



June 3, 2014

To: Council

Re: June 3 Council Report

Hi Councilors,

I hope you're all doing well! It was really nice to get to know a bunch of you better at Govcamp. I know I had a lot of fun and I hope that you did too! I was impressed by the programming that Discover Governance put together, I noticed for the most part that it was very interactive, which I really liked. I was also happy to see that there was a lot of free time given just for game-playing and bonding. I am of the opinion that that kind of thing can be just as valuable as sitting through sessions.

There have been a couple of interesting developments in terms of committees. At GFC Executive last week, the big item of the agenda for undergraduates was eUSRIs. Essentially, we were voting on whether or not to move the professor grading system (you know at the end of each term when you fill in the sheet with the bubbles and then write comments on the back) online. There are a lot of benefits to doing it online, for example, it lightens the administrative load substantially, class time isn't taken up, in trials it was shown that students were more likely to give better quality written answers, and also less useless answers (for example: "I didn't like this professor because I thought they wore ugly clothes"). However, other institutions that have implemented eUSRIs have had some issues with dropping participation rates. Basically, less students complete the online surveys because they aren't allotted a specific time to do it. In one case, the university had to go back to paper because the response rate became too low. When I inquired as to the response rate of the trials that were done over the past year at U of A, I found out that, while there was a decrease in participation of ~15%, the mean score for professors and courses did not change, meaning that the data obtained was basically the same for both on paper and online evaluations, even though less students responded for one of them. I'm still concerned about the response rate dropping to a level that is way too low, though. Things might be different when it jumps from a single faculty to the whole university. In committee, I made sure that a provision was made for the eUSRIs to be reviewed in one year's time at CLE. At that point, participation rates will be scrutinized again and there are a few things that could happen at that point. If everything went fine and the participation rate is still high, it would be determined how regularly the system could be reviewed (given the resources available) from that point onward. We could also decide that the participation is too low or the answers being given are way too skewed and scrap the system and go back to paper. There's also the option that, like other universities, we could decide to incorporate incentives to raise participation, but I wouldn't suggest this route because it could be too problematic.

This move to online was just one aspect of USRIs. There are a ton of awesome possibilities for eUSRIs. For example, this move online makes it way easier to do midterm evaluations. Midterm evaluations improve teaching quality for the students actually still in a class because the professor gets feedback on the course they are still teaching, rather than getting information after the fact. Another thing that could be done with eUSRIs is an evaluation of the questions asked to see if they



could be worded better, or more relevant in general. I'll be looking into making these improvements to the system.

I also attended Facilities and Development Committee (FDC), which is a committee that the VP Academic has an ex officio seat on, but normally delegates to the VP Operations and Finance. Our VPOF, the mystical Cory Hodgson, was away on a fantastic Quebec adventure during the time FDC met, so even though Cory will be my delegate on FDC, I was forced to attend this meeting that I actually have a seat on. The hottest item at this meeting was the approval of some changes to the Saskatchewan Drive Residence, formerly known as the Peter Lougheed Leadership College. Little known fact: it's shaped like a backwards Alberta, but that wasn't intentional. The new additions include a communal space and a games room and a fitness room. I asked whether this would drive the rent price up (thus creating a financial barrier to the average students), I was told that it would a little bit, but that it was not substantial. I asked whether students other than those in the residence would have access to the community areas and facilities. The response was that students enrolled in aspects of the leadership program could use the facilities, but would not be allowed into the areas with sleeping quarters.

Also of interest at FDC was the consolidation of all international student services into one place in Telus Centre. Right now, services are scattered across campus and the city, and this initiative would bring them all together in one place. Furthermore, Telus is a nicer and more visible venue than the current HUB location of ISS. There is also the prospect for a physical office for the ISA. I chaired my first meeting of GFC Student Caucus on Monday, I thought it went pretty well, and although I thank those that attended, I wished that attendance had been better. We are providing dinner for Student Caucus, so that's one incentive, but I clearly need to do more. There's also the considerations that it is summer and people are out of Edmonton, and that midterms for summer classes were this week. Also, we have 16(?) vacant seats for GFC currently, so there aren't as many people as there should be to begin with. My hope is that the current GFC councilors and student councilors will help me out in encouraging people from their faculties to run in the by-election. Another thing I have considered is meeting with GFC councilors one-on-one to discuss what would make student caucus more attractive to them. It could be a matter of timing, or it could be a matter of usefulness, or it could be something else, we shall see.

Until next time,
Kathryn

All the best,
Kathryn Orydzuk