

June 15th, 2015

To: Council

Re: VPA Report

Dear Council,

I'll be in Vancouver for the Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (STLHE) conference, and I'm really looking forward to some of the sessions around teaching and learning, grading and assessment, and learning outcomes. I'll be attending with our University Governance and Advocacy Advisor, as well as a few other instructors here at the University of Alberta.

Here is a report on my duties to date:

1. Be BookSmart

I took some time over the past two weeks to run our content for the Be BookSmart campaign by the University Libraries and SUBprint. They had a few edits to help tighten up language, and are also reviewing how they can market the services they provide for students as well. Both groups were really into seeing students pay less for their academic materials, which was excellent.

I'll be circulating a letter to all instructors before the end of the month encouraging them to consider the following strategies:

1. Allow the use of older editions of the textbook for your class.
2. Design a copyright regulation compliant coursepack customized to your curriculum, which are often cheaper than textbooks. [You can order a Coursepack here.](#)
3. Assign journal articles accessible through the Libraries, rather than a textbook. [Submit your class reading list](#) for persistent links to available e-resources that you can share with your students, at no additional cost.
4. Link students with less expensive alternate materials, where possible, on your [course website](#) and syllabus.
5. Order textbooks 6-8 weeks before classes start as late orders have rush shipping and additional handling fees that are passed directly to your students.
6. Encourage your students to visit the Libraries to borrow your course textbook. If the Libraries don't currently own your course textbook, [submit a request](#) that it be purchased and put on reserve for your course.

I'm circulating it to instructors at the end of month so that it reaches them over 8 weeks before textbooks and other materials need to be in the Bookstore's shelves, giving instructors time to change strategies if needed. We'll continue to appreciate those instructors who have their own strategies for lowering the burden through our [Be BookSmart Award and teaching honor roll!](#)

2. University Standing Committees



No University standing committees met over the past two weeks.

3. General Faculties Council

There were three meetings of GFC standing committees last week: the Academic Standards Committee Subcommittee on Standards, Replenishment Committee and Academic Planning Committee.

At ASC SOS, a certificate in biomedical research for Science students in FoMD programs like neuroscience or biochemistry was discussed, alongside modifications to the Dental Hygiene program to replace our diploma program to a degree program. This will alleviate the burden the program places on students in their second and third years as dental hygiene students. Three certificates were also presented from Education for early childhood, adolescent literacy and digital learning. Finally, the Faculty of Extension proposed changes to their bridging program for students without a strong background in English. I'm currently trying to figure out if the SU can play a role in this issue outside of advocacy.

RC was a simple meeting to appoint members onto GFC Executive Committee and GFC Nominating Committee. Refilling the undergraduate seat went really smoothly thanks to applications from GFC Student Caucus!

I attended APC as a proxy for President Khinda, which was exciting as I've rarely been in a meeting with so much representation from the different senior administrative offices. Here a motion to rescind the Law FMF by the Registrar's Office passed unanimously, and will continue forward to the Board. New M. Sc programs in Audiology and Urban and Regional planning were presented and approved, alongside the graduate student professional development plan.

4. COFA

My most recent conversations with Faculty Associations occurred with the Business Students' Association, the Medical Students' Association and the Interdepartmental Science Students' Society. Oddly enough, all of those Faculty Associations alongside the Augustana Students' Association are undergoing internal reviews of how they operate, akin to the SU's Governance Review Task Force.

5. Council

Attended CAC last week and enjoyed the discussion around Council jackets and where to spend our money as a group. Council engagement and connecting with constituents seemed to be the primary focuses, so I'm looking forward to what gets proposed as a plan of action on these tasks!

At our next Policy meeting, I'll be motioning to approve the first principles for a new Experiential Learning policy, which I'll then bring to Council for a motion and discussion.

6. Student Group Policies

In light of the cancellation of Geer Week for 2016, VP Kwan and I will likely be meeting with the University to develop a clearer policy around student group policies come Fall.



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

All the best,

Fahim Rahman

(Electronically submitted)