

November 18th, 2013

To: Students' Council

Re: Report to Council

Hey Council,

Before I proceed with my report, I would like to acknowledge that our university and our Students' Union are on Indigenous land. Specifically: Cree, Saulteaux, Metis, Blackfoot, and Nakota Siou. They are faculty, staff, students, family, and friends, and they are still here. I acknowledge that we meet on treaty 6 territory. That treaty governs the relationship between first-nations and non-first nations citizens. I am thankful for this opportunity for us to meet on this land today. This statement will be included at the front of my report to council until either the time that my term ends, or Council moves to makes a similar statement available for public viewing.

It's been an interesting few weeks for Universities here in Alberta. On November 6th we received a small bit of good news – Minister Lukaszuk had decided to restore \$50 million in provincial funding to post-secondary education, \$14.4 million of which is earmarked for the University of Alberta. However VP Woods among others pointed out that these funds will not prevent or reverse most of the damage from previous cuts. Nevertheless this is a step in the right direction, and is hopefully indicative of a change in mindset in Minister Lukaszuk.

Despite this, the decision to reinvest \$50 million leaves us with more questions than answers. First of all, how can our administration function effectively when funds are being added and removed in such a manner? Universities are massive organizations, and it's impossible to change their direction in the drop of a hat. Which further begs the question: in addition to the outright cuts, how much university money and energy has the budget debacle sucked away?

Second, how has this budget instability negatively affected the University's reputation as an academic institution? Financial and institutional stability need to be rock solid if we're trying to recruit top academic

talent. Unfortunately, financial stability is not something universities can take for granted in this province.

The Province's behaviour does not, I think, inspire feelings of confidence in students thinking of going to a post-secondary institution in Alberta.

On the one hand, however, this crisis does bring attention to an issue that is critical to the University of Alberta: funding source diversification. The U of A is, admittedly, heavily reliant on provincial grants to maintain its operation. To her credit, President Saramasakera has made funding diversification a top priority. For example University Advancement has seen significant growth, and initiatives such as the recently unveiled Dino 101 MOOC appear promising. Nevertheless, as it stands the University faces an ever-more uncertain financial future so long as the Province doesn't take further action to restore funding and offset the current structural deficit.

Changing topics, I've had further correspondence with former Councillor Carson regarding the statement acknowledging Indigenous territory. We've set a meeting for later this week to discuss general strategies for how we should go about getting a well-researched and well-informed statement. As always, I'll have more updates for you as we move forward.

Next week I'll attend a meeting of the General Faculties Council and a dinner with the other members of the Board. I'm very eager to discuss some of these recent developments with the Board – especially the reinvestment. Heretofore the news of reinvestment has been received quite warmly by the Members. However as the shine from the initial announcement wears off, I suspect the Members will remember that our University remains in a very tough situation.

In Solidarity,

Brent Kelly

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