



August 18, 2014

To: Council

Re: Council Report

Hey Team,

First of all, I apologize for my report being in the late additions. I believe that it's valuable for councilors to have enough time to read and think about exec reports and formulate challenging questions for us in order to act as the check on executive power that you are. However, this time around, we all attended a conference this past weekend. I really wanted to include all the awesome things I knew I would learn at the conference in this report while it was still fresh in my memory, thus, I am writing on Monday. I would also like to apologize for being absent from council. I really needed to take a few days off before we get into the craziness of Fall Term and governance starts up again.

The conference that we attended from Thursday to Sunday was the Student Union Development Summit, hosted by the Alma Mater Society of UBC. There were sessions all day and networking in the evening, but the most useful thing that I got out of the conference was to meet with all of other VP Academics/University Affairs/Internals/Student Affairs from across the country. One morning, we all sat down together and put together an agenda and discussed the issues that we were having and shared best practices.

One of the things that dominated the conversation was Withdrawals. University of Alberta recently moved its Withdrawal date back so that students would have more time to get substantive feedback before they withdraw, which is great!!!! However, at other universities across the country, what they have implemented is two types of Withdrawals. When applying to certain grad schools or after degrees, a W on your transcript might impact your application, but in other provinces, there are WEs and AWs, which are indicative of a situation, for example a death in the family, that impacted the student's ability to attend classes or succeed academically. Admissions boards don't look at WEs or AWs, it's as if it isn't there at all.

Another thing we talked about was midterm evaluations for professors. A couple of universities have already successfully implemented this. I was really happy to hear how it works and how it was set up originally. I really hope that the methods that are used in other places will be applicable here.

We also talked a lot about university governance and student senators (in most places, what we would call GFC is referred to as Senate). In this case, I was able to share some best practices that we already do here. GFC Student Caucus is an excellent mechanism for coordinating student representatives on GFC and fostering student engagement that isn't practiced everywhere else.

Going forward, the VP Academics from across Canada are planning on keeping in touch and sharing information on the various aspects of university advocacy that we all have in common. I'm really excited to help out and also have a network of people who would be able to help me in return. It's a really great thing.



Other than the conference, I met with Gerald Beasley, the chief librarian who is also in charge of the bookstore to talk textbooks. I discussed the feasibility of a textbook library with him, and he was able to give me quite a bit of insight since when he worked at Concordia he worked on a similar project in conjunction with the Students' Union there. Concordia also has 24 hour library access during exams and a plug-in at every studying pod. I was very encouraged by this meeting and I'm so glad that the chief librarian really seems to have the best interests of students at heart.

Also last week, I was asked to give a speech at the New Professors Orientation. I welcomed them to the university and also took the opportunity to impress upon them the importance of transparent assessment and grading practices and looking into less expensive options for textbooks. Additionally, I met Bob Luth last week, who is a resident expert in fair assessment and grading practices, so I'm looking forward to my regular meetings with him over the year.

The week prior to that was more about student representative meetings than university meetings. COFA Advocacy Working Group met, and I got some great feedback on the online constituency communication project (if anyone can think of a better name that isn't 'petitions' I would love to hear it). I was really happy to hear the general support of Faculty Associations for the project. One change that will be made to the most recent draft is that the students will be able to submit petitions both in French and English.

Nick and I have been meeting steadily with all the Residence Association executives. I've had two in the past couple weeks. These are long meetings to discuss and understand the future of the SU's relationship with RAs and understand what they want and need from us now that they are recognized as SRAs under our Bylaws. We also have been asking them about their advocacy goals and issues and trying to find ways that we can assist, or share useful information with them.

Also in the past couple weeks I've been trying to wrap up a lot of the small side-projects that I have going on so that I can free up more time in the Fall Term. So there was some ARG stuff that I finalized, the GFC SC logo, answered a huge backlog of emails, drafted an internal leadership college strategy, sent off the letter of support for the research partnership, coordinated exec WOW tshirts, a couple Be Booksmart details, and gave questions/concerns from us about some new enrolment policies from the RO.

Anyways, I hope the council meeting is alright. I know that it can be tough to get the hang of how council works and using RRO and everything, I remember being in the same position when I was a councilor. But, my advice to you would be always think about what an average group of students from your faculty would say or think if they were watching you in council. Keeping the best interests of the people you represent at heart is probably the best way to go.

All the best,
Kathryn Orydzuk