



September 15th, 2015

To: Council

Re: VPA Report 9

Dear Council,

Happy September and welcome to our new Council chambers! It's been exciting to get back into a regular class while still working for the union. My past few weeks have mainly been focused around the Arts Restructure alongside writing the Academic Plan and connecting with other Faculty Associations. GFC and other committees are starting to pick up their workloads as well, which is exciting given the many changes in university administration we've seen this year.

Here is a report on my duties to date:

1. Academic Materials

Be Book Smart gained some media traction as students returned to campus this semester, and I'm hopeful we reached out to many students looking at purchasing their course materials, some of them for the first time as new members of our campus. I was happy with the posterage that had been done across campus, though I definitely should have enlisted a bit more help in covering campus!

The Faculty of Science also released a new mobile app for Dino 101, which provides all of the academic materials into an easy to digest format at an affordable level. This really also gained a fair amount of media attention, and the messaging fit in very well with Be Book Smart. I was excited to see an initiative like this be developed, and I'm certain it's part of a broader movement towards affordable and accessible academic materials.

2. Week of Welcome

Week of Welcome was a lot of fun this year, and pretty intense from trying to see all the different faculties on campus to watching Turpin and Khinda give incredible speeches at the Presidents' Address. It was really nice to see parts of Orientation for our smaller faculties such as Business, Nursing and Pharmacy as well.

The Executives also attended a game between the UAlberta Bears and Augustana Vikings, hosted by the Augustana Students' Association and PhysEd and Rec's Council of Students (PERCS). I was really glad to see our Bears pull out a 4 – 1 win this year, though the game was incredibly close and practically tied for the first 50 minutes of the game before a third period outburst by the bears. I also learned some neat chants from our friends in PERCS!

Lastly, we wrapped up our week with a Block Party to celebrate the newly completed renos in SUB. It was amazing to see all the SU alumni that were a part of the project, all the way from VPOF-emeritus Zac Fenitman who held the position before I had even started my term here! We also buried our time capsule, where it will stay for 50 years. If you have any questions about its content let me know!

3. University Standing Committees

I attended an Advisory Committee meeting of the Center for Teaching and Learning, and received an update from Facilities on new initiatives around teaching and instruction in their units. I also mentioned some of my goals as VPA at the committee, which the Chair took note of. In particular, I'll be discussing academic materials like OERs and a teaching tenure stream that works best for the U of A with the Director of CTL before our next meeting.

I also brought up some of the academic services Faculty Associations provide and some of the Associate Deans in attendance were impressed with them.

4. General Faculties Council: CLE, SOS, Exec

I've attended GFC meetings of the Committee on the Learning Environment (CLE), Academic Standards Committee Subcommittee on Standards (SOS), and GFC Exec. Exec will take place a day before Council so I'll provide an oral report.

CLE was an introductory meeting where we got an update from CTL on their activities over the summer, and we also started drafting a workplan on our priorities for the year. I mentioned a teaching tenure stream as well as OERs, but it wasn't the only interesting additions made to the list of potential focuses.

SOS was a routine meeting, where hefty changes to the Pharmacy program were discussed, alongside the new (improved return) system the RO is using for admissions now. We had also had a discussion around standards for international students and ensuring they were placed in positions to succeed.

GFC will have its first meeting on September 28th, chaired by President Turpin in our new Council Chambers.

5. COFA: Advocacy Working Group, Medicine, AFSA Restructure

COFA Advocacy Working Group met prior to our last Council meeting, but I wanted to give you a written update: we've identified a few topics of discussion including how to be an effective student representative and academic services that an FA can provide for students. I suspect academic services and programs will be more of a focus this year for Faculties, seeing how we're not looking at drastic cuts from our provincial government this year.

Our team met up with the executives from the Medical Students' Association, and had a great time getting to know each other's portfolios. It sounded like their team had a lot of successes with Orientation this year, and had really raised the level for their FAs involvement in strengthening the undergraduate experience in their Faculty. They had some really neat goals coming through the pipeline like a new certificate for undergraduates and a federal conference for medical students to be hosted in Alberta!

Finally, the AFSA restructure has been going rather well. There was a lot of feedback from students in our second survey, and the comments really helped guide the restructure in our final proposed changes.



We also had our Annual General Meeting last week, and where all of those changes were implemented and an FADRO (FA-CRO equivalent) was appointed. Last steps are helping recruit for and carry out a smooth election and transitioning the new team before we hand over the reins to the new team! AFSA will also be known as the Organization for Arts Students and Interdisciplinary Studies (OASIS) as well moving forward, courtesy of our AGM participants.

6. Academic Plan

A significant amount of my time has also been spent writing an SU Submission to the Academic Plan, as I hopefully have the big themes for it finalized but I want to run it by Council beforehand. Stay tuned for our first presentation within the new Council Chambers.

7. Miscellany

The SU Executive were invited to a friendly dinner with some of the senior members of the Senate as well as the Basecamp Wrap-Up dinner. VP Bondarchuk, President Khinda and I also attended part of the Bridges Orientation for Aboriginal students, and lastly the whole team had a series of "Meet the SU" interviews with the Gateway.

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

All the best,
Fahim Rahman

(Electronically submitted)