

**Date:** 05/19/20

**To:** Students' Union Council

**Re:** Vice President Academic 2019/20 Report #1

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Hi Council!

I hope you are all doing well and staying healthy. My last two weeks have been mostly dominated by the CAUS Changeover retreat, and administrative work getting myself set up as CAUS chair. I have had a few big meetings and events in the last few weeks, and have a very busy next week coming up!

### **CAUS (Council of Alberta University Students) Changeover**

Myself and President Agarwal had the opportunity to join the incoming and outgoing external teams from the Students' Association of Mount Royal University, Students' Association of Macewan University, University of Lethbridge Students' Union, and University of Calgary Students' Union for four days of workshops and training to ensure a smooth transition. We had presentations from Alberta Counsel, CAUS's government relations firm, our General Manager, Marc Dumouchel, and a variety of other expert speakers. Even though it was on Zoom, we had a great time and learned a lot. I am very excited to work with all of the incomings from across Alberta this year-- I was very impressed by the can-do spirit, friendly attitude, and smart ideas of all the new delegates.

I was also elected to be this year's Chair for CAUS, a position that will take quite a bit of time as I will be chairing CAUS meetings and running the organization. A strong CAUS is essential to our provincial advocacy goals, though, so I am confident that this is a very important use of my time. In the next two weeks I will be working to transition into the role with the outgoing Chair, Sadiya Nazir, and Jon Mastel, the Executive Director. In the next month, I will be working on a board action plan for CAUS, and this Friday I will be attending our annual priorities-setting session where we will decide on the top advocacy items we will be bringing to the provincial government this year.

### **Meeting with Minister Nicolaidis**

President Agarwal and I joined a conference call with student leaders from around ALberta and Demetrios Nicolaidis, the Minister of Advanced Education, to discuss the upcoming performance-based funding metrics and their parent Investment Management Agreements (IMAs), COVID-19 support for students, and the government's Alberta 2030 plan to hire a consulting firm to redesign the post-secondary system. The meeting was my first representing all five CAUS institutions, and so I was able to ask several questions. The meeting was productive and we learned quite a bit.

The Minister said, at our request, that he would coordinate with his cabinet colleagues to ensure that student associations and university-owned businesses were eligible for business support measures, as that had been overlooked by the federal government for some time. We were also

able to get clarity on expected timelines for the student placeholder metric in the performance-based funding model. The Minister also expressed a willingness to make considerable alterations to the rollout of performance-based funding, at our request. Measures discussed included eliminating metrics measuring employment and income of graduates, and reducing the initial amount of institutional funding at risk. We also got clarification, mostly positive, on a number of PBF metrics we were very worried about. If you have any more questions about how performance-based funding works, please let me know-- it is a complicated area.

### **Media Interviews**

I was invited to speak on Alberta at Noon this Wednesday about the impact the COVID-19 pandemic is having on students, including through unemployment, uncertain futures, and the transition to online learning. You can find the audio of my interview, starting around 37:30, here:

<https://www.cbc.ca/listen/live-radio/1-1-alberta-at-noon/clip/15776557-graduations-delayed-by-covid-19>

On Thursday, I also had an interview with Hellen Pikes of the CBC about the impact of delayed and cancelled convocation ceremonies on students, and how it affects closure for them and their families. That interview will hopefully be out in the next few days on CBC TV.

### **Upcoming: CASA Foundations Conference**

In two weeks, President Agarwal and myself will be joining to the CASA Foundations conference on Zoom. CASA, the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations, is our federal advocacy group. At Foundations, we will be doing development seminars, learning from outgoing student leaders from across Canada, and elect the new leadership of this year's CASA.

That is a quick summary of my last two weeks, but obviously there has been a lot more. As always, if you have any questions, feel free to reach out by email anytime. Enjoy the summer weather!



University of Alberta Students' Union Vice President External  
**Rowan Ley**