

September 15, 2015

To: Students' Council

Re: Report to Students' Council

Hello Council!

I hope you all had a wonderful Week of Welcome, and are settling into your classes for the Fall term. It has been a very, very busy three weeks for me with students coming back to school and projects getting started, so I look forward to a time where I'll be able to catch up on some sleep.

SUB Atrium and Plaza Opening

Thank you to everyone who came out and celebrated the opening of our new atrium and plaza! This renovation had been in the works for many years, and it was exciting to see the support from students, the University, and the greater campus community. This new student space will be available for everyone to socialize and study, and gives a fresh new perspective to the Lower Level and the building itself. I view it as an important renovation, because it was decided and approved by students, and shows the power students have on campus when we work together. The fireworks were also awesome!

New Student Orientation

Being sick during my Orientation four years ago, I was very excited to attend my first Orientation sessions this year, and meet a lot of the new students to the University of Alberta! The SU Services staff who worked on Orientation did a stellar job this year, as they always do, and the night was perfected by a heartwarming and inspirational set of speeches and ceremonies at Presidents' Address, notably the speech from our fearless leader, President Khinda.

Access Fund Changes

As I mentioned in my oral Finance Committee report last meeting, some exciting changes have been approved and are being implemented with regards to the Access Fund, a non-repayable emergency bursary offered by the Students' Union through Student Connect and supported by a dedicated fee from undergraduate students.

- All assessments and disbursements will now be given out to the nearest \$100, rounding up. When applying for the Access Fund and supplementary bursaries, a student enters their financial information – both money they will earn over their study period and expenses they will incur. After they attach the relevant documents as back-ups, the shortfall is the amount they are eligible to receive. The amount they are eligible to receive is then rounded up (for example, if a student had a shortfall of \$612, they would be given \$700 in assistance). This change was proposed and approved because students who apply for financial assistance will often need more than they

apply for, and it is easier on the operational side to budget for an unexpected number of applications using rounded numbers.

- The cost-of-living calculation has now been bumped up to \$1,400. It was \$1,200 previously, and has been for the last seven years. We realize this isn't a complete adjustment based on inflation, but was a step in the right direction keeping the budget in mind. Hopefully it will be further increased in future years as the cost of living continues to rise. This change is significant because students can now be assessed for more assistance based on living expenses.
- Under the current system, a student can be assessed up to \$3,000 in need annually, and \$6,000 of need as a lifetime maximum. As many students use the Access Fund as a supplement to paying for school, we kept the annual value the same. We did, however, vote to increase the lifetime maximum for each student to \$9,000. This covers three years of maximum need, or multiple years of partial need. The number of first-year students who apply for the Access Fund is small, so assuming a full course load, this change will guarantee assistance for a student in the next three years of their education after their first. Over time, we can see how this changes the budget for the bursaries, and increase the annual maximum in the future if necessary.

SIHA Condom Dispenser

The free condom dispenser in SUB, sponsored and paid for by the Students' International Health Association, is now installed on the main floor of the building, just outside the washrooms by the Bookstore. Tell your friends!

Famers' Market

Sustain SU hosted their first Farmers' Market of the year this Thursday, and it was a hit! Come by on September 24 for the next one; get some delicious gluten-free cookies, produce, or hummus, and BYOB (Bring Your Own Bag)!

SUBprint Shift

Over the next month, I hope to do some shifts in each one of the SU's businesses. I have been a long-time customer of them, but have never gotten a chance to see what happens behind the scenes. I think getting some experience working in the businesses will help me better with planning their development and setting goals for the coming year. This week, I got to work at SUBprint for a few hours, and it was hard work! They are the ones who produce all the course packs for classes that get sold at the Bookstore, and do a super job of that while still serving students and their various printing needs! If you're in Mining Engineering, there's a good chance I made your course pack :)

Thanks for reading through, and have a wonderful week!



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