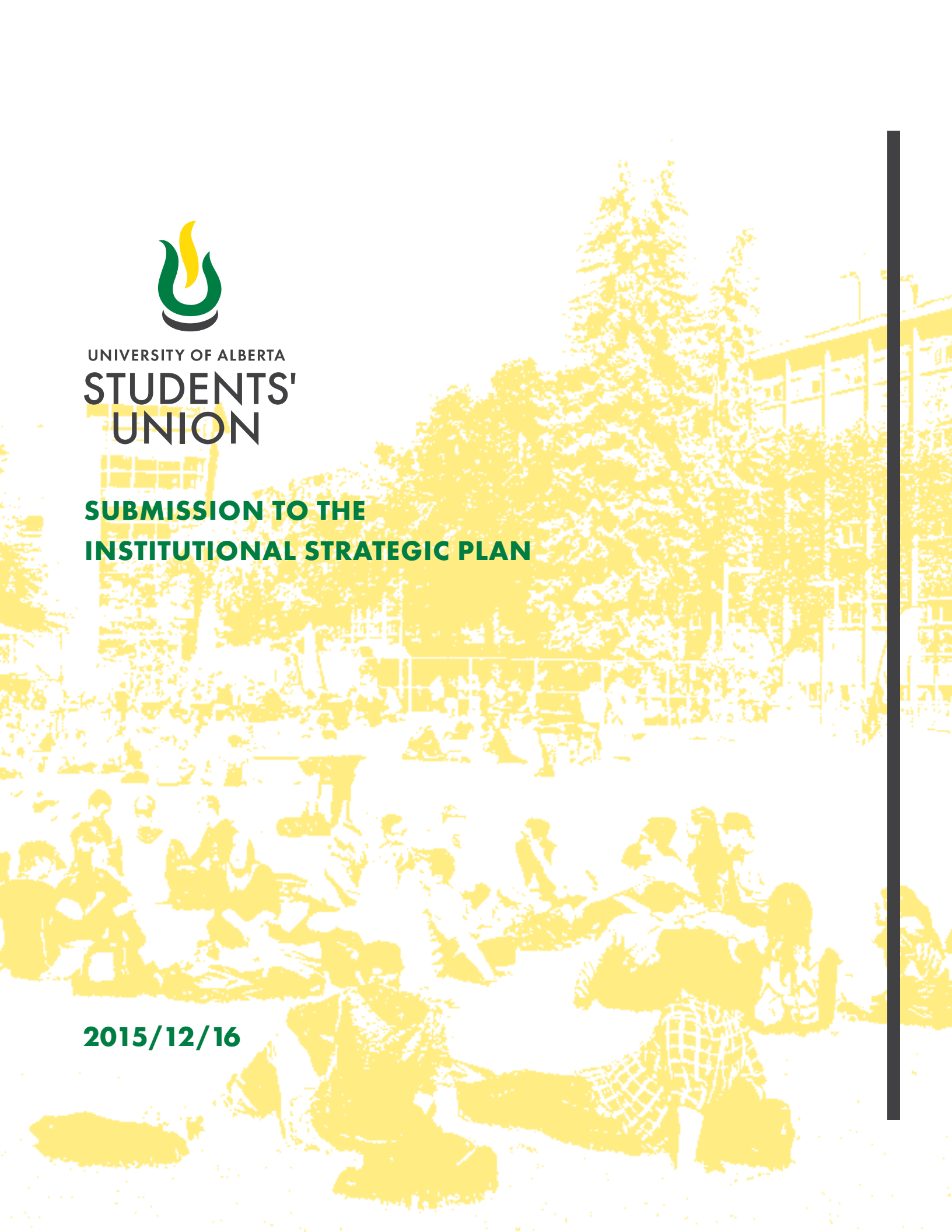




UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA
**STUDENTS'
UNION**

**SUBMISSION TO THE
INSTITUTIONAL STRATEGIC PLAN**

2015/12/16





The University of Alberta's mission of "uplifting the whole people" has become increasingly complex. Increased competition for staff, students and research funding paired with rising enrollment and stagnant government investment has created an environment where post-secondary institutions have to constantly adapt to broad and competing demands. The role of the University in the public sphere is changing, as are the attributes that society expects new graduates to possess. As the University of Alberta develops its new strategic plan, the University of Alberta Students' Union wishes to highlight areas where innovative solutions and forward-looking investments in teaching and student experience can help ensure that the University continues to empower a diverse group of students to become successful, socially-engaged citizens. As the voice of undergraduate students, the SU's recommendations focus specifically on:

- 1) affordability;
- 2) high-quality in-class teaching and learning experiences;
- 3) opportunities for transformative learning, growth and civic citizenship and
- 4) a campus culture that provides the context and opportunity to achieve all of the above.

A AFFORDABILITY

Significantly increase the number of courses taught using OERs to support teaching innovation and excellence as well as ensure affordability for students on our campuses.

Increase funding for bursaries and grants for both full- and part-time students, including faculty-specific bursary funding.

B HIGH-QUALITY IN-CLASS TEACHING & LEARNING EXPERIENCE

Align institutional policies to create a culture of teaching innovation and excellence, with priority attached to teaching, professional development and scholarship of teaching and learning; and,

Transform the culture of celebrating teaching recognition and achievements to reward and retain our quality instructors.

Outline a clear plan of addressing ongoing class size and student faculty ratio, with a multi-year plan plan to invest in faculty member recruitment into tenure-track positions.



C OPPORTUNITIES FOR TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING, GROWTH AND CIVIC CITIZENSHIP

Create a centralized office that will prioritize experiential learning as an integral part of the undergraduate experience, provide greater coordination of opportunities in line with advances in pedagogy, and ensure all students have flexible program requirements for equitable access to experiential learning.

Provide greater institutional support for extracurricular leadership opportunities like student group involvement and entrepreneurship programming, fostering diverse leaders through targeted outreach for underrepresented bodies such as non-traditional and low-income students.

D A SENSE OF COMMUNITY

Investigate barriers towards student involvement and engagement, with a goal of making it easier for students to get involved.

Continue to bolster the resources of programs that are currently highly successful so they can assist more students in need of support.

Adopt the Student Participation Protocol as a clear framework to navigate issues of consultation



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Over the past three decades, the post-secondary education sector in Canada has experienced dramatic changes characterized by rising enrolment, falling public investment in post-secondary institutions, fierce competition for research dollars, rapid internationalization, massive transformations in teaching and learning led by technological advancements and beyond. The combination of these rapid changes have pushed and pulled the post-secondary sector, including the University of Alberta, in various directions. These transformations have created new challenges and opportunities for the University in fulfilling its core mission of teaching, learning and research.

This document is the official submission of the University of Alberta's Students' Union to the 2015 Institutional Strategic Plan consultation process led by the University of Alberta. It outlines the Students' Union's vision for undergraduate student priorities that our University needs to fulfill its mission of "uplifting the whole people."

As a student led organization, we exist to enrich the academic and non-academic experiences of students during their time at university. The priorities we articulate below are also grounded in our own vision of a successful future where students

- 1) feel accepted and welcome on campus;
- 2) thrive in a vibrant intellectual community;
- 3) are empowered and confident in their ability to succeed; and
- 4) can contribute to the larger society as active citizens and effective leaders.¹

Hence, our values are guided by these principles: do what's right, not what's easy; inspire change for the world; act with unbridled compassion; always keep moving; and plan for tomorrow.

The Students' Union believes that every graduate of the University of Alberta should be able to benchmark their academic and non-academic learning and achievement during their time at the University against the attributes articulated in the *Graduate Attributes at the University of Alberta* report approved by the GFC Committee on Learning Environment on June 5, 2013. Collectively, these attributes could form the cornerstones of a comprehensive learning outcome framework for the institution similar to those seen at other Canadian post-secondary institutes. The suggestions articulated in this submission are informed by the Students' Union's goal of equipping undergraduate students with these attributes and ensuring that their studies are rewarding and enriching.

Student attributes are only one way the University of Alberta can distinguish itself as a leader from its peer institutions, and can be developed in many ways such as through extracurricular and experiential learning. However, they are not the sole determinant of student development. Many students elect to pursue post-secondary education at the University of Alberta for an excellent experience in the classroom, after considering the financial impact such a decision will bear for them. This decision gives them access to an involved community of peers on campus.

¹ University of Alberta Students' Union. "Students' Union Strategic Plan 2015." Last Modified March 31, 2015 <http://www.su.ualberta.ca/media/uploads/512/SU-StratPlan-2015.pdf>

INTRODUCTION



Our ideas for a successful academy have been developed through consultation with undergraduate faculty associations, Students' Council, and undergraduate students-at-large. They include:

- 1) an affordable post-secondary education;
- 2) a high quality in-class teaching and learning experience;
- 3) opportunities for transformative learning, growth and civic citizenship; and
- 4) a campus culture that provides the context and opportunity to achieve all of the above.

We believe that the University is responsible for committing to the success of their students; we must invest in resources and programs necessary to develop an unparalleled transformative university experience for its graduates, one that will determine the course of their lives and undertakings for years to come.

A AFFORDABILITY



The cost of post-secondary education, which has been rising disproportionately relative to inflation over the past two decades, needs to be a priority for the institution to make University a public good.² Indeed, affordability is a key determinant of higher student retention and success rates in programs, enabling participation in campus community activities, and improving student mental health. There are many different components related to affordability to students, from financial support to attend University, to textbook costs and fee increases once they begin their studies. With an emphasis on affordability in these aspects, our campus will ensure that students have a chance to fully develop, become part of the larger campus community, and benefit from services designed to enrich their experience.

INNOVATIVE ACADEMIC MATERIALS

When it comes to post-secondary education, academic materials are a significant part of the financial costs for students. Academic materials range widely in their platform and scope, from the traditional textbook to the newly released app for Dino 101. These materials play an important role in undergraduate education and are integral to their learning activities; however, they can also constitute a significant financial burden for students. There needs to be a greater commitment from both the University and the provincial government towards the creation of innovative academic materials with a view to improving the affordability of post-secondary education for students.

Our university asks students to budget up to \$1600 for books and supplies with a full course load, even though the Alberta Student Loan program only covers up to \$1200 toward such expenses. This presents substantial affordability concerns when coupled with tuition, food and residence costs.³

American Bureau of Labor Statistics data (re-indexed and adapted to reflect Canadian data) shows that textbook prices, in real terms, have risen by approximately 101% since 2002, whereas the Canadian CPI has risen 25.2%.⁴ Accompanied by a simultaneous rise in the various costs of obtaining a post-secondary education, this is a key contributor to rising student debt.⁵

Given that publishers exert substantial influence over the market for academic materials, developing more accessible and affordable solutions may require non-traditional approaches. We propose to reduce the burden of increasingly expensive academic material by developing open education resources (OERs). These materials are highly compatible with different teaching methods and are openly licensed, providing instructors with greater flexibility in modifying and adapting content to suit their instructional needs while simultaneously making learning more interactive and engaging for students.

Consider the example of a parasitology instructor who creates a website with a list of all parasites studied within the course, alongside an interactive component that lets students take practice classifying species based on their defining features and characteristics. Not only will students find the material engaging and enjoy the reduced financial burden, but also the instructor will find it easier to modify the website content to fit their plans for the course.

- 2 Shaker, Erika and David Macdonald. "What's the Difference? Taking Stock of Provincial Tuition Fee Policies". *Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives*. September 9, 2015, available from <https://www.policyalternatives.ca/publications/reports/whats-difference>
- 3 University of Alberta. "Money Matters". *University of Alberta*, last modified 2015, <http://admissions.ualberta.ca/en/money-matters.aspx>
- 4 Statistics Canada, "Consumer Price Index, Historical Summary (1995-2014)," 2015, <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/tables-tableaux/sum-som/101/cst01/econ46a-eng.htm>; RI Department of Labor and Training, "US Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers," 2015, <http://www.dlt.ri.gov/lmi/business/cpi.htm>; Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Consumer Price Index - All Urban Consumers," 2015, http://data.bls.gov/timeseries/CUUR0000SSEA011?output_view=pct_3mths.
- 5 Canadian Alliance of Student Associations. *Setting the Access Agenda: Advocacy Week 2013*. 2013, available from http://casa-acae.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/CASA_AccessAgenda_Advo2013.pdf



While initiatives to promote the use of OERs have been undertaken at relatively few Canadian campuses, in British Columbia they have been reported to save students well over \$250 000 in the 2014 academic year.⁶ If our University is truly going to prioritize student success through higher completion rates, investing in the development of OERs is one certain way to reach that goal. OERs in classrooms can help foster an open access culture on campus, and may make professors more amenable to publishing in open access journals on campus and submitting their work to library repositories. With many Tri-Council grants requiring some level of open access sharing of information, and many leading universities fully embracing an open access culture, there is clearly an opportunity for the University of Alberta to follow suit and enhance its value as a public good.

⁶ Lalonde, Clint. "BC Open Textbook Project". Last modified May 13, 2015, <http://www.slideshare.net/clintlalonde/olttd-webinar>

Significantly increase the number of courses taught using OERs to support teaching innovation and excellence as well as ensure affordability for students on our campuses.

NEEDS-BASED AID & BURSARIES FOR STUDENTS

For students applying to study at the University of Alberta, their ability to enter and remain enrolled at the institution is not solely a function of merit and achievement. Finances also are a significant predictor of whether students will attend post-secondary institutions or not.

Universities may assume that students will be able to pay off their debt with a successful career post-graduation, but student debt can inhibit a student's ability to fully integrate with campus experiences while at university. Consider the case of a student interested in taking a leadership position within their fraternity or sorority or undergraduate departmental association, but not being able to do so due to a part-time job necessary to finance their living expenses and rent. Alternatively, a student may be interested in taking a reduced course load to manage both work and extracurricular activities which will likely require them to extend their degree to five or more years; students are thus forced to add more time, and therefore cost, to their degree. Additionally, students who extend their studies by a year to do part-time studies are often not eligible for awards and scholarships through the University, further straining their finances.

The burden of having to work during studies to balance costs between residence, food, tuition, and academic materials can be detrimental to student success and participation as an active member of our campus community. To remedy this, the University should increase the amount of need-based funding available to students, including to the rapidly growing and very diverse part-time student body. Aid offered by the University should strike a balance between rewarding students based on merit and personal growth while contributing to the campus community, and aiding students that need financial assistance to become more engaged, thus empowering the whole student body.

Increase funding for bursaries and grants for both full- and part-time students, including faculty-specific bursary funding.

B HIGH-QUALITY IN-CLASS TEACHING & LEARNING EXPERIENCE



The University of Alberta has earned national and international recognition as a result of its successes in research. In view of its size, stature, and potential for impact, the University must complement reputational growth by working to create an institution that is also recognized for excellence in undergraduate teaching and learning.

RAISE THE PROFILE OF QUALITY INSTRUCTION

While the University of Alberta prides itself in having the leading number of 3M Teaching Fellows nationally, a majority of undergraduate students are not guaranteed exposure to high quality instruction provided by members of this elite cohort of award-winning teachers. Undergraduate students at the University of Alberta, like their counterparts at most Canadian institutes, are increasingly taught by instructors who are subject to precarious employment conditions. These contract instructors face a lack of job security, sustained institutional support and sufficient resources for professional development. Nearly half of all undergraduates in Canadian universities are taught by instructors who do not hold full time and/or tenure-track positions.⁷

This is particularly acute for introductory courses, which are required for shaping undergraduate students' transition to higher order learning. Institutional context is a key determinant of quality teaching, which takes on a dynamic form depending on teaching culture. This in turn shapes the nature and scope of knowledge exchange and learning at the institution.⁸

An exemplary institutional teaching culture fosters positive student engagement and inspires their curiosity, thus providing them with an unparalleled learning experience and preparing them for the challenges they may face in future as they transition to the world beyond university.⁹ This places even more importance on the creation of an institutional teaching culture that supports strategic commitment to excellence in teaching and learning at highest level of the institution.

Recognizing that teaching, learning and research constitute equally important components of a publicly funded post-secondary institution's core mission, and are what undergraduates seek from a world-class institution, we propose that the University of Alberta take the following recommendations to fulfill its core mission:

Align institutional policies to create a culture of teaching innovation and excellence, with priority attached to teaching, professional development and scholarship of teaching and learning; and,

Transform the culture of celebrating teaching recognition and achievements to reward and retain our quality instructors.

- 7 Association of Universities and Colleges Canada. *The Revitalization of Undergraduate Education in Canada*. A Report on the AUCC Workshop on undergraduate education in Halifax, March 6-8, 2011.
- 8 Cox, B.E, McIntosh, K.L., Reason, R D., & Terenzini, P.T. "A culture of teaching: Policy, perception, and practice in higher education". *Research in Higher Education*, Vol. 52, (2011): 808-829; Krusta et al.. "Teaching Culture Perception: Documenting and Transforming Institutional Teaching Cultures". *Collected Essays on Learning and Teaching*, Vol. VIII (2015): 231-244; 2015 as quoted in Henard Roseveare.
- 9 Henard, F and D Roseveare. *Fostering quality teaching in higher education: Policies and practices*. France: Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2012.



TACKLING DECLINING FACULTY/STUDENT RATIOS

In 2013-14, the University of Alberta's aggregate (i.e. both graduate and undergraduate) student-to-faculty ratio remained at 21.3:1, indicating a slight drop over a decade when the student-to-faculty ratio was 20.5:1 in 2004-05.¹⁰ The University of Alberta has a long way to go in achieving its targeted student-to-faculty ratio of 15:1.¹¹ This is concerning given that full time undergraduate enrollment during this ten year period has grown substantially from 26,540 to 29,098; undergraduate students are faced with growing class sizes.¹² Although at the institutional level average class sizes are 42 and 27 in typical first/second and third/fourth courses respectively,¹³ there are wide variations depending on faculty, department and academic year. For example, Fall 2015 enrollment data indicates that the average class sizes in a second year chemistry course and a third year biology course are respectively 157 and 206. Average class size in the Faculty of Science overall is 85. Similarly, while the average class size in the Faculty of Arts is 35, the same for first and second year Economics courses are 302 and 77 respectively.¹⁴

The University of Alberta's 2014-15 Annual Report for submission to the Government of Alberta indicated that the "net loss in academic faculty" caused by the voluntary severance program created to meet the demands of a tough and tumultuous financial climate in 2013 "[gave] rise to numerous institutional risks, including the impact on quality; ...[and] maintenance of program accreditation" (56). While there may not be any relevant metrics to track differences in the quality of instruction, we are certain that students have felt the impact of these consequences on their studies, from increased class sizes to reduced course offerings.

Instructors can connect students to the right opportunities through many forms, such as providing research mentorship and academic advising, integrating experiential learning opportunities in their course curricula, and mentorship outside the typical student-instructor relationship, which students often rely on for guidance. An instructor can broaden a student's horizons and show them new doors from internship placements to a better understanding of academia.

Growing class sizes are an obvious challenge for instructors and students to form a close professional relationship that often serves as the foundation for further mentorship; with larger class sizes students may not be able to present themselves as prospective candidates with potential competencies or capabilities to instructors. For example, for students to become interested and participate in undergraduate research, they need to learn the skills and behaviors of the discipline and apply them to solve problems posed by society. However, large lecture classes do not facilitate such a learning opportunity.

Outline a clear plan of addressing ongoing class size and student faculty ratio, with a multi-year plan to invest in faculty member recruitment into tenure-track positions.

- 10 University of Alberta. *Dare to Discover Report Card Academic Year*. 2014: 15, available from <http://uofa.ualberta.ca/-/media/uofa/reporting/report-card/12700-d2dreport-card-2013-14-final.pdf>
- 11 Ibid.
- 12 University of Alberta. *University of Alberta Student Fall Headcount*. https://idw-bi.ualberta.ca/t/Production/views/UofAStudentDatabook/UofAStudent-FallHeadcount?embed=y&:display_count=no#1
- 13 Audit and Analysis. *UAlberta Facts: Class Sizes*. Last modified 2013, <https://uofa.ualberta.ca/about/facts/class-sizes>
- 14 When calculating average class size and total enrollment for the both the Faculty of Arts and the Faculty of Science, the Department of Psychology was excluded from calculations, given the mixed nature of their course offerings.

C OPPORTUNITIES FOR TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING, GROWTH & CIVIC CITIZENSHIP



Experiential learning opportunities include internships, field experiences, cooperative education programs, undergraduate research exposure, service learning, community-based educational experiences, studying abroad and other exposures. These, alongside co-curricular activities, play an invaluable role in students' growth. The opportunities also help students develop their interpersonal skills while applying classroom knowledge to solving real world interdisciplinary problems. The availability of, and ease of access to, experiential learning opportunities at an institution is a key determinant for a positive and effective institutional learning culture.

15 Available from <https://uofa.ualberta.ca/reporting/statistical-reports>

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

The 2014 NSSE survey results show that only 50 percent of senior students from the University of Alberta, in comparison to 57 percent belonging to the Dare to Discover (D2D) comparator group, had completed or were in process of participating in an internship, co-op, field experience, student teaching or clinical placement.¹⁵ Beyond personal growth and individual civic citizenship, skills and competencies acquired through experiential learning opportunities provide students with additional leverage in transitioning to their professional lives, which is especially important in this continued climate of economic recession characterized by slow job growth. Similarly, the 2014 NSSE survey results also showed that among first year students, only 64 percent planned to participate in experiential learning opportunities relative to 70 and 76 percent of students respectively at U15 institutions and the D2D comparator group. This might indicate a lack of awareness and/or access to sufficient opportunities for various reasons. In the current economic environment, employers increasingly prefer hiring individuals who are "job-market ready" or able to overcome the perceived "skills gap"; the role of co-curricular and extracurricular opportunities in preparing students for a hyper-competitive job market by providing personal, academic and professional growth cannot be over-emphasized.

Undergraduates have a wide variety of academic programs to choose from at a large research-intensive university and the demand for experiential opportunities, whether as exposure to research, service learning, internships or study abroad programs, across a wider spectrum of experiences, is growing. For example, there is a growing demand for internship experiences among prospective study abroad applicants, which provide the benefit of globally competitive training and mentorship essential to survive a rapidly changing and globalizing workplace. However, according to the results of 2014 NSSE survey, only 13 percent of University of Alberta senior students had participated in study abroad programs, which while at par with Canadian U15 institutions, lags behind the D2D comparator group where 19 percent of students have participated in similar opportunities.



Due to the importance of experiential learning opportunities in both engaging students while on campus and in preparing them for the work force, we propose that the University of Alberta consider the following recommendations:

16 Available from <https://uofa.ualberta.ca/reporting/statistical-reports>

Create a centralized office that will prioritize experiential learning as an integral part of the undergraduate experience, provide greater coordination of opportunities in line with advances in pedagogy, and ensure students have flexible program requirements for equitable access to experiential learning.

A high quality learning environment must equip students with knowledge and skills beyond those provided through narrowly defined disciplinary training. Graduates of University of Alberta must be individuals who can be exemplary local and global citizens who can make positive contributions that are worthy of a society with a publicly funded post-secondary education.

BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION IN STUDENT EXPERIENCE

Students face many barriers in participating in programs, ranging from awareness of such programs and how they may integrate with their academic program, to the opportunities that are flexible enough to meet the needs of a diverse student body, to affordability and funding support concerns. A student may find competing priorities between working to earn necessary living expenses, and taking on experiential and community service learning opportunities. Tough decisions are at the heart of any individual's growth, though our institution should work to minimize the need for students having to choose between the two.

These barriers, in turn, relate to the challenges faced by units like Community Service Learning (CSL), Education Abroad, and the Undergraduate Research Initiative who offer experiential learning opportunities, especially those housed outside a typical academic unit such as a faculty or college. Lacking sustainable funding makes it difficult for these units to maintain existing programs, let alone plan for growth and future expansion. Post-secondary institutions face an increasingly tumultuous financial situation, and developing predictable funding models for traditional academic units presents a challenge to the institution. Identifying and allocating funding for a new initiative is even more challenging. Units for experiential learning similarly require dedicated staff who can engage in innovative design, outreach, liaise with students and faculty advisors to respond to their queries, and identify potential partners to satisfy student demands. Simultaneously, as the demand for experiential learning opportunities continues to grow among undergraduate students, ensuring that academic instructors are deeply engaged in providing such efforts will be key to offering meaningful learning opportunities for students.

According to 2014 NSSE survey results, 50 percent of graduating University of Alberta students never had a course that included a community-based project (or service learning).¹⁶ Yet, the 2014-15 Annual Report of CSL at University of Alberta indicates that 73 percent of students participating in the program felt that the

C OPPORTUNITIES FOR TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING, GROWTH & CIVIC CITIZENSHIP



experience provided them with the opportunity to use their classroom knowledge in the community. Furthermore, 71 percent felt that their CSL experience helped them understand the complexities of social change.¹⁷ If today's students and graduates are to become tomorrow's leaders and address local, national and global challenges, the University must work to ensure that a greater proportion of the student population is able to take advantage of these valuable learning opportunities.

The Students' Union believes that as a major Canadian and global centre for research, teaching and learning committed to "uplifting the whole people," the University of Alberta should ensure that every undergraduate student graduates with the knowledge, skills, and experiences required to become a 21st century citizen and leader. To that end, we urge the university to consider the following recommendation:

Provide greater institutional support for extracurricular leadership opportunities like student group involvement and entrepreneurship programming, fostering diverse leaders through targeted outreach for underrepresented bodies such as non-traditional and low-income students.

¹⁷ Community Service Learning. 2014-15 Annual Report, 2015, available from <https://uofa.ualberta.ca/community-service-learning/-/media/arts/departments-institutes-and-centres/community-service-learning/documents/reports/annual-reports/annualreport14-15.pdf>

D A SENSE OF COMMUNITY



With a campus community of over 30 000 undergraduates spread across five campuses, it can be difficult for students to feel a sense of community during their studies at the University of Alberta, particularly for those living off campus or studying in larger Faculties. Building community from the individual student level outward is not only important for that individual student, but for the cohesiveness of the University of Alberta as a whole. Many positive outcomes can be associated with having a sense of community within one's Faculty or University, from increased student retention and success within academic programs, to a feeling of responsibility for making campus a better place for everyone to study and work. A sense of community can come from many different sources; these can range from senior students leading study seminars that help an out-of-province student understand ways to succeed in University, to students and staff raising awareness around programming like the Peer Support Centre or the annual Sustainability Week. To ensure that these community-building efforts remain the focus of our institution and are achieved, students need to be active collaborators in the development of these goals.

STUDENT GROUPS

Student Group Services recognizes over 350 student groups on campus, making it one of the easiest ways for students to get involved. Student Group Services also offers a robust way for students to create a group in case their interests are not found in one of our currently existing student groups. There needs to be a commitment from the University to ensure that students are free to participate in student groups. The success of celebrated campus wide events such as the Long Night Against Procrastination or PositiviDay run by University of Alberta Compliments would not have been possible without student buy-in, and are the types of events that go a long way towards building a sense of community on campus. Many events like this are organized within Faculties as well, from the Mr. Pharmacy fundraising competition for prostate cancer by the Alberta Pharmacy Students' Association to the Political Science Undergraduate Association's popular local band nights that fill Dewey's.

By giving students more of a reason to become involved on campus, we will be able to provide a premier experience for members of our community. A student will have a more memorable time and sense of connecting with their campus if they are able to make friends while picking up dance lessons from a student club, or find a group of like-minded individuals interested in debating the greatness of Star Wars versus Star Trek. They may even develop skills not acquired through a standard curriculum or program, which can serve them well in entering the workforce post-graduation. A recent National Bureau of Economic Research paper found that strong social skills, which can be fostered through extra-curricular activities like student groups, is increasingly important in the labour market.¹⁸ Ensuring that students' involvement and growth in non-academic pursuits on campus should be a central tenet of a forward-looking University.

18 David J Deming, The Growing Importance of Social Skills in the Labor Market, 2015, <http://www.nber.org/papers/w21473>.



If our campus increases student participation through these methods, students will have more opportunities to develop their skills and become well-rounded graduates. We will also see students having a strong community to fall back on during stressful times of their studies. Ultimately we will have a resilient, compassionate and caring campus community willing to tackle a plethora of issues we all face as citizens, capable of engaging the whole people.

Investigate barriers towards student involvement and engagement, with a goal of making it easier for students to get involved.

MENTAL HEALTH

Undergraduate students increasingly face a hyper competitive environment, with pressures arising from having to balance their studies with extra-curricular activities, sometimes while working in part- or full-time employment to support their education and related expenses, as well as a fiercely competitive and uncertain job market upon graduation. This has implications for maintaining a healthy lifestyle, particularly including one's mental health. The Students' Union has been impressed with the initiatives the University has created, such as the Unwind Your Mind program led by the Health Campus Unit of the Dean of Students' office, to tackle these issues.

Students frequently use programming led by the University, which leads to services being oversaturated with the number of students seeking support. Unfortunately, long wait times for those highly used services and a lack of near-term appointments may result in students being unable to access these crucial services and discourage them from reaching out again for support. We do not want to see students be turned away when they are seeking help, no matter how large or small the issue they are encountering. The Students' Union would like to see a commitment to mental health support from the University throughout the semester, by the continuing creation of new programs while expanding and evaluating the effectiveness of current programs as needed.

While these programs are operating based on a provincial grant, two things should be considered: regardless of grant money, we still have a responsibility towards students' mental wellbeing, and the grant effectiveness has come from the focus on mental health programs for students on an individual level. Stigma reduction and awareness are important for our campus community, but the importance of support in the form of psychologists and professional help cannot be overstated. The University must ensure adequate access to these essential personnel.

These programs and services have an incredible effect on the well-being of our campus, and will lead to a number of positive student outcomes. Ideally we are able to help students be proactive with their mental health, just as a strained muscle is given treatment and rest before it escalates to more damage.



We hope that students will be included in conversations on how to develop programs that best benefit them during their studies, and believe that the Dean of Students' office is best suited to lead these initiatives for students. That is not meant to preclude students from taking the initiative towards this goal as well; we simply want more collaborative efforts to arise from staff and students working together.

Continue to bolster the resources of mental health programs that are currently highly successful so they can assist more students in need of support.

We would like to see programs be targeted and developed so they can fulfill roles as a safety net for those in acute distress, while building student resilience so they can avoid the need for a safety net in the first place. A funding commitment will also be needed to maximize the potential of these programs, and introduce new ones wherever gaps may be present.

STUDENT PARTICIPATION IN ACADEMIC GOVERNANCE

Undergraduate Faculty Associations are comprised of elected student representatives who provide services, run programs and advocate on the behalf of their peers in the Faculty. Typically students who are involved with academic governance balance a multitude of roles, from full course loads to part-time employment to senior level capstone projects. Similar demands are present for student members of GFC as well. Coupled with the pressure to serve their peers, including squeezing meetings in between classes, roles in academic governance can be difficult to adequately fulfill for undergraduate students.

Exposure and participation in academic governance can be instrumental in leadership development and gaining particular skills, such as communication and time management. However, its current structure is preventing student voices from being brought to the table. Given that GFC is generally held during regular class hours on a Monday, many GFC student members are unable to participate equally in governance. They are forced to choose between attending GFC meetings and attending class, lab or a seminar. Participation in academic governance and representing peers, while it forms part of service related commitments for many faculty, staff and administrators, can result in sacrificing valuable class time for undergraduates. This limits both the experience for students and the quality of our governance. It is best for our campus to provide students opportunities to easily be involved in governance and have an active stake in the outcome of projects that impact students.

This is particularly significant for discussions around fee increases, changes in program design (including elimination and reforms), and amendments in academic support and service offerings. Predictability in fees is possibly the most significant factor that determines student experience for undergraduates. Students seek greater transparency in fee increases and assurance on the quality of return on investment students are making for their futures. Their decision to support the PAW Centre in the 2015 Winter semester speaks to this commitment. Students primarily come to campus for their classes, but are willing to financially support the development of on-campus



services, provided they are perceived as accessible and high-value. Through proper consultation, we are confident that our policies can be reformed to create a better, fairer, more transparent and accountable publicly funded post-secondary institution.

Beyond fees, the Students' Union would like to see the University evaluate issues on how student consultation is carried out in a specific capacity: whether it is to inform, consult, engage, collaborate or empower student responsibility over a project. We believe that The Student Participation Protocol, developed in collaboration between the Students' Union, Graduate Students' Association and Provost's office in January 2015 and co-signed by all three parties, is capable of fulfilling this role. With clearer student involvement in academic governance and campus projects, we are confident this will build a campus where students can take ownership over matters that impact their degree, and feel a heightened connection to their University.

Adopt the Student Participation Protocol as a clear framework to navigate issues of consultation.

If all stakeholders on campus adhere to a shared guideline, we will have new projects and policies that take into consideration those that stand to be affected. Fundamentally, decisions should be made with the intent to provide a great experience for both campus staff and students at the University, and these decisions can be best made through direct stakeholder engagement.

