

Vice-President (Academic) Students' Council Report

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By: Emerson Csorba

Hi everyone!

I hope that you all had an outstanding break and managed to spend a lot of time relaxing and taking advantage of the weather outdoors. The holidays provide some time to not only relax, but look back at the year and assess personal strengths and weaknesses, do a lot of reading, and perhaps most important of all, prepare for an even stronger second half. Now, I know that we're not really going into the second half of the year, because there are only four months left in the term. Still, if I can make one point clear in this report, it is the following: the last four months are going to *count*. January is off to a fast start, and I plan on maintaining a blistering pace over the next 120 or so days. Without further ado, here are some of the big things I have been working on.

GRADUATE STUDENT ATTRIBUTES PLAN

On January 3, I wrote virtually all of the Graduate Student Attributes Plan, which was based on consultation with 5000 students (via the responses in the SU Survey), the Interdepartmental Science Students' Society (which represents approximately 6000 Science students), and interviews with nearly every member of Students' Council. The plan is 3000 words, and is currently being edited by a handful of different people across the university. A draft version will also go to Students' Council for edits, at some point over the next two weeks. My firm deadline for *The Plan* is January 16.

Here are the four attributes outlined in the document:

- Curiosity and Creativity
- Resilience and Adaptability
- Global Awareness
- Engaged Citizenship

Expect to receive a draft copy of *The Plan* some time next week.

UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH SYMPOSIUM

One of the major benefits of hosting the symposium is that the University of Alberta has now opened Undergraduate Research to direct funding from alumni donors. That means that alumni providing financial donations can provide direct donations to the Undergraduate Research Initiative. Each year, the Undergraduate Research Initiative will receive \$200,000 in sustainable funding, but this development means that the figure could increase significantly.

I've also been wrapping up a lot of the symposium-related work. Providing cheques to winners of monetary awards, sending out invoices, etc.

In 2012, I want to see the next Undergraduate Research Symposium host at least 500 students, and provide \$50,000 in funding to students. It's ambitious, but achievable. I've contacted the Universidade de Campinas in Sao Paulo – Brazil, and possibly Latin America's top university – to learn more about their 2000-person Undergraduate Research Conference, so that we can reach this ambitious goal.

MID-YEAR REPORT

I wrote my VPA Mid-Year Report before the holidays, and it is now being edited by the Advocacy Department. There are some changes to my goals. I never subtracted any goals, but instead, have created new and more ambitious ones. For instance, I have set the goal of organizing the Canadian Roundtable on Academic Materials this year. I feel that Canadian students need a discussion about academic materials affordability, so we are going to initiate and lead it. On January 4 2011 (i.e. today), I'm sending off invitation letters to numerous student associations across Canada as we speak. The goal of organizing CRAM was not even on my radar in May 2011, but it is now at the forefront of my goals. I feel that the goals with specific dates force me to come through under pressure, and they provide measurable success markers from a responsibility perspective.

CANADIAN ROUNDTABLE ON ACADEMIC MATERIALS

See above. We're organizing this event for February 9-10. If you want to be a part of it, please tell me by January 16. The maximum limit using Illuminate, an online Skype-ish technology, is 200 people. So I need to hear from you early on. The conference will be for all of Canada, and it will host student leaders, bookstore managers and library administrators, with some professors mixed in as well.

SOCIAL MEDIA AND TRANSITION

I wrote a blog post entitled "Should you run to become an SU Executive member? Q & A" which will hopefully inform some students about whether they should run or not. Moreover, Colten and I did a video blog post about running for the SU Executive, which should be posted shortly. In terms of transition, I wrote a ten tips document regarding how execs can maintain their mental and physical health throughout the year. I think that each year in the SU is getting "healthier," which is certainly a great thing to see.

COUNCILOR COMMUNICATION TEAMS

About one-third of councillors have agreed to participate in Council Communication Teams, which will be teams of two councillors that attempt to speak to the most students about major student issues every month. I'll be coordinating the teams, and we will develop a short list of questions that each team of councillors can ask students. I hope to see this going for the second or third week of January, once Antifreeze has taken place.