate Research Symposium, while also balancing university governance commitments and preparing academic-related questions for the upcoming SU Survey.

AASHE CONFERENCE

The five or so days spent in Pittsburgh were very beneficial, and I return to Edmonton with an increased passion for sustainability. In particular, I now have a clear vision for how students should advocate for “academic sustainability,” which is essentially the integration of more sustainability-related content in existing university courses. I think that we should certainly integrate sustainability into the student attributes project that we are currently leading on campus. As per SU operating policy, I will have a comprehensive AASHE conference report (it is currently at 4.5 pages, double spaced) ready for Council within two weeks.

SUSTAINABILITY AND STUDENT ATTRIBUTES

On October 19 from 4-5pm in the SUB Alumni Room, I hosted an event entitled “Sustainability and Student Attributes,” where three panelists – Ian Moore, Dr. Genevieve Gauthier and Dr. Susan Barker – led a discussion based on two questions. The first was “What qualities or attributes are characteristic of a ‘sustainable’ person?” The second question was, “What steps can the university take to cultivate a ‘sustainable’ person?” Overall, about a dozen people were in attendance, and I think that the discussion flowed well.

SU SURVEY

I’ve been working with the Department of Research and Political Affairs (DRPA) to create about five questions about academic materials, to be included in the upcoming student survey. Additionally, around two written questions about student attributes and another two questions about undergraduate research will be included in the student survey.

UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH SYMPOSIUM

With a little under one month left before the inaugural undergraduate research symposium takes place, there is a lot to do, but the URS Team and I are slowly chipping away at the preparation. We’re setting

up a day of interviewing students and faculty, along with the U of A multimedia team. Moreover, student abstract applications are rolling in, I'm confirming physical space with CCIS and the Telus Centre, collecting sponsorship funds, establishing a URS Adjudication Committee of faculty and students, creating a "master schedule" and responding to many e-mails from students and faculty looking to know more about the symposium.

BLOG POST

I recently wrote a blog post entitled "Making mental and physical health a lifestyle." The entry concerns some of the initiatives that I am working on regarding mental health, or things that I plan to initiate once the undergraduate research symposium finishes up. Some of the things that I am doing (i.e. walking or running meetings) are a bit unorthodox, but working outside of what is deemed "normal" is not a bad thing.

RUNNING FOR VPA

If you are thinking about running for VPA, please do not hesitate to contact me. I'm more than happy to sit down with you at any point to answer any questions that you have about the position. The more questions, the better!

CONCLUSION

As per usual, if you ever have questions about the Students' Union, the VPA portfolio or anything else related to student engagement, send me an e-mail at vp.academic@su.ualberta.ca or give me a call at 780.492.4236. I'm always open to constructive criticism or listening to whatever suggestions you have for improving the student experience.

In solidarity,

Emerson