



2011/2012 Report to Council

June 21, 2011

Vice President (Student Life)

Prepared by: Colten Yamagishi, Vice President (Student Life)

To: Students' Council 2011/12

Hello council! Currently I am in Ontario with the VP Operations and Finance, the General Manager, and the President. We are currently touring Student Centres at Universities in the Greater Toronto area. So far we have visited Wilfred Laurier, Waterloo, McMaster and York. Each student association has provided a very different view on their role in serving students. Throughout my report I will include a few things that I have found interesting from our trip thus far.

Before we left to Ontario we dedicated a day to hold an exec retreat where we talked about our goals, how we can work together, and how our year is going so far. The retreat was very constructive and helped me prioritize my goals for the year.

In this reporting period I have only been in the office for about three days but I feel like it has been my most productive two weeks this Summer. The three of us have been grinding through piles of work every night so far on this trip.

Programming

WOW Bonding Night:

Though I have been working a lot this past while I have still been finding time to have quiet a bit of fun. The WOW Facilitator team and I attended a team bonding night with the programming department. Almost all of the facilitators showed up and we were treated to an advanced screening of the movie *The Changeup*. The movie was very good and I had a great time chatting with some of the facilitators that I did not know well before.

International Student Presentation:

I was given the opportunity by University of Alberta International to do a very ad-hoc presentation about the Students' Union to a group of students from China who were here on a 3-week study tour. The students had a number of great questions and were very amazed by our expansive governance structure as well as the large number of services that we provide. They also really liked the *Break the Record* video on our website (they had never seen dodgeball before).

Tour Programming:

Most of the schools that we have visited so far have had very similar events and programs to ours. I am proud to say that many of our events such as Antifreeze and Break the Record far exceed the scope of programs being run at other universities. One interesting event that was described to me was "Dirty Bingo" at York University. I dare not explain it here.

Services

Access Fund:

The VP Operations and Finance and I will be conducting the summer semester round of the Access Fund selection committee this Thursday. A reminder to all GAC members to bring their schedules to the next GAC meeting so that we can schedule the selection committee and appeals committee meetings for the rest of the year. It is extremely important that we do get these meetings set because many students rely on this money.

Campus Food Bank:

This week I volunteered for the Campus Food Bank's Save on Foods Food Drive. I worked with a number of CFB volunteers to bag groceries and encourage customers to purchase food donations for the CFB. I would like to congratulate the CFB staff and the volunteers for doing an amazing job!

SUSTAIN SU: The Student Sustainability Office:

I worked with the Director of SUSTAIN SU and the VP Operations and Finance to finalize the collaboration agreement between SUSTAIN SU and the Office of Sustainability. I believe that the document will provide a strong vision for sustainability related initiatives and the promotion of sustainability on our campus.

Health and Dental Plan:

We had our first Health and Dental Plan Committee Meeting. Callan from Studentcare provided us with a plan overview and orientation and asked for our input regarding the marketing and communications plan for the change of coverage period. The VP Operations and Finance and I recently approved the health plan mail-out that will be sent to all new students.

Student Group Services:

I have been busy giving away lots of money. This week I completed the approval process and grant selection for individuals as well as the student group startup grant.

Tour Services:

One of the most interesting services that I saw was the Off-Campus Dons program at the University of Waterloo. The service is meant to pair new students living off campus with student mentors to help provide an easier transition to university. The program includes many recreational events to allow students to meet new friends and stay connected while living off-campus.

Another very useful point is that every school that we have visited has had a GLBTQ space or service in their Student building. This makes it very clear to me that this is a service that our Students' Union is lacking and that I should make it one of my top priorities.

Lastly, the McMaster Students' Association has recently implemented a Farmers' Market that they operate two days per week. We checked out the operation and think that this could be a great way to bring fresh food options to campus.

Advocacy

Athletics:

I had a meeting with two of the promotions and advertising reps from the University Athletics department. They proposed a collaboration agreement regarding sponsorship and our two organizations working together to promote each others causes. I will be working with the VP Operations and Finance to review and edit the agreement soon.

Microwaves:

I received an e-mail from Ancillary Services letting me know that they now have a planner set in place to verify the new microwave locations across campus that we had chosen earlier in the summer.

Residences:

I met with Dima (Director of Residence Services) and Michael McPhillips (the LHSA President) to discuss the possible creation of a residence governance system in Lister with equal or majority student representation and that would give students voting and decision making power. I think that this would be a great initiative to increase the accountability of Residence Services to answer the requests of residents in Lister.

After Michael left, Dima went into further detail regarding a number of projects that he is working on this year. They all sound very promising and I will fill you in with more information when the projects become official. The projects that are certain to happen include the introduction of a faculty member in HUB to help students' academic needs and the creation of a student space behind the Newton Residence that will include picnic tables, a gazebo, a beach volleyball court, and bicycle racks.

Residence Community Standards:

We finalized the RCS training plan, communications plan, and RCS assessment forms. I was quite impressed with the thoroughness of these documents. The RCS training began last week and was kicked off with an RCS symposium lead by two RCS experts brought in by Residence Services.

International Student Association:

I met with the VP Academic and Councillor Zinyemba to discuss the possible creation of an International Student Association that would represent international students on a governance level and would provide them with resources to advocate to the University for international student needs. York University has a very strong International Student Association that runs separate from, but is supported by the York Federation of Students.

Paw Center:

We had a meeting with the GSA to discuss what we are looking for in the PAW contract and to align our ideas for when we discuss the contract with the University.

Meeting with University Health Center Outreach Co-ordinator:

Rory and I met with Natassha Wilson (the new UHS Outreach Co-ordinator). Natassha explained that her position is new and is still being fine-tuned. This year she will be working on a project called Community Helpers that is being created to help refer students to the proper student services that they need. We spoke about our initiatives for mental and physical health and discussed ways that we could work together.

Tour Advocacy:

We have seen all different types of advocacy efforts on this trip but the main focus always seems to come down to similar topics such as tuition and fees, food service, student space, and academic programs. It was very interesting to visit York, which is a Canadian Federation of Students member rather than a CASA member. Though I did find their lobbying strategies and executive structure very interesting I still believe that CASA is a much better fit for the UASU.

Opportunities for you to get involved:

- Please sign up to volunteer for Week of Welcome at <http://goo.gl/P4vMs>.
- Let me know if you want to help on any of my initiatives!

Summary:

So far this trip has been amazing. Though it is extremely hot outside (+39 degrees!) I have been able to get a ton of great ideas and have had the opportunity to meet a number of very talented student executives and general managers. I hope to learn even more during the last few days of our trip and am very excited for our trip to the University of Western Ontario tomorrow. Hopefully we will have some time this weekend to visit Niagara Falls and take a walk through the Toronto downtown core.

If you have any other questions ask during council, stop by the office, or send me an email at vp.studentlife@su.ualberta.ca.

- Colten Yamagishi
780-299-3076