

February 17th, 2012

To: Students' Council

Re: VPX Report to Council

I am doing my report a little early this week since I will be on a leave of absence until March 9th.

Lobby Training

It's happened! On February 11th the Students' Union hosted a pilot project for Advocacy Training. About 20 students came, on such short notice. I believe it was beneficial to everyone who attended, and I already have some ideas on how to improve it next year if the incoming VP (External) is interested.

A special thanks goes to all the people who participated: Amanda Henry (Student Governance Advisor), Justin Williams (Director of Research and Political Affairs), and Emerson Csorba.

Emerson was interested in creating Lobby Training 2.0 for the incoming exec, council and COFA in April. Maybe we could start doing the tweaks to it then.

Changes to Student Financial Assistance

The Minister of Advanced Education and Technology has announced on Monday February 13th major changes to the Alberta Student Loans Program. Changes to the program include the introduction of a flat-rate contribution of \$1,500 (reduced to zero for single parents), and the elimination of savings, RRSP, part-time earnings or parental contributions in determining loan eligibility.

They will now also stop collecting interest on the loan during the grace period. Moreover Alberta Advanced Education and Technology decided to cut its Remission Program, and instead move the \$69 millions dollars used to fund this program to a completion grant. All students who have student loans will now get a \$2,000 grant upon their graduation.

The SU, and CAUS, have advocated for much of these changes in the past. However, we will continue to push for more grants instead of loans to reduce overall debt-load and encourage post-secondary participation.

CAUS' number one priority remains to be Mandatory Non-Instructional Fees, and we're hoping to see if the Minister will solve the issue before the election. The following link is my letter to the Journal that was published on Sunday 12th: <http://www.edmontonjournal.com/opinion/University+fees+have+real/6140479/story.html>

Cheers,
Farid