



July 8, 2014

To: Students' Council

Re: VPA Council Report

Hi Council,

I hope you all had a great Canada Day/long weekend!

It's been three weeks since I last saw all your beautiful faces so I have a handful of things to report on.

In a meeting of governance committee, we discussed a handful of items pertaining to Student Representative Associations, which are associations as referenced in the SU Bylaw 8000 series. Right now, we have Faculty Associations, Campus Associations, and Residence Associations, but what if there is ever a need for another association to become a student representative association? What if there is a desire from an association to become a student representative association? How are we able to expand the category as necessary for the future? The solution that was agreed upon is actually outlined in Bylaw, but required some clarification. Bylaw 8100 says that all determinations under Bylaw 8100 are to be made by the VP Academic of the Students' Union in conjunction with a handful of other people, which are different depending on the issue at hand. That's why when the VPAs talk about their job they always talk about how student reps in FAs and CAs are their responsibility, and that section of that Bylaw is largely the reason why we say that. Anyways, going forward, the process is going to be that if the situation arises where there is an association that would like to be considered as an SRA, meaning that SU delegates its PSLA-granted representative authority to the association, then the VPA will consider the association and vet them according to the criteria outlined in 8100, if the potential SRA can qualify, the VPA will bring it to council for discussion and ratification.

Also in governance committee, we discussed an issue that seems pretty small, but is actually really important to me. Departmental Associations that have representative capacities have exclusionary membership, for example, only students associated with the department can vote and run for a position on the executive. The restriction is correct because it doesn't make sense for, say, a bunch of Political Science students to hold representative position for Computer Engineering and represent computer engineers to the ECE department. However, one of the rules for student groups that comes from the Dean of Students Office is that groups need to promote inclusivity by not restricting membership. This is blanket across all student groups with the exception of SRAs and fraternities/sororities. In committee, the directors of SGS were there so we had a discussion and really got to the bottom of the issue and found that the issue could be corrected if we provided SGS with a schedule of all DAs that have representative functions, so SGS would automatically know which ones needed to have restrictive membership and could avoid asking each of them to change their constitutions.

I had a meeting that I didn't expect to have with one of the heads of the leadership initiative. It was a long meeting and I went through issues point by point. We will not be getting everything we originally wanted in exactly the way we wanted, but I feel a lot better about the situation anyways. The SU will certainly be more intensely involved in the project going forward.



So far, there has been meetings of Council of Faculty Associations Senior Board and Council of Faculty Associations Finance and Administration Working Group. Member Services Working Group will happen the evening just before this report is due and Advocacy Working Group is happening in August. In fall term, the cycle of COFA meetings will begin again with Senior Board meeting. Everything that has happened so far with COFA is very preliminary since Faculty Association executives are still planning and getting their bearings. So far COFA has done some goal planning for the year, which will result in actions in the working groups. A number of years ago, COFA was only one board and it wasn't incredibly functional for actually making things happen, but a couple years ago, the structure was revised to what we have now, which is a Senior Board that the presidents sit on and the three working groups that the Senior Board delegates work to, and must report back to Senior Board. This structure gives COFA huge capacity for collaboration and initiatives and I have found it to be a very functional structure overall. I'm really excited to see what COFA accomplishes this year, should be good.

A little more information on COFA: Council of Faculty Associations is a body that is advisory to the Students' Union, and is intended to foster communication and collaboration among the Associations and between the Associations and the Students' Union. The Students' Union's role in COFA is more facilitatory than anything else. The VPA impartially chairs committees of COFA, and VPSL coordinates MSWG specifically, and our task is to listen to what Associations need from the SU and communicate between the working groups and Senior Board. The idea behind it all is that we become apprised of what the Associations feel and are doing and the Associations work collaboratively with each other to achieve community building or advocacy or operational goals because (and I know this sounds cheesy, but) they are stronger together. There is value in building off of each others' strengths and learning from each others' weaknesses.

I have made a lot of progress in the last few weeks in terms of the online petition system that I've been working on. I have hammered out internal and process issues and I am currently seeking feedback from people who have demonstrated interest. If you would like to look at the draft document and tell me what you think about it, just shoot me an e-mail sometime in the next week and I'll send it to you (vp.academic@su.ualberta.ca). One big barrier that I have run into is that how it is programmed online is reliant on the information sharing agreement that we have with the Registrar's Office, and I am somewhat unclear on it. I think we need to renegotiate our agreement so that students can log into the petition system with their CCIDs, which is not too much of a problem, but I also want students to be able to log in by FACULTY so that we can do faculty-specific petitions.

Important also to note is the difference between this thing that I am making and the official referenda and plebiscites that we are allowed to use to charge fees under provincial legislation. I think I probably just have to change the name and put a disclaimer in order to avoid confusion.

The Students' Union will now be on the forefront of cutting edge research regarding the use of technology in higher education. We have agreed to partner with a long-time friend of the SU who does research out of the Faculty of Education in order to conduct original research alongside other global partners such as the European Union Students' Union for the next few years. This is an amazing opportunity as it will give us incredible credibility when advocating on issues pertaining to technology in higher education and it sets a new precedent for Students' Unions being partners in conducting research.



Further, it helps us to better understand student's needs for the future so we can plan advocacy efforts accordingly.

All the best,
Kathryn Orydzuk