



December 2, 2014

To: Council

Re: VPA Report

Hi Council,

Hope you are all doing well and not letting exams get you down!

I thought it might be fun this week to shake it up and do a more broad kind of report. It's been seven months already, so overall we've done a lot of stuff. It would be difficult to look back through all reports at this point to see what progress has been made overall, so I thought it would be cool to do a 'Year-To-Date' type of report this time.

Back in the summer months, I made a one-page document that basically outlined what my goals for the year would be. This document was based on my campaign promises, and was used to help make the SU Goals Document, which has five pillars that each of these things fit under. I have three broad groupings that aren't related to the five SU pillars because I did my groupings before we did our collective pillars.

I know that the level of specificity of my goals is uncommon. I can understand wanting to set broader goals before you know exactly what resources will be available, and the trade-off is a greater ability to set concrete milestones. There is also the sense that, if a normative, structural, or systematic change is needed, identifying the issue and identifying what should be changed is the correct method. I believe that structural changes are indeed broad changes that should be identified, but once identified, have solutions that are founded in smaller concrete goals. This is simply a different philosophy that would lead to the same outcome. I think that what a person decides to set as their goals for a campaign is an ideological choice, and there is no right or wrong way to go about goal-setting. There are different ways that will work for different people, and success can be achieved either way, it just takes a different method.

Now for the goals:

Support Student Representatives

- *Create an Online Petition System:* so that students at large can propose changes directly to the SU, and student representatives can understand more precisely what their constituents want.
 - If you remember, I called for feedback on the guiding document a while ago. It took quite a long time to get the consultation done on this piece, there were a lot of perspectives to consider. COFA AWG saw it and approved the ability for students to make faculty specific petitions. The Online Petition System is currently 'under construction', meaning that the tech people are developing it. Estimated completion in February.
- *Raise the Status of Departmental Associations:* so that they can be successful advocates for students in their departments and have access to any resources they need for governance.
 - This is probably the goal with the least progress. I did a survey of what the environment of DAs is currently like as well as what resources they might be interested in. The next step is meeting with the BoD, COSSA, and CODA.

- *Get a Financial Reviewer for the Faculty and Campus Associations:* because obtaining a financial reviewer is the thing that FAs/CAs struggle with the most in terms of completing reporting requirements for the SU.
 - This is a goal that is done in partnership with VP Hodgson. COFA FAWG has seen the proposed idea for what we want to do and has approved it. VP Hodgson is in the middle of meeting with VP Finances of FAs in order to figure out the specifics of the system. We hope to have four organizations test it in the Winter Term and we will roll it out for all FAs/CAs for the Summer. FAs/CAs will not need to hire a financial reviewer anymore.
- ~~*Create a Council of Campus Associations:* in order to institutionalize a line of communication between Campus Associations and the SU as well as facilitate communication between Campus Associations.~~
 - Done! COCA met and approved ToR on October 31 (a memorable day). We will meet again in Winter Term.
- *Support the International Students' Association:* by assisting them in their efforts as a representative body.
 - I have not heard much appetite from the ISA this year to push for recognition as an SRA, but I do need to follow up with them again on this.

Reduce Barriers to Accessing Academic Materials

- ~~*Run the Annual Be Booksmart Awareness Campaign:* so that students and professors are aware of alternatives to purchasing brand new textbooks.~~
 - Be Booksmart is bigger this year than it has ever been with both a Fall and Winter run, a letter out to all professors, support from CTL in creating a new award for professors who save their students money on academic materials, materials out to first years in their orientation packages and thousands of hits on the Be Booksmart website.
- ~~*Create a Textbook Repository:* so that students can borrow textbooks at no cost.~~
 - The Ualberta Library's recent announcement has made the SU doing this redundant. We are instead supporting the Libraries initiative.
- ~~*Revamp the Online Textbook Exchange:* so that students can very easily buy and sell used textbooks to other U of A students.~~
 - Also done! It is currently being 'beautified' but the functionality is completed. You should see an advertising campaign for the UBR around campus soon!

Focus on Fair Grading Practices

- *Grading Standardization at the Department Level:* so that students know in advance how we will be graded on assignments and how our efforts translate into our grades.
 - This is by far the most difficult goal I set for myself. Making rubrics mandatory is quite the task, and I fear it that this goal is longer than a year. My hope, if that is the case, is to set things in motion so that it will complete even if I am not around to see it. Thus far I

have done extensive research, found partnerships in CTL and central, and found purchase in the university governance system.

Bonus (things that came up that I decided to pursue after I was elected. These things came from student complaints, opportunities that came up, and political policy)

- *Mid-Term Professor Evaluations:* Formative feedback for professors that want it half-way through the year. Students will benefit from professors hearing feedback and altering their teaching before the end of the term.
 - The eUSRI system that has now been implemented opens the opportunity for this to be done. It is very specifically outlined in our Quality Instruction policy. I am extremely confident that will be happening either for Winter Term 2015 or Spring Term 2015, I am just waiting to hear back from a couple people.
- *Access Codes:* Eliminating the need for students to purchase extra materials for purposes of assessment and grading.
 - The Provost's office is well aware of our concerns on this issue and we have made progress. More information to come on this one soon.
- ~~*Restructure ALES Faculty Association*~~
 - Done! I definitely did not personally create FAUnA, there was a team of dedicated ALES students that did so. But, as VPA, I am responsible for there being an Association for ever faculty and I facilitated the creation of the FA by creating the structure by which the restructure would happen.

Anyways, thanks for bein' awesome so far. Especially you wondrous folks that read the entirety of my Council Reports. Hope you have a great break!

All the best,
Kathryn Orydzuk