



August 11th, 2015

To: Council

Re: VPA Report 7

Dear Council,

I can't believe it's already August, and we're all over 25% done our terms so far. I certainly would benefit from an extended summer to continue to set up plans for a what's panning out to be a big year between a new government, board chair, University President and Provost. Planning for an SU submission to the University's Academic Plan has been exciting, as well as supporting Faculty Associations in their endeavors for the year - it seems like we're starting to hit a busy peak!

Here is a report on my duties to date:

1. SU Submission to the University's Academic Plan

I've mainly been working with our University Governance and Advocacy Advisor on this front, doing research on what the goals from the SU's end for students have been over the past few years, as well as the content of the previous Academic Plan submissions from the SU. My next steps on this will be prioritizing our asks into themes as well as along importance to narrow the list down slightly, before bringing it to Exec for feedback on what we have ready so far.

2. Open Educational Resources & Be Booksmart

For Be Booksmart, one of the professors in Biological Science was kind enough to follow up from the letter I sent to all instructors encouraging them to look at alternative delivery of course materials. Through a collaboration between two instructors, a graduate student, an undergraduate student and funding from the Centre for Teaching and Learning, the professor was able to convert an entire course's textbook, regularly priced at \$140, into an open educational resource (OER), or in layman's terms, a PDF available for public distribution. The OER was designed for students taking the course, and each chapter in the textbook corresponds to an individual lecture the instructors would give to the class each day.

It was amazing to hear how the pieces worked together for the two instructors developing this OER, which is the first one that I've heard of being used on our campus. I'm hopeful that more instructors on campus will considering creating new OERs or revising current OERs in order deliver both more customized content to students, making lectures easier to digest for students and deliver for instructors, as well as being highly more affordable for students. There's definitely a lot of work that needs to go into creating an OER, but once in place they carry a lot of pros for students and instructors.

On a quieter note, Be Booksmart ads have gone live on SUTV! Posters will go up across campus during the last week of August.

3. University Standing Committees



No University standing committees met over the past ~~two four six eight~~ ten weeks. I'll make up for the low committee time this summer by the end of the year, I promise.

4. General Faculties Council

GFC Facilities Development Committee met two weeks ago, and the discussion was centered around the Library's new space being developed close to the Saville Centre for storage and access to academic materials. There will be minor student space in this area, as well as sections for researchers to use materials for reading, which is quite exciting. The building is still in the planning stage, so it won't be ready for a while, but I've been pretty content with the consultative route this is currently taking.

5. Council of Faculty Associations (Senior Board, Science, Member Services Working Group)

COFA Senior Board went really well two weeks ago, with FAs receiving an update around Orientation plans for this year's Week of Welcome, as well the Healthy Campus Unit's Unwind Your Mind program. Many FAs were pretty receptive towards either integrating their programming into what has been outlined already by Unwind Your Mind, or applying for a grant with UYM to run currently offered services within their spaces for students. I'm really glad to see COFA engagement come in a form that supports student mental health, and am going to see if there's any other goals for the entire campus that we can work together on.

Last week I also gave a few presentations to the Interdepartmental Science Students' Society around Robert's Rules of Order, effective chairing practices, the achievements and successes an FA can grow from, as well as the general direction FAs tend to head in. It was really nice to visit the team at ISSS and see how their year is coming along, not just for the FA Executives I usually speak with, but also with their Councillors who play an important role for the organization.

Finally, we've had to reschedule our COFA MSWG meeting for next week as not enough FAs were able to attend a meeting this week. Falls in line with the sentiments of FA leaders either having workloads build up or time scheduled for vacation around now that I've gathered from members of FAs.

6. Academic Relations Group

While I don't have a full roster for the Academic Relations Group at the moment, we had our introductory group meeting after I interviewed and accepted the candidates who applied to serve. We covered our expectations for the group, and having a diverse set of members for ARG was a priority, both with respect to Faculty and student status.

Some topics ARG wanted to address this year included quality instruction, connecting Faculty Associations with their constituents, discussing the overlap between academics, student life and residences, representation for international students, and transparency in grading and assessment for students. The topics we will cover this year will depend on who I'm able to get from the University's end to solicit feedback on one of these topics, as well as what other issues arise throughout the year based on how the term goes. I'm really looking forward to working with ARG this year to making progress on a select few of these issues.



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

All the best,
Fahim Rahman

(Electronically submitted)