

May 30th, 2013

To: Students' Council

Re: Report to Council (for June 4th meeting)

Introduction

Hello Council,

I am very happy to be back home after almost a month out of town for the change over's of our provincial and federal lobby groups. I'm finally getting some much needed time in the office, which has mainly been compromised of responding to emails, attending meetings, sending out requests for lobby meetings and doing some planning and organizing into newly elected roles I've undertaken over the past month. In my report I'll cover my time at the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations' (CASA's) changeover, the meetings I've attended in the past few days, plans for the weeks ahead and a brief overview of my Executive goals.

CASA:

I do not have all that much to say about my time in Ottawa, other than I learned a lot about federal lobbying and that it was a ridiculously busy week. On top of electing a new board and hiring a new National Director (ND), the week was spent educating everyone about the resources available to them and what the year would look like. I am happy to say that we both successfully elected a new board and decided upon a new ND.

There is a good amount of Alberta representation on the new Executive, as delegates from Athabasca, Mount Royal and Calgary all claimed a position. I will be able to release more detail on the hiring of the new CASA ND at a later time. I am also pleased to announce that I have been elected Chair of CASA's National Advocacy Team, which is the Committee that deals with planning and coordinating the organizations lobby efforts. Needless to say this is an honor and is keeping me very busy in the office. CASA's next conference will be Policy and Strategy in Lethbridge at the end of June, and our committee must decide upon recommendations for lobby priorities by then.

Meetings:

I have also spent a lot of my time since returning home in meetings. The first of which was all day on Monday, May the 27th between the Council of Alberta University Students', the Alberta Student Executive Council, the Alberta Graduate Council and the Civil Servants from the government of Alberta and also included presentations to Alberta's Council on Admissions and Transfers and the Deputy Minister.

Meetings with the Civil Servants were incredibly productive, and we spent the morning discussing what good potential changes to the Alberta Student Finance Board would look like. This would become a very wide conversation about student finance in general, which gave us student representatives the opportunity to discuss our lobby priorities.

Presentations to the Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfers also went very well. CAUS's presentation focused on the fact that Alberta already has an incredible transfer system, and that any improvements should be focused on transfers between institutions in the same category and improving school curriculum language. Overall the presentation went very well. We closed off the day by discussing the upcoming quarterly meetings with Civil Servants from Minister Lukazsuk's office, and how things would proceed forward during the upcoming year. While no date has been set for this meeting as of yet, a draft agenda has been made presented.

I also had the opportunity to attend a TBAC-MBAC meeting between University officials, the Vice President Academic, the President and myself. It was a great opportunity to ask the University Administrators questions regarding the upcoming budget, however I imagine the VPA and President will cover this in more detail in their report given that this is more their area of expertise.

While not technically a meeting, I also had the opportunity to sit on the panel for Alberta Primetime on the topic of American students coming to Canada. This was an opportunity to bring up issues regarding International students, as well as high rates of tuition for both those from Canada and abroad. The panel came to the consensus that International students were good for Canadian Universities, however I reiterated the point that these students should be recruited in order to give them a high quality of education, not for the money they represent through differential tuition. If you would like to watch this video, it is available on Alberta Primetimes website.

Executive Goals:

This is the same rough draft report I provided to the policy committee regarding my goals. I would like to add that I am also considering making a large goal out of the upcoming Municipal Election due to the recent increase of a chance regarding conversations around property taxes. Nonetheless, here are my goals as they currently stand:

Work towards the regulation of Mandatory-Non Instructional Fee's:

Mandatory Non-Instructional Fee's (MNIF's) are the Universities way of bypassing the tuition cap implemented in 2009. After being told they couldn't increase tuition above inflation, they created a whole new group of fees they claimed do not relate to tuition. While some of these fees are completely rational such as the Athletics and Recreational Fee and the Health Services Fee, we also pay nearly \$300 a year for the COSSS fee. We don't really know what this fee pays for, and it was initially promised as a one-time fee by the University to combat budget shortfalls.

We need to ensure that the University remains accountable to the tuition cap and its students by having some form of student approval mechanism. The University has a responsibility to justify the fees they charge us, and a student referendum process would ensure students would only pay fees they see legitimate value in. Our statistics show that 76% of the time students vote in favor of these fees. Ideally MNIF's should be legislated on in the upcoming review of the Post Secondary Learning Act.

Work to re create a student employment program in Alberta:

The Government of Alberta recently cut Alberta's Summer Temporary Employment Program, thus eliminating the only student focused employment program in Alberta. These types of programs are critical to students for both helping to pay tuition and finding employment that relates to their field of study.

My goal is to hold a roundtable between student stakeholders, the Ministry of Human Services, and the Ministry of Culture in order to discuss what a quality summer employment program would look like, and how it can be implemented. I believe that by working together with the government we can overcome this recent shortfall. As of now Canada is the only province or territory in Canada without a student employment program, and that is very detrimental to a student's ability to afford education.

Protect student interests within the Post Secondary Learning Act:

As I have mentioned before, there will likely be a review of the Post Secondary Learning Act in the upcoming

year. While this review will possess many opportunities to advance student interests in Alberta, it also could affect legislation that already protects students. Ultimately student representation in the University governance process needs to be protected. The review will also likely mean discussion of the Tuition Cap set place in 2009, and gives us the opportunity to have the cap legislated into the PSLA.

Collaborate with other Student Associations (SA's) across the province:

Every single goal I've mentioned above comes back to one factor; whether or not student leaders in Alberta can come to agreement on what actions should be taken in post secondary education (PSE). There are many different types of institutions in Alberta, along with many different provincial lobby groups all with different asks of the government. By collaborating with other SA's we can ensure our message is clear, and leave no doubt in the government's minds about what students feel is best for PSE.

Minister Lukaszuk has indicated he wants to meet with all the Presidents, Faculty Associations and student leaders of the 26 Alberta PSE institutions in the next year. I have the goal of meeting with as many student leaders of the 26 institutions as possible beforehand to work towards a united student voice.

Plans for the next few weeks:

At this point, I am very much in a planning and organizing stage. I've been trying to start up meetings for my goals of holding a roundtable on student employment, collaboration with student associations, the advocacy team and general lobbying regarding all of the issues I've identified. At this stage, this means a lot of emails and phone calls. Soon however, MLA's will begin hosting Constituency Barbeques which means I will soon be spending a lot of time tracking down politicians. As mentioned earlier, I'm also spending a good amount of time working on things related to CASA's External Advocacy Committee. While this position realistically won't take up too much of my time, this is the month in which it will take up the most. Ultimately, the time since I've returned home has flown by, but I couldn't be happier to be back. Feel free to ask any questions about this report, or anything else External related you might have been wondering about.

Thank you for your time,

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