

SU Vice President (Academic) Report

Date: December 1 2011

Hi everyone,

It is hard to believe that we are in December. The weeks since the symposium have been full tilt, and I have been working on a number of initiatives before leaving for the Organisation of Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) Annual "Teaching Quality" Conference in Mexicali, which begins on Monday. I am going with the U of A Centre for Teaching and Learning, which is also funding the trip. I'll make sure to provide Council with a thorough report, especially since this conference marks the end of a long-term research project led by the OECD on teaching quality worldwide. I'm very excited for this conference, and although it will be an intense one, a change of scenery will be nice following a rigorous last two months organizing the symposium.

I have a number of things to report on, so here we go:

CANADIAN ROUNDTABLE ON ACADEMIC MATERIALS (CRAM)

Over the last few months, I've thrown around the idea of organizing a Canadian Roundtable on Academic Materials. This was a goal of the VPA last year, and I think that it is an excellent goal to make. Back in May, I definitely did not have this on my radar, but as of earlier today, it looks like CRAM is going to happen. This year's edition will likely take place in late February 2011 at the University of Alberta, with the only catch being that it is via teleconference, which mitigates the significant cross-Canada travel and cost issues. Obviously, this is a major undertaking that involves collaboration between the U of A Libraries, Bookstore and various student associations, libraries and bookstores across Canada. However, now that the Undergraduate Research Symposium is done, I've set my sights toward more large initiatives, and this is certainly one of them. My way of thinking is that only 5 months in my term are left, and those months will be spent being as productive and effective as possible.

I met earlier today with the Chief Librarian and Vice-Provost/Director of Library Studies at the U of A to talk about CRAM, and we are all on the same page. A worldwide conference on academic materials was recently held in San Jose, and they accommodated thousands of delegates using the technology "Illuminate." We would use the same technology for CRAM.

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT ASSOCIATION

Vice-President (Student Life) Yamagishi, Councillor Zinyemba and I have been planning for the potential creation of an International Students' Association, which could be quite similar to the one at UBC: <http://www.ubcinternational.ca/>. I've been putting together an all-star cast of current and former international students and domestic students with international experience to be the think tank for this initiative. Although I made a call on Monday to the UBC ISA, I have not heard back from them. I'll try them again next week.

Councillor Zinyemba and I also attended the monthly U of A Standing Advisory Council on International Engagement (SACIE), where we talked briefly about the symposium and organizing an International Symposium next year that will focus on sharing students' stories about their international experiences.

UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH: WRAP-UP

Although the symposium is “over,” there are still logistical issues to work on. I’m currently creating certificates for student award winners and writing cheques for the monetary prizes. There are also a few student e-mails that flow in each day and interviews with stakeholders (i.e. the Alumni Association) that generously provided funds for the student awards.

On Saturday, I also convened the URS Team to discuss what went well, what didn’t go so well and what we can do next year for the symposium. Naturally, we spent 5% of the hour speaking about what went well, and 95% of the time on what needs to be better. The URS Team is definitely a focused group, and they know how to kick things into gear.

The SU Marketing Department, a few professors, students and I got together to whittle the 250 or so “What do you want to know?” contest entries down to 4! We managed to do this in 3.5 hours, over pizza and drinks. The four questions are all unique and creative, but there were *many* brilliant ones. It was a hard choice, and not one of the final four choices was unanimous among the judges.

COUNCIL OF ALBERTA UNIVERSITY STUDENTS E-BOOKS MEETING

I participated in a conference call for one hour with the Lethbridge SU VPA (Andrew), the Chair of CAUS (Duncan) and the Director of Research and Political Affairs of the SU (Justin). We discussed the e-books market in Alberta, and agreed to do more research and come back with a solid plan for one week from now. I definitely know what I’ll be doing during spare time at the OECD conference: more research!

COUNCIL COMMUNICATION TEAMS

Four councillors met to discuss council communication teams, which will be teams of two councillors that vie to speak to the most U of A students every month. This initiative will be starting up in early January when we get back from the break. I plan on talking to 100 students every week from this point on, in order to engage as many students as possible from now until the end of the year.

UNIVERSITY ATHLETICS BOARD MEETING

For the first time this year – and perhaps in recent years – the SU met with the student reps on the University Athletics Board, who are all dedicated varsity athletes. We spent a productive hour discussing how the SU can better advertise Athletics events, and vice-versa. I’m really looking forward to the future, where we will see more students attending varsity sports games. We are fortunate to have many stellar varsity athletics teams at the U of A, and I think more students should be out at games.

BLOGGING

I’ve been blogging consistently this year, and one of my recent posts going up very soon is about what a week looks like for the Vice-President (Academic). It pretty much goes through a few days of the week, hour-by-hour. I think that using Twitter and the SU blog consistently are helpful, especially for those that want to learn more about the SU, but the key to getting more students involved is going out to directly speak with students one-on-one. Blogging is great, but it is not a panacea for students that have yet to be engaged.

<http://www.su.ualberta.ca/governance/executives/blog/>

QUESTIONS/INTERESTED IN RUNNING

We're getting to the point where some of you will start making decisions about running for the SU executive. If you are thinking about it, please feel free to come talk to me. The experience has been an outstanding one, and I'll do my best to answer any questions you have. As usual, feel free to contact me at vp.academic@su.ualberta.ca or at 780.492.4236.

In solidarity,

-Emerson