



October 2, 2014

To: Council

Re: October 7th Council Report

Hi Council,

I hope the beginning of the semester is treating you well, and that midterms aren't getting you down!

It's been another busy two weeks in the SU. Despite a devastating cold that took out just about the whole office, things have moved along.

We have a new person in the office! Our new executive assistant's name is Robyn Fenske and she will be helping out around here with scheduling and institutional memory. That means if you want to schedule a meeting with any of the execs, you should email robyn.fenske@su.ualberta.ca and she will set you up.

The Be Booksmart awareness campaign has officially come to an end. I am considering it a success based on the number of hits we got on the webpage (hundreds and hundreds), and the great media attention we got. That being said, there are some improvements that could be made for next time. In the next run, I would like to include a more professor-focused campaign. I hope to do some kind of recognition for professors that already do great things for students in terms of academic materials. Also, there were some... well... interesting statistics out of SUBtitles. The Be Booksmart campaign did not help SUBtitles. The numbers for the last three years are as follows:

August 15th - September 15th, 2014 - Consignment Sales: \$90,501.25 (\$40,618.52 lower than 2013)

August 15th - September 15th, 2013 - Consignment Sales: \$131,119.77 (\$31,645.49 lower than 2012)

August 15th - September 15th, 2012 - Consignment Sales: \$162,765.26

So it seems like used book sales are steadily dropping and the Be Booksmart campaign did not help. Why are the numbers dropping so drastically? I would speculate that there is a growing prevalence of desire to purchase digital textbooks, this is also having an impact on the bookstore. There also could be less students using the service, which could be due to the change in location. My bet is on the online materials.

Speaking of online materials, there is an issue that is of growing concern to the SU and that is online access codes. I've been getting a couple of student complaints about these things, and the essence of what they are is a code that you have to purchase that gives you access to something online that your professor uses as part of your grade. Since tuition should be already going towards instruction and assessment, we see this as students being charged twice for the same thing.

One question that I've gotten is, why is it acceptable to charge for a textbook but not an online access code? The answer is that the textbook is not so directly tied to assessment. Yes, you do need to do readings to succeed in the classroom, but the tests and assignments are directly worth a percentage of your grade. The line is not blurry. It is either worth part of your grade or it is not. The most insidious part of access codes is that there is no way to mitigate the cost or get around it. You can't share with your



classmate, you can't resell it afterwards, and you don't usually get to keep it longer than six months. Our research thus far shows that an access code that comes with an ebook costs between \$66 and \$117, and an access code with a hard copy book will cost somewhere between \$111 and \$290.

Recently, University of Calgary has bought a subscription to TopHat, which is one of the companies that provides the online assessment services. This institution-wide subscription means that students can access it for their classes for free. The provincial Ontario government has instituted a regulation that prevents any instructor from assigning an access code that costs more than \$50. This is an issue that is starting to pop up across Canada.

Navneet and I are working together on this one. She will be working on getting CAUS on board with making a policy around this to lobby the provincial government for something like Ontario has, and I will be lobbying internally to see what the possibilities are for getting something like Calgary has.

The highlights of this week for me were related to undergraduate writing and the Festival of Teaching. I sit on a committee called University Writing Committee and right now, this is an orphan committee with no place in central reporting structure or real capability to collectively effect change in writing on campus. I think this is a poor show for something as integral to undergraduate education as writing. I would really like for writing to have a place in university governance to represent its place at this university. Over the last two weeks I talked to a bunch of people and put the gears in motion to make it report to CLE.

Relatedly, the theme for the Festival of Teaching this year is writing. An interesting thing to note about the FoT is that it isn't a festival in the conventional sense, rather, it is a series of related events that happen throughout the year. My role in organizing is the "student voices" aspect. Much like last year, we will be asking students questions on camera and compiling a video, we will also probably be putting chalkboards up everywhere with questions on them that students can answer. Interactive signage has worked well in the past, I'm pretty interested to see how it goes in this context.

Probably the most fun thing I did in the last two weeks related to work was attend the Celebrate! Teaching, Research, and Learning awards. I was on the selection committees over the summer for a bunch of the awards that were given out, so I got to come to the ceremony. I was so inspired by the work that people at our institution have done, especially the student award recipients. I saw more than one crying parent in the audience and it just about brought me to tears myself.

The Engineering Student Society was nice enough to invite me out to their Board of Directors meeting. This is a meeting with the members of the ESS and the presidents of all their Departmental Associations. It's kinda like COFA. I was so impressed by how organized it was and how they spoke about tackling real advocacy issues that they faced in their department. I'm hoping to work with BoD to help them tackle advocacy issues and make sure they have all the resources and help they could want.

Anyways, that is probably enough for now, see you Tuesday!

All the best,
Kathryn Orydzuk