

December 1st, 2015

To: Council

Re: VPA Report 14

Dear Council,

This will be the last meeting for our semester, and it's been a busy one. I'm sure we're all looking forward to the conclusion of classes and are getting ready to buckle down for finals. This is our last Council meeting for the semester, but I'll be in town if you ever want to catch up over the break!

Here is a report on my duties to date:

1. University Institutional Strategic Plan

I've completed the draft of the SU submission to the University's Institutional Strategic Plan with the assistance of Council, the Executives, Faculty Associations and our Research and Political Affairs Department. Thank you all for your help throughout this process!

The President and Provost have set up a committee to guide and advise on the creation of the final document, which will be a very tough job to complete. At the discussions I've been at so far (the Campus Forum on Empowering the Whole People and the Joint Institutional Retreat of GFC, the Board of Governors, Senate and Alumni Council), there mainly has been more questions raised than answered. It'll be tough to compose all of the thoughts and ideas being proposed, some of them in conflict, into a final planning document.

The Provost will also be attending our upcoming Council meeting to speak to the Institutional Plan and solicit feedback from Council on what values and ideas should be included in it.

2. Teaching Tenure Stream, Teaching Quality, Textbook Costs

I met with the Association of Academic Staff: University of Alberta (AASUA)'s Teaching and Learning committee, and was surprised at how receptive they were in introducing a teaching tenure stream on campus. They felt that the Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry effectively had created one with professors who focus solely on clinical practice and/or instruction, meaning the rigidness of linking research and teaching has arguably already been broken without any dire consequences on quality of instruction.

CLE will be meeting tomorrow, and I hope that teaching tenure is selected as a focus for the committee, at least for the next six months. Following CLE, I suspect the topic of teaching tenure would go straight to GFC, chaired by President Turpin.

For expanding the Festival of Teaching, progress is moving slowly but surely. I've met with many of the marketing and communications leads within Faculties, and it looks like I'll be partnering with a few Faculties for this inaugural year based on who has the resources to support the initiative; members were

quite supportive and enthusiastic about it, though there was wide variance in how much of their roles included event execution in addition to updating social and other media.

Finally, libraries hosted a meeting around open educational resources and increasing their implementation on our campus. Essentially, the envelope for OER funding the previous government offered is expiring this academic year. The remainder of this funding will be allocated towards raising awareness of OERs on our campus, as well as developing them for courses with consistent high enrolment across all Alberta PSIs. Raising awareness will really kick off on the week of March 8th, when Open Educational Resources Week starts, which I'm looking forward to. I expect programming including faculty and students discussing barriers and benefits in moving from traditional textbooks over to open education resources.

3. University Standing Committees

The Provost's Academic Advisory Council on Sustainability, Chancellor Search Committee and finally a committee proposing a leadership certificate between Arts and Science met recently. PAACS focused mainly on how sustainability doesn't always equate with the practices of research, and also touched on the moral and ethical consequences of engaging in particular research questions within disciplines. The Chancellor Search committee was a preliminary one looking at essential and valued attributes for a University Chancellor, and for the next meeting the committee will hear from President Turpin for additional insight into the role.

The leadership certificate in Arts and Science is coming along well, though I don't believe it'll be ready for September 2016 based on the trouble in identifying learning outcomes for the final practicum based course of the certificate. Depending on how it pans out, it could make serving on Students' Council or a Faculty Association (or an intensive student group project) where significant growth and leadership is demonstrated eligible for course credit. The role would need to meet certain criteria and involve some form of a mentorship aspect, but it's a very exciting potential change!

4. General Faculties Council: APC, ASC, FDC, Student Caucus, GFC

Lots of GFC activity over the past few weeks:

I proxied for President Khinda at the Academic Planning Committee, where the CPI increases to tuition were recommended to the Board and an update on our budget was given. We also had a chance to comment on common values for our Institutional Strategic Plan, where I noted accessibility, affordability and quality as values desired by students. The Academic Standards Committee agenda was heavy on graduate programs, and the chair noted our new government seemed to have a particular interest in learning outcomes for new programs introduced. Facilities Development Committee continues to examine new capital projects on campus, particularly the Research and Collections Resource Facility on South campus.

GFC Student Caucus went well, though it was really a preparatory meeting for the Joint Retreat on the Institutional Plan. We came up with a lot of particular suggestions for how to improve our experience and time on campus. Common items that were valued were involvement with student groups and



supportive, compassionate instructors, while particular barriers were around incorporating experiential learning or capstone projects into extended degrees.

The agenda for GFC was very light, with only a few committee terms of reference amendments and presentations from the SU and GSA on our strategic work plans. Surprisingly, the motion to amend ToRs were tabled to the next meeting, as GFC felt the governance changes needed to be reviewed within the context of the most recent report on Governance compiled during President Samarasekera's term, but wasn't officially released until Dr. Turpin took office. The undergraduates at GFC also asked a number of great questions as well, from the changes in Mechanical Engineering that were announced over the summer to the timing of GFC, which often conflicts with classes and labs for students.

5. COFA: OASIS, AUFSJ, COCA, Senior Board

I met with the VP Finance of OASIS to discuss some key items that need to be included in the upcoming OASIS budget. Aside from that, it's been quiet from my end but not for FAs: Business and Physical Education and Recreation had Annual General Meetings over the past week. The SU Executives had dinner with Association des Universitaires de la Faculté Saint-Jean, the Campus Association for CSJ.

The first Council of Campus Associations meeting this year is taking place at Campus Saint Jean in between the deadline for Council reports and Council, so I'll have an oral report on that meeting. Aside from that, COFA Senior Board is meeting this coming Friday. In addition to presenting to Council, the Provost will speak with Senior Board about the Institutional Plan. I'm really glad to see the Provost engage with the undergraduate community like this.

6. Academic Relations Group

ARG met last week, where we made some ground on coming up with sound definitions for what accessibility, affordability and quality means to students. It was really surprising and telling to hear that one of the international students on ARG selected the U of A over other universities like U of T on the basis of tuition costs, but was also the only member of ARG who knew how well his Department ranked in undergraduate education. The sense I got was the student was looking for not necessarily the very best institution, but a well-respected one and there wasn't much of a perceived difference between being the second or the fifth ranked institution in the nation.

7. Miscellany

VP Bondarchuk, President Khinda and I headed over to Augustana campus in Camrose two weeks ago to catch a great set of performances at Augustana's Got Talent. I also participated in a study on physical library space usage by students, and attended the SU Awards Night with VPs Bondarchuk and Kwan, giving out awards to some of our talented peers on campus (including our own Councilor Duan)!

Finally, the SU Executives got dinner with a former University President Myer Horowitz, whom our own theatre is named after. He had a lot of stories to share from his time on campus, particularly as he worked closely with the Students' Union back then on a smaller campus. A few of us also went to the Mr. Pharmacy male beauty pageant hosted annually by the Alberta Pharmacy Students' Association, and I gave one of the lessons at the annual Festival of Lessons and Carols with our campus Mixed Chorus.



Thanks so much for your time, and looking forward to the next report (in about a month! So long folks!).

All the best,
Fahim Rahman
(Electronically submitted)