

October 3, 2013

To: Students' Council 2013-2014

Re: Report of the Vice President Academic

Hello Council,

Below you'll find an update of my activities from the past two weeks.

I. Voluntary Severance Package

The University announced the results of its voluntary severance package: 83 professors and 38 administrators will be paid out to leave the University by June 30, 2014. In the media, my perspective was that the announcement was a sad one. Students come to the University of Alberta for access to the best and brightest in their field, and that these cuts will ultimately result in larger class sizes and fewer classes being offered. I'm remaining hopeful that the University will focus in on its change objectives of "sustainable financial models" and "efficient administration" before it keeps cutting at the core of the academic endeavor.

II. COFA Senior Board

The Fall semester COFA Senior Board meeting set the tone for a productive year for Faculty Associations. We continued to discuss the budget as it relates to Faculties, and determined that a meeting after the October cuts are announced would be useful. Most importantly, COFA set out a year plan that prioritizes open sharing of information, enhanced understanding of the University budget, greater consultation with students, tackling student apathy, and reaching out to students. Together with Discover Governance, COFA working groups will be focusing on these projects throughout the rest of the year.

III. Leadership Initiative

At the last GFC meeting, the University President proposed an academic structure for a new leadership college to be built on Saskatchewan Drive. A number of members of GFC raised concerns with the implied elitism of a 144-person program, and whether or not the University should pursue this in tough fiscal times. The VP Advancement promised that funds raised for such a leadership college would also benefit more than just 144 students, and so I am working on a discussion paper on how leadership skills could be better fostered at the University.

IV. COFA Myths and Facts Campaign

Based on submissions from the COFA Member Services Working Group, the SU is sponsoring the COFA myths and facts campaign. Across north campus, Augustana, and Campus St. Jean students will find lawn signs with commonly held myths about students in each of the different faculties. The purposes of this campaign are to help break down barriers between collaboration between FAs, to emphasize campus unity in a time of vertical budget cuts, and to better advertise FAs, COFA, and the SU.

V. Miscellaneous

I met with a number of University administrators including the Vice Provost (Academic Programs and Instruction), the Vice Provost and Dean of Students, and the University Secretary. Attended meetings of the AASUA Executive Committee, Academic Standards Committee Subcommittee on Standards, Committee on the Learning Environment, GFC Executive Committee, as well as an executive retreat. I had the pleasure of attending the tipi raising for the Faculty of Native Studies 25th anniversary. Finally, I met with the Provost's lead on digital learning to discuss the current state of the online learning movement, as well as to try and understand why the Digital Learning committee needed a student representative who wasn't appointed by the SU.

If you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to call me at 780-492-4236, or email me at vp.academic@su.ualberta.ca.

Sincerely,


Dustin Chelen