

September 18, 2014

To: Council

Re: September 23 Council Report

Hi Council,

I hope all of you are settling wonderfully into your classes! I know a couple of my fellow VPs are doing office hours now, which I actually think is an amazing idea. I want to do it but I'm never free at a regular time all the time. I could announce a new day and time each week in my report, but I think it might be better if you want to talk to me one on one if you send me an email (vp.academic@su.ualberta.ca) and I will set time aside for you as soon as possible.

I don't normally like to make my Council reports have a negative tone, but I'm afraid this one might. I am frustrated about my goals being somewhat stagnated over the last little while because of everything with the Market Modifier proposals and FAs. Don't get me wrong, I love the FAs and CAs and I would make all the time in the world for them, but I had always hoped it would be more positive. I started this whole governance journey on an FA myself (then called CBAS, now called AFSA), so these organizations have a special place in my heart. Recently, I've been put in a tough place with Faculty Associations because of actions that I feel are out of my hands. Under bylaw, what happens with the FAs falls to me, and the weight of those decisions are not light. What at first seemed procedural has now become very serious as people become invested. I know some of you are invested, the faculties and faculty associations certainly are, and many students and community members at large are. One of the things that's been bothering me the most is the starting of this narrative that 'the SU is unreasonable' or 'the SU won't bend on their positions so why bother talking to them'. It isn't true at all. Also it's really damaging for us from an advocacy perspective because we are reasonable at the table and there is an out for Faculty Associations who are in a particular instance where they would be going against what the students in their faculties wanted if they followed SU policy. Why, you might ask, do Faculty Associations need to have an out from policies that don't fit what their students want? Shouldn't they just be able to do what their students want? A valid question on all accounts. The SU designates its representative authority to SRAs. They are like proxies in a way. As a result of them acting on our behalf, we ask certain things from them. We ask them to let us know who they are each year (exec roster), we ask that they abide by bylaw 8200 (basically financial reports), and we ask that they abide by bylaw 8100 (overarching rules for SRAs). I've been on both sides of these bylaws, and they have always seemed fair to me.

Something else that's been bothering me about all this is this idea that I'm going to sanction an FA or punish them or something. I'm not. I don't have that kind of power and that's not the SU style anyways. When an SRA breaks bylaw (honestly, it's normally something to do with the financial report) we need to do an investigation to see if they are crumbling on the inside. Breaking a bylaw or getting into trouble with the faculty are usually really good indicators that something is really wrong in there. So we look into it. That's the investigation. Probation cannot be thought of in a punitive way. If I'm being honest, probation is probably a bad word to describe what really happens. While an Association is on probation, they just get extra help from the SU to fix the issues that they've been having, whether it be structural or financial. This is a collaborative process meant to help, not to punish. Derecognition is a more serious



thing that can happen, but, I mean, the VPA last year derecognized an FA and it was waywayway less controversial than the investigation this year is. This is baffling to me, but hey, different year, different environment. So before you, as a councilor, question me for not taking harsher action again the FAs, take a look at the tools I've been given to handle this. I don't have a mechanism for punitive action really. I only have procedures that are designed to problem-solve.

I want students in the faculties with proposed tuition increases to have the chance to vote in a plebiscite before the October 15th deadline. The timeline is tight, but our President believes it can happen, so it must be true. Even if they run the plebiscites, there still really isn't time for them to present to Council, since Council meets on Oct 7 (prior to plebiscite) and Oct 21 (after they would have supported on this round). I do not yet have a solution for this issue.

Okay. On to other things I did in the past two weeks. I'll keep it short this time.

On the Wednesday after Council, the team packed up in a van and went to Campus Saint Jean to dole out some BBQ burgers. It was really good fun (as it always is with the CSJ folks).

I met with the VPA from SAMU on Friday for a very productive discussion on Open Educational Resources, which is a very interesting project coming from the province, as well as transfer credits between the two institutions. Also on Friday I did the ALS Ice Bucket Challenge! It was really cold, but it's for a good cause so it was okay.

On Saturday I came in for a morning session with city councilors. We brainstormed various ways that the city could contribute to post secondary education on a number of issues, then they surveyed us on ways to brand Edmonton more effectively.

I went to a handful of committees this week as well (as is the way of the VPA). Some common themes include the Enrolment Management Plan, which is a very interesting proposal from the registrar's office to control enrolment numbers and organize the way students are admitted, and Responsibility Centered Management, which is a change to the funding model of the university that involves every faculty managing their own funding.

See you Tuesday,
Kathryn Orydzuk