

SU VPA Report: June 14 Meeting
By: Emerson Csorba
To: Student Council

Hi councillors,

The last few weeks have been hectic as VPA, and there is much to report. In this report, I will discuss some changes being made to the Faculty of Education admissions process, a huge opportunity for the Students' Union and university through graduate attributes (if you read anything in this report, make it the heading below), developments for the undergraduate research symposium, show how faculty associations are becoming increasingly involved in Orientation, provide a brief report on sustainability in academics, and update you on the festival of teaching, assessment and grading, my policy committee report and social media work.

GRADUATE ATTRIBUTES

If you are going to read anything in my report, please read this section. On June 3 2011, the university's first CLE subcommittee on attributes and competencies meeting took place, which I attended along with some administrators, faculty and the Graduate Student Association (GSA) VPA. As I have noted on numerous occasions, graduate attributes is soon to become one of the university's largest projects, comparable to the current assessment and grading project.

In this first meeting, I was named a co-chair of the committee, along with the GSA VPA. This is a significant development for the Students' Union, for a few reasons. First, very few students are ever named chair of a university committee. The last time this occurred was when PotSU Janelle Morin served as chair of the Student Resource Task Force. Moreover, this development is significant, because the university is taking a student-focused approach to graduate attributes. Considering how graduate attributes ultimately affect students, this approach is commendable.

Now that I am co-chair of this committee, my year as VPA will certainly change. The consultation regarding graduate attributes will consume a lot of my time, but my goals are still the same for the upcoming year. If you have any questions about this, please ask during question period.

FACULTY OF EDUCATION FIRST-YEAR ADMISSION

Prior to a recent GFC ASC SOS meeting, I learned that the agenda included a discussion item on admission changes to the Faculty of Education. Simply put, the faculty is proposing to allow first-year students gain admission, rather than only utilize the 1+3 system. With the proposed change, the 1+3 system remains in place, though high school students can now enter the Faculty of Education.

During the lead-up to this ASC SOS meeting, I met with Dr. Clive Hickson, an Associate Dean within the Faculty of Education, and sent e-mails to numerous current and former Education students and councillors. Following the meeting, I talked with the Dr. Fern Snart, the Dean of the Faculty of Education, and am currently finding a meeting time with the ESA.

Based on my consultation with different stakeholders in this issue, I believe that the change is good for the faculty, and am impressed by the level of consultation that has taken place within the faculty. By allowing first-years to enter the faculty, the administrative duties of the faculty's academic advisors lessens, which allows more time for academic support. Moreover, first-year students will now take foundational teaching courses, which will have Education students think like teachers in year one. Additionally, this change allows the Faculty of Education to participate in the annual Orientation, which may boost spirit within the faculty.

Overall, I feel that this change is auspicious for students within the Faculty of Education, for the reasons listed above. Please do not hesitate to pose questions in Council in response to this report.

UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH

I met once again regarding the upcoming undergraduate research symposium, which is slated for November 17 and 18. At this point, I have drafted a letter to potential donors, and am preparing a package to be sent off to different stakeholders on campus. Moreover, in order to determine the theme, keynote speaker, etc., I will be creating a student committee to help organize the event. I am currently drafting a terms of reference for this committee, and it should be finalized within the next week. Lastly, marketing will be an important aspect of the symposium, and I hope that the SU Marketing Department can provide a design for the event. The marketing campaign for the symposium will begin in September.

For councillors, if you are interested in serving on the student undergraduate research committee, please tell me as soon as possible. Additionally, if you have any friends that are very interested or involved in undergraduate research, please inform them of this opportunity. I am looking to fill the membership within the next week or so, which means that there is a limited opportunity to serve on the committee. One of my goals, however, is to involve as many non-councillors as possible, so that the SU branches out to students that are not as engaged in student government.

Finally, there is a chance that an undergraduate research fair will take place during the days of Orientation, on September 6 and 7. This fair would be endorsed by the Students' Union, and occur next to the annual clubs fair. At the moment, a number of individuals across campus, from Student Group Services, the Centre for Student Development, the Undergraduate Research Initiative and CaPS, are working out the logistics of this event. The fair would coincide with the opening of the Undergraduate Research Initiative on

campus, and educate incoming high school students about undergraduate research opportunities on campus as soon as the year begins.

ASSESSMENT AND GRADING

In my last report, I briefly discussed the assessment and grading developments at the university. On June 6, I once again spoke in favour of the assessment policy and grading procedure at the General Faculties Council Executive meeting. The small edits proposed regarding the policy and procedure are auspicious for students, in my eyes. I look forward to continuing to work with Dr. Luth and Mr. Dustin Chelen (my delegate on the assessment and grading subcommittee) in the near future.

FACULTY ASSOCIATIONS IN ORIENTATION 2011

At the inaugural Council of Faculty Associations meeting of the year (back at CoFA retreat, in April), the ISSS and CBAS moved to have the VPA consult with the Centre for Student Development (CSD) to see whether FAs can have additional time to engage with incoming high school students. This motion was carried, and over the last months, I have worked with Mr. Tim Ira, the Assistant Manager of the CSD, to hash out a plan for additional time for FAs. Thanks to Mr. Ira's superlative work, FAs could have anywhere between 50 and 80 minutes to present to incoming high school and transfer students during Orientation, on September 6. This provides a good opportunity to engage first-year students with their FAs, as soon as they step on campus. I am currently hearing back from FAs regarding their availability on September 6 and willingness to participate in the event, and so far, the response has been overwhelmingly positive.

SOCIAL MEDIA

As many of you know, I have been writing blog entries – since the executive retreat in early May – about my experiences and thoughts as VPA. Although I have six of them in total waiting to be posted online, the SU website's executive blog is still not working. I hope that this can be fixed as soon as possible, because I think that the blog serves as an effective means to reach out to students. Of course, it will not reach too many students, but it is nevertheless important... especially during the summer months where incoming students tend to peruse the SU website.

In addition to blog entries, I am regularly posting on Twitter, usually twice per day.

SUSTAINABILITY

Over the last few weeks, I have not worked extensively on sustainability-related projects. However, I met on June 8 with Ian Moore, the Director of ECOS, to discuss the upcoming year, setting out some goals for the next weeks and months. In addition to the double-sided exams policy, there is also the prospect of attending the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education conference in early October. I will

also be putting in considerable effort to the Office of Sustainability Academic Advisory Committee that meets throughout the next year.

FESTIVAL OF TEACHING

In March 2012, the annual Festival of Teaching will take place. The Festival of Teaching steering committee will be meeting regularly from now until the March event, in order to plan and organize it. In the past, the student engagement for the event has been decent, though not spectacular. Over the next year, I plan to be involved in the planning of the project, along with the two students on the steering committee. Additionally, I view the festival as an outstanding opportunity to actively involve student groups in teaching-related discussions and activities taking place on campus. If you have any questions, or would like to be involved with the festival, please contact me at your convenience.

POLICY COMMITTEE

At the recent June 6 policy committee meeting, I presented my policy report to those in attendance. In this report, I used the SU political policies that are delegated to me as headings, and briefly described the work that I have done thus far. The three main policies that I have implemented are the ones on international students, quality of instruction and research. At the next meeting, I hope to lead a discussion and possibly renew the research policy. If you would like to view my policy committee report, please contact the Interim Chair of the committee, Councillor Fehr.

CONCLUSION

As you can see, this has been quite the extensive report. Please note that I will be away at the STHLE conference from June 14-19, though I will try to Skype in for this Council meeting. Again, note that I am the co-chair of the CLE subcommittee on attributes and competencies. This represents a significant opportunity for the SU and councillors. If any questions arise about anything in (or perhaps not in) the report, please ask them!