

January 19th, 2016

To: Council

Re: VPA Report 16

---

Dear Council,

The semester is starting to pick up again, and it's been bittersweet knowing these are the final weeks that we'll have in our roles. I'm excited to see what bills and policies are drafted to close out our year.

Here is a report on my duties to date:

#### 1. University Institutional Strategic Plan (ISP)

The committee members of the ISP advisory committee split into subgroups to organize feedback on the following topics: UAlberta Narrative, Excellence, Inclusive Campus Culture, Teaching and Learning, Responding to TRC, Campus Sustainability, International, Faculty Renewal, Interdisciplinary Collaboration and Community Engagement.

At our most recent meeting, we presented our findings on each of the topics, and found that the many themes emerging from each topic linked with each other. In particular, I believe the focus moving forward for our University is to be involved with our community locally on issues that matter globally.

I also had interviews with the [Gateway](#), [Metro](#) and Wanderer (TBA) about our SU submission to the Institutional Strategic Plan.

#### 2. Textbook Costs: Open Educational Resources Week

Open Educational Resources Week is also taking place March 7 – 11, and is geared to raise awareness around what open educational resources entail and the benefits they carry. I'll be helping promote the events of this week, and also will provide a student perspective on OERs at their one of their panel events.

#### 3. University Standing Committees

The Festival of Teaching Steering Committee was the only one standing committee that met this month so far, and the focus of the meeting was to finalize the structure of the festival and finalize the list of speakers we'll reach out to for the festival. Among those shortlisted included Alex Usher. We also discussed how to include Campus Saint Jean and Augustana with our activities, and will reach out to the Associate Deans at those campuses to best connect them with the festival.

#### 4. General Faculties Council: Exec

GFC Exec met last Monday, and approved a few new course designators within PhysEd and Rec and Campus Saint Jean. We also received an annual report from the Office of Safe Disclosure and Human



Rights and the Helping Individuals at Risk (HIAR) program, the latter of which is commonly connected with mental health referrals for anyone at risk for self-harm or harm to others.

HIAR noted that international students tended to be overrepresented (making up 28% of all referrals), and some reasons for that may be because the stigma around mental health and differences in how cultures treat mental health; they are preparing to increase awareness in the international student community about what resources are available.

HIAR is also looking at becoming an early alert system including tracking student academic success, which is connected to mental health, and is looking at becoming a quick case manager, but is sorting out how that fits in with member confidentiality. Particularly, HIAR has the capacity to direct anyone to a particular service, but cannot follow up with the service to see if a particular student has used it recently.

#### 5. COFA: BSA, ESS, ISSS, MSA, OASIS

The BSA is getting ready for their elections cycle which starts next month, and is also ensuring that their FAMF referendum can be run at the same time as their executive elections. The ESS is in a similar boat too, though their elections take place in mid-March concurrently with SU Council elections.

The Interdepartmental Science Students' Society has some neat plans for Science Week that's occurring next week, and the Medical Students' Association recently won a bid to host the Canadian federal medical student association Annual General Meeting in Alberta for the first time ever. Finally, OASIS has begun administering grants to students participating in conferences out of town, so Departmental Association funding grants should follow shortly.

#### 6. Transition

A fair amount of my time has been spent recapping the past eight months' worth of progress on issues common to the Academic portfolio, in preparation for transition once elections conclude. I am hopeful my job shadow dates will be finalized by the time of our meeting; **Thursday, February 4<sup>th</sup>** is confirmed as one job shadow day, and potentially **Monday, January 25<sup>th</sup>** will be a second job shadow day.

#### 7. Miscellany

I have been involved in a large number of internal SU meetings over the past two weeks as well, and I'm grateful for the opportunity to judge some of the dances performed at Antifreeze earlier this month – some of the performances were amazing. I also attended CAC and was glad that a few of the Governance Review Task Force suggestions (though not all) popped up in the changes to standing orders that were approved. Lastly, the Academic Relations Group met and covered the Graduate Attributes Assessment Tracker and how receiving credit for participation in Governance could work.

Thanks so much for your time, and looking forward to the next report.

Fahim Rahman  
(Electronically submitted)