

May 19th, 2015

To: Students' Council

Re: Report to Council

Introduction

Hey Council!

This will be my first official report to Council and I'm super excited! It's been an incredibly busy but very exciting last few weeks. This report will be full coverage of my entire VPX year so far, how exciting!

All in all, the last couple weeks have been pretty packed but I feel like myself and the rest of the team is learning at an incredible rate and are running on all cylinders already.

My apologies that I'm not in Council right now, if you do have any questions about my report or the VPX portfolio, feel free to email me or Facebook message me. I will be checking my email periodically and let's be honest, we can't go longer than a day without checking Facebook. It's a sad, sad world my friends but we shall face it together. Anyways, to the report:

Government

So just in case you haven't heard, Alberta has a new governing party, pretty big deal. I know that you are probably very interested in what this means for the coming year and the next 4 years in terms of advocacy that the SU does, and in a way we are still in the process of figuring that out ourselves. A lot of the real nitty-gritty work will have to wait for the announcement of the new Minister of Advanced Education, and to hear the priorities of the new government. That said, once I get back from our CASA conference in Ottawa, I will start meeting with MLA's in the Capital region (Edmonton and area) to start building those new relationships.

The change in government means that we need to significantly change the way we lobby. We will be changing not only the things we ask of the government, but also our approach to our advocacy and how we propose certain solutions. However, I am cautiously optimistic that this government will be open to many of the priorities we have set provincially through CAUS (see below) and we can make a lot of progress on them.

I'm sorry if my analysis of the change may seem lack-luster, but there is a lot I can talk about and would rather answer specific questions over rambling. One take away from the change: I'm cautiously optimistic about the year ahead and will start building the relationships needed for the years ahead ASAP.

Exec Retreat

We left for exec retreat on the 28th of April and stayed until the 3rd of May and it was a blast. We all learned a ton about our own portfolios in addition to learning about the Students' Union in general. We also focused a lot on team building between all of the executives and the General Manager. It was very intense and at times more information than I could cram into my brain, but a great learning experience and transition into the job.

CAUS Changeover

After coming back from exec retreat I was in the office for 3 days, then off to Canmore for 4 days for CAUS Changeover. CAUS, or the Council of Alberta University Students, is our provincial advocacy group and we all met in Canmore to discuss the coming year. CAUS consists of the student associations from; the University of Calgary, the University of Lethbridge, MacEwan University, Mount Royal University, and ourselves. All the people there are great to be around and it was a fun and productive 4 days. Myself, Naveneet, and William Lau all attended Changeover.

Most of our first day consisted of travelling down to Canmore and getting to know everyone. The first two days were focused on presentations surrounding topics like Open Educational Resources, Mental Health Funding, and Student Financial Aid in the province. In between we got to know each other better and I regret to inform you that the UASU disc golf team was narrowly beat by the University of Calgary Students' Union. CAUS traditionally plays a game of disc golf between all our members ever year at Changeover.

The last day in Canmore focused on our goals and priorities for the year. This was by far my favorite day, and I believe that CAUS has some really good asks to the Alberta government this year. We have six different asks and I will outline them below. Keep in mind that they are still a rough outline and more wordsmithing and review is still needed on them.

1. Tuition and Fees
 - a. Regulation of Market Modifiers and MNIFs
 - b. Ask for a fully funded tuition freeze (freeze comes from NDP platform), while long term options regarding tuition are explored
2. Mental Health
 - a. Extend and expand pilot project (\$3M given to U of A, U of C, and U of L)
 - b. Increase funding for MacEwan and MRU (they received a fraction of what the other 3 have)
 - c. Seat at the table developing a mental health strategy
3. Student Aid
 - a. Increased grants
 - b. Grants for rural and aboriginal students
 - c. Review of Alberta Student Aid
4. Student Employment
 - a. Seat at table in reestablishment of STEP
5. Research
 - a. Create an external arm's length research body that will track student experience
6. PLSA Governance
 - a. Increase BoG/GFC student representation
 - b. Move MRU/MacEwan to part 1 of PSLA

I realize that you may have some questions about these as they are very bare bones, but as I said, they are still in the development stage and feel free to ask me any questions you have.

Also, CAUS has hired a summer researcher and he is one of our own U of A students. We decided that we would like him to do research on both student employment programs as well as student financial aid. This will really help us with accomplishing our goals and being seen as a thought leader in the Alberta post-secondary system.

CASA Foundations

During this Council meeting and for the entire week, Navneet and I will be in Ottawa for the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations (CASA) Foundations conference. Here we will be learning about the role of the federal government in post-secondary and meeting the other delegates. I will let you know how this goes next Council meeting.

ESA

The Edmonton Student Alliance is a brand new organization that brings together all public post-secondary institutions across the city, and we had our first meeting of the year on the 13th. Danika McConnell, the VPX from MacEwan University was elected as the chair and I was elected as the Vice-Chair! It will be interesting to work with the organization, as it has never existed in recent memory. As such, we have an opportunity to do a lot. We also set loose priorities for the year as well at the first meeting, and they are:

- Transit – including safety and routes
- Jobs in Edmonton for students
- Advocating for seats on Edmonton committees

I will be taking on the priority of jobs in the city, so if you have any ideas on how we might partner with the city to get students working in Edmonton, let me know.

As well, the first item of business for the ESA will be presenting at a Transportation Committee meeting focused on *Transit Security for Women*. Both Danika and myself will be speaking at the meeting on behalf of the ESA and will be speaking in favour of higher levels of security on Edmonton transit for our non-male students. This will be a great first step for the organization and a very important issue to our students in my mind, regardless of gender.

By now, you will have seen the google form that I have created to solicit feedback and personal experiences that students have had where they did not feel safe on Edmonton transit. It would be great if you could circulate this form to your networks so that we can have the biggest impact possible at the committee meeting!

Well, that about covers it. If I missed anything I will add it into my next report, and if you have any questions please don't hesitate to ask. Also, any feedback on the format of the report would be greatly appreciated. If this was too long/short, formal/informal, or if you want a take away at the end, or a "tl;dr" section let me know. I have to write these every meeting and would love for you to read them every meeting with earnest and a twinkle in your eye.

Until next time,
Dylan

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