Date: January 31, 2014

To: Students’ Council 2013-2014

Re: Students’ Council Engagement Task Force (SCET) Recommendations

Dear Students’ Council,

On behalf of the Students’ Council Engagement Task Force (SCET), I am pleased to provide you with the SCET Recommendations Document.

The following document was created with the help of SCET members: Petros Kusmu, Jessica Nguyen, Kelsey Mills, Marina Banister, Dawson Zeng, Lok To, Fabian Gonzalez, and Seamus Wu.

Over the span of six meetings, SCET drafted nine recommendations. These recommendations were consulted with the Students’ Council, SU’s General Manager, and Discover Governance. The draft of the document was also made available to the Faculty Associations’ VPAs.

It is SCET’s hope that the individuals listed in the “Summary of Recommended Steps” section will pursue the outlined recommendations.

Thank you,

Natalia Binczyk
Students’ Council Engagement Task Force Chair
Students’ Council Engagement Task Force (SCET) Recommendations to Students’ Council
# Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION ........................................................................... 3

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS ...................................... 4

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDED STEPS ................................. 6

RECOMMENDATIONS

A. CONNECTING SU COUNCILLORS WITH THEIR ELECTORATE 9
B. ENHANCING COLLABORATION BETWEEN SC AND FACULTY ASSOCIATIONS 10
C. ENHANCING COLLABORATION BETWEEN SC AND INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS 11
D. DEFINING COUNCIL GOALS .................................................. 11
E. ENHANCING COLLABORATION BETWEEN COUNCILLORS AND EXECUTIVES 12
F. INCREASING SC PRESENCE ON FACEBOOK ......................... 13
G. IMPROVING SC’S PRESENCE ON THE SU WEBSITE ............. 14
H. ENSURING SC’S EFFICIENCY .............................................. 14
I. ENHANCING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR COUNCILLORS 15

APPENDIX 1 ........................................................................... 16
Introduction

As stated in the Students’ Council Engagement Task Force (SCET) Terms of Reference (Appendix 1), SCET was tasked with examining “ways for Students’ Council to be more engaging”. The scope of SCET’s work included a “review of Students’ Council’s bylaws, standing orders, and its general practices to increase Council’s visibility to the greater student population, mak[ing] Council more inclusive to traditionally underrepresented demographics, and empower[ing] members of Council to better connect with their constituents”.

SCET’s recommendations to Students’ Council (SC) are organized into Problems, Solutions, and Recommended Steps. None of these recommendations are mandatory. The intention behind this document is to identify problem areas and propose solutions, thus enabling SC to enhance its visibility, inclusivity, and connection with students.

Upon reading the document, it will become apparent that many responsibilities associated with most recommendations fall on the Chair of the Council Administration Committee (CAC). It is advised that future CAC Chairs offer Council members the opportunity to lead certain initiatives. This will result in a more engaged Council and a more manageable workload for the CAC Chair.

In order to ensure continuity for the outlined initiatives, it is recommended that Committee Chairs also include these recommendations in their transition documents.
Summary of Recommendations

The document identifies problem areas and recommends solutions in order to improve SC’s visibility, inclusivity, and connection with the students. Recommendations are sectioned as follows:

A. Connecting Councillors with their Electorate
It is recommended that Councillors attend campus-wide events. The Event Calendar will aid Councillors with incorporating the events into their schedules. Class talks will offer quick updates on SC and will allow better recognition of SU representatives by the electorate. It is also recommended that clothing specific to SC be ordered following the elections and Councillor portraits be displayed in a public place such as SUB.

B. Enhancing collaboration between SC and Faculty Associations
It is advised that the VPA encourage FAs to request a Council delegate to sit on their boards. The Council representative would have the option to report to Council under the Board and Committee reports and would be required to report to CAC each trimester. The delegate would be key to debriefing on the state of the respective FA should Council be making a decision that could potentially impact the FA.

C. Enhancing Collaboration between SC and International Students
It is recommended that the VPSL advocate for the ISA to request a Council representative to sit on its board. Council representation on the ISA would occur on the same basis as Council representation on FAs. The delegate would be strongly encouraged to give at least one presentation to the ISA on the SC, the SU, and the SU elections.

D. Defining Council Goals
It is recommended that Standing Committees and individual Councillors create annual Goal Documents. These documents would be uploaded onto the website. The intention behind the document upload is to enhance accountability of Councillors to their electorate and to provide a ground for augmented collaboration between Councillors with similar aspirations. Pre-determined goals will also improve the efficiency of collaborative Council goal planning sessions.

E. Enhancing collaboration between Councillors and Executives
It is recommended that Councillors with goals that fall under an Executive portfolio commence collaborative efforts with the respective Executive. It is also advised that all Executives host at least one job shadow day to allow Councillors a more intimate view of their areas of expertise.
F. Increasing SC Presence on Facebook
It is recommended that CAC work with the Speaker and the Administrative Assistant towards the establishment of the SC Facebook page. The intention behind the page is to provide students with quick updates on SC and to facilitate discussions between the students and their representatives.

G. Improving SC’s Presence on the SU website
In order to increase the students’ knowledge of their representatives, it is recommended that Councillor biographies and portraits be uploaded onto the SU website. Furthermore, it is advised that a Councillor job description be created and uploaded onto the website.

H. Ensuring SC’s Efficiency
It is recommended that SC administer intro and outro interviews for all Councillors. It is advised that the interviews occur via surveys. Survey results should be analyzed by DG and presented to Council in order to identify ways to consistently improve SC.

I. Enhancing Professional Development Opportunities for Councillors
It is recommended that professional development opportunities for councilors be explored. Enhanced development opportunities might provide an additional incentive for students to contest a representative position on Council.
Summary of Recommended Steps

A. Connecting Councillors with their Electorate
1. Increase Council’s involvement in campus-wide events
   • Programming and Venues (PnV) – With the assistance of the VP Student Life, PnV will find ways to maximize SC’s presence in its various events and the VP Student Life will communicate these opportunities to CAC.
   • VP Student Life and VP Operations and Finance – With the assistance of the SU staff, create an SU Event Calendar.
   • VP Academic – With the assistance of Discover Governance (DG), through the Council of Faculty Associations (COFA), the VP Academic will encourage Faculty Associations (FA) to populate the SU Event Calendar.
   • VP Student Life – With the assistance of Student Group Services (SGS), the VP Student Life will encourage student groups to populate the SU Event Calendar.

2. Encourage Council’s involvement in Class Talk presentations
   • DG – With the assistance of the SU President and the Chief Returning Officer, DG will collect listing of classes from the Registrar’s Office, organize the list, and share it with CAC.
   • CAC – Will create a monthly PowerPoint based off the Students’ Union’s monthly Newsletter and share it with SC.

3. Enhance Council’s presence through visual means
   • CAC – Order SC clothes within the first six months of SC. Amend CAC’s Standing Orders by adding in a “Council Clothing” section and legislate that it must occur within the first six months of SC.
   • DG – With the assistance of the President and the SU’s Marketing Department, DG will arrange to display Councillor Portraits.

B. Enhancing collaboration between SC and Faculty Associations
   • CAC – Amend SC’s Standing Orders by amending Section 2(1) and including an Order of Business entitled “Trimester Councillor Reports”.
   • VP Academic – Work with SC members in advocating FAs to have at least one non-voting member seat on their Council.

C. Enhancing Collaboration between SC and International Students
   • VP Student Life – Ensure the ISA’s Bylaws allow for at least one member of SC to be a part of its structure.

D. Defining Council Goals
   • Standing Committees – Amend Standing Orders to include “Committee Plans” section with deadlines that are concurrent with the “Executive Plans”.
   • Councillors – Follow deadlines for Committee Plans while submitting Individual Goals Documents.
   • DG – Work with CAC and the SU’s Marketing Department in developing
templates for the documents and ensuring that Goals Documents are uploaded online.

E. Enhancing collaboration between Councillors and Executives
   • President – With the assistance of DG and the cooperation of the Executive Committee, establish at least one job shadow day in all executive portfolios.

F. Increasing SC Presence on Facebook
   • CAC – With the assistance of the President and the SU’s Marketing Department, create a Facebook page for SC.

G. Improving SC’s Presence on the SU website
   • Discover Governance – Work with the President and the SU’s Marketing Department to ensure that Councillor photos, biographies, goals documents, and email addresses are online and up-to-date. Work with CAC to develop and publish a Councillor job description.

H. Ensuring SC’s Efficiency
   • Discover Governance – With the assistance of the President and CAC, DG will develop the interview surveys and analyze the survey results. DG will present survey results to the newly elected SC.
   • CAC – Amend CAC’s Standing Orders by adding in an “Intro and Exit Interviews” section.

I. Enhance Professional Development Opportunities for Councillors
   • Discover Governance – With the assistance of GM, CAC, and the President, DG will explore professional development opportunities for Councillors.
Recommendations

A. Connecting Councillors with their Electorate

Problem:
Council’s presence is apparent primarily during elections. Candidates often connect with the students through posters, banners, class talks, and social media. Once the elections are over, Council’s presence on campus decreases dramatically. Minimized Councillor and student interaction is reflected in the decreased knowledge on SC’s business among the students. Although all information about SC is available online, this method of searching for SC updates is the most time consuming. One-to-one conversations or class presentations on SC require only a fraction of this time. Minimized knowledge on SC results in fewer students interested in attending SC meetings, running in elections, and voting in the SU elections. Therefore, increasing SC’s presence on campus may improve student interest in Council as seen through the number of students attending SC meetings and running or voting in the SU elections. There are three main recommendations for connecting Councillors with their electorate.

Solutions:
1. Increase Council’s involvement in campus-wide events. Although some Councillors already attend University events, they often attend these events as students, not as Council representatives. According to an informal poll during one of this year’s SC meetings, the main barriers preventing Councillors from attending University events are: keeping track of what’s going on, short notice, lack of interest, and lack of time. An Event Calendar, created by the SU staff, will help Councillors to stay up-to-date with upcoming events. Councillors will be able to access the calendar at any time during the year and incorporate the events into their schedules in advance.
2. Encourage Council’s involvement in Class Talk presentations. Class talks may take between 1-2 minutes and should occur right before commencement of a lecture. It is imperative that Councillors request permission from professors prior to conducting class talks. Creation of a Class Talk PowerPoint takes approximately 15-20 minutes, and can be based upon the monthly SU newsletters. It is recommended that a CAC member create the monthly PowerPoint. Should all of the CAC members lack the time to fulfill this responsibility, it is recommended that a SC volunteer creates the PowerPoint and distributes it to Council members. It is essential that Councillors conducting class talks sign up on a class list in order to avoid duplication of efforts.
3. Enhance Council’s presence through visual means. It is recommended that any Council-specific clothing items be ordered shortly after the elections, instead of towards the end of the term. When seeing individuals wearing SC clothing, students will be more likely to recognize their representatives and start a conversation. Furthermore, it is recommended for portraits of Councillors to be displayed in a
public place such as SUB in order to enhance recognition of representatives by their constituents.

**Recommended Steps:**
1. It is recommended that VPSL and VPOF, with the assistance of the SU staff, create the SU Event Calendar. It is advised that VPSL and VPA encourage student groups and Faculty Associations, respectively, to populate the SU Event Calendar. It is also recommended that VPSL collaborate with Programming and Venues (PnV) in order to further examine opportunities for Councillors to become involved in campus-wide events.
2. It is advised that Discover Governance (DG) collect class listing from the Registrar Office. Furthermore, it is recommended that DG organize the class listing by Faculty, or any other method that DG deems appropriate. Creation of the monthly PowerPoint should fall on a CAC volunteer. Should no CAC volunteers be able to take on these responsibilities, an opportunity to complete the described tasks should be opened up to all members of Council.
3. It is recommended that DG collaborate with the President and the SU’s Marketing Department to arrange display of Councillor photos in public places such as SUB. It is advised that CAC amend its Standing Orders by adding a section relevant to Council Clothing and legislate that clothing items must be ordered within the first six months of SC.

**B. Enhancing collaboration between SC and Faculty Associations**

**Problem:**
Currently, there are no systematic, direct communications between Council and Faculty Associations (FAs). During the decision making process, Council may not always be aware of the state of each FA.

**Solutions:**
Due to the large number of students associated with each FA, it is essential for Councillors to bear in mind the state of FAs while making decisions. It is recommended that each FA create a non-voting seat for a Council representative. The Council representative will have an option to give written or oral reports to Council, which will appear under the Board and Committee reports. Council delegates would also be responsible for debriefing on the state of their respective FA should Council be making a decision that may impact this FA. This representative structure is inspired by the Council of the Collective Body for Arts Students, which requests that a Council representative, who also is an Arts student, sit on its Council. Council representatives on FAs would be treated similar to SU Standing Committee Chairs in that they would be expected to formally report to CAC every trimester.

**Recommended Steps:**
It is recommended that the Vice President Academic (VPA) work with FAs towards creation of a non-voting seat for a Council representative on the various FA Councils
or their equivalent body, wherever possible. It is recommended that the FA request a SC representative instead of SC request a seat on a FA Council or equivalent. Once an FA requests a SC representative, representatives from respective faculties will be elected via the same process as for electing SC representatives to SU Boards and Committees. It is also recommended that CAC amend its Standing Orders by amending Section 2(1) and including an Order of Business pertaining to Trimester Councillor Reports.

C. Enhancing collaboration between SC and International Students

Problem:
As stated on the UAlberta website, over 6,000 international students study at the University of Alberta (University of Alberta, n.d., International Undergraduate Students section). Unfortunately, many international students are unaware of SC’s actions and mandates, and their right to vote or run in the elections. Current efforts to create an International Students’ Association (ISA) generate the opportunity for Council to reach out to international students in an organized and strategic manner.

Solutions:
The ISA’s developmental stage increases the possibility for a Council representative to sit on its board. It is recommended for the VPSL, who is engaged in the creation of the Association, to advocate that the ISA request a Council representative to become a member of ISA’s governing body. Council representation on the ISA would occur on the same basis as Council representation on FAs. The ISA is compared to an FA due to the exceptionally large number of its members. It will be strongly encouraged for the Council representative to give at least one presentation to the ISA on Council’s role at the University, the SU, and the SU elections. The information is then expected to trickle down to all international students. As with the Council representatives on FAs, the Council delegate will be able to give optional oral and written reports to Council and will be expected to report to CAC each trimester.

Recommended Steps:
It is recommended that the Executive overseeing the development of the ISA, the VPSL, encourage its founders to form the ISA’s Bylaws such that a Council representative is requested to sit on its board. It is recommended for the ISA to specify whether the Council representative should also be an international student and whether he or she would be a voting member. Selection of the delegate will occur through voting at Council.

D. Defining Council Goals

Problems:
Although Council often sets multiple goals during Council goal planning sessions at the retreats and throughout the year, there often is no sense of direct responsibility for these goals. Council sets goals as the collective, without specifying parties that would be responsible for pursuing particular initiatives. Furthermore, there is no
document specifying Council’s annual goals, which makes it more challenging for constituents to hold their representatives accountable. Reasons for the lack of a Council goals document includes lack of a person responsible to creating this document and no definite agreement on which goals will be pursued.

_Solutions:_

It is recommended that SC’s Standing Committees create annual Goal Documents. Councillors would have an opportunity to create Individual Goal Documents. These documents would be uploaded onto the SU website and made available to all students. Creation and publication of the goals documents opens a door for better collaboration between Councillors with similar aspirations. Once everyone’s goals are determined and clearly stated, Councillors may begin to team up in order to pursue certain initiatives. Creation of Committee and Individual goals will allow fellow Councillors and the students to question representatives about the progress of their intended actions. It is not recommended for the collaborative goal setting sessions to be eliminated. Pre-determined individual goals will contribute to more efficient Council goal planning sessions.

_Recommended Steps:_

It is recommended that each Committee amends its Standing Orders to include “Committee Plans” section with deadlines that are concurrent with the “Executive Plans” (specified in bylaw 4000, Sections 8-11). If an individual Councillor would like to publish his/her goals, the Committee Goal Documents submission deadlines should be followed. It is recommended that DG work with CAC and the SU’s Marketing Department in developing templates for the documents and ensuring that the Goal Documents are uploaded online.

**E. Enhancing Collaboration between Councillors and Executives**

_Problem:_

Councillors often have ideas and projects, which they would like to implement. However, the primary role of a Councillor is to simply set a vision for the SU. It is then a role of the Executive to do the ‘leg work’ and to implement this vision into the SU’s actions. As a result, the Executives are often more informed of the nuances associated with leading a project.

_Solution:_

It is recommended that Councillors with goals that parallel Executive portfolios reach out the Executives in order to commence collaborative efforts. It is also recommended that each Executive host at least one job shadow day per year in order to allow Councillors a closer look at their areas of expertise. Once more Councillors have an intimate knowledge of the work done by the Executive, there may also be an increased number of candidates for the Executive positions.

_Recommended Steps:_

It is recommended that Councillors set their goals by mid-summer and commence
collaboration with the respective Executives. Furthermore, it is recommended that Executives plan and host at least one job shadow day per year.

F. Increasing SC Presence on Facebook

Problem:
In the face of increased dependence on technology, students are often searching for quick updates on events, issues, and news. Currently, the main resource where students can find out about SC updates is the SU website. Documents posted on the website are often lengthy and require a significant amount of time to examine. There is a need for a resource where students could receive quick updates on SC.

Solution:
SC Facebook (FB) page would allow students to see brief updates as well as links to Agendas and Minutes on their Newsfeed. The creation of a SC social network page gives rise to a number of questions, which will be addressed individually.

1. Who is able to post on the page?
   Only Councillors and the Administrative Assistant for SC would be able to post on the page. Students will be able to comment on the posts. This will minimize the possibility of inappropriate/irrelevant posts.

2. Will there be new accounts created for Councillors?
   Councillors would be using their personal accounts. Creation of a new account would lead to significant administrative work, which can easily be avoided. It is Councillors’ responsibility to be mindful of their privacy settings and the content on their FB profiles.

3. Who will ensure that there are posts on the page?
   The Administrative Assistant for SC will regularly post links to Agendas and Minutes.

4. Who will set up the FB page?
   The Speaker will do set up of the page, as long as the Speaker feels that his/her skills are sufficient for such a task. Set up of the page should include: rules of the page (which may be similar to the rules on the SU FB page), Administrator settings, and graphics. It is recommended that CAC reviews the rules and approves the FB page before it becomes public.

5. Who will oversee the FB page?
   It is recommended for the CAC Chair to coordinate the set up and maintenance of the page with the Speaker and the Administrative Assistant. The CAC Chair would also be expected to regularly examine the page for any inappropriate/irrelevant posts.

6. How can we ensure that questions/concerns from students are answered?
   It is recommended that Councillors visit the page regularly and address questions to the best of their abilities. If a Councillor is unable to accurately answer a given question, it is recommended for the Councillor to tag an Executive or a committee Chair under whose portfolio the question falls.

7. How will the page be promoted?
The SC FB page may be promoted via posts on the SU FB page and the SU website. Councillors and Executives may also promote the page on their personal social media accounts, through word of mouth, presentations, etc..

Steps to be taken:
It is recommended that the CAC Chair initiate the creation of the FB page with the assistance of the President, SU’s Marketing Department, the Speaker, and the Administrative Assistant. The CAC Chair should then inform Council members of the page activation date and any rules associated with using the page.

**G. Improving SC’s Presence on the SU website**

**Problem:**
The SU website offers minimum information about Councillors compared to the information offered about the Executives. Lack of information about Councillors contributes to the students’ scarce knowledge about their representatives.

**Solutions:**
It is recommended for Council biographies and pictures be uploaded onto the SU website. It is advised that a Councillor job explanation be created and published on the SU website. It is hoped that the job explanation will increase the students’ knowledge of the work done by their representatives.

**Recommended Steps:**
It is recommended that DG work with the President and the SU’s Marketing Department to ensure that Councillor photos and biographies are uploaded onto the website. It is advised that the CAC Chair encourage submission of the outlined files and send out remainders pertaining to these items. It is recommended that DG collaborate with CAC to create a Councillor job explanation and upload it onto the SU website.

**H. Ensuring SC’s Efficiency**

**Problem:**
The Students’ Council does not have a regulated feedback mechanism that would evaluate SC’s overall efficiency on regular basis.

**Solutions:**
It is recommended that Students’ Council implement annual intro and exit interviews for all Councillors. It is advised for the interviews to occur in a form of a survey. Survey results from the outgoing Council and the results of the intro survey administered to the incoming Council should be analyzed in order to explore ways for the improvement of SC. Survey results and corresponding recommendations for improvement should be presented to SC.

**Recommended Steps:**
It is recommended that DG work with the President and CAC to develop the intro and outro surveys and to analyze the survey results. It is advised that DG present the annual survey results and recommendations for improvement to SC. In order to institutionalize this recommendation, it is advised that CAC amends its Standing Orders by adding in an “Intro and Exit Interviews” section.

I. Enhancing Professional Development Opportunities for Councillors

Problems:
Currently, there are limited incentives for students to contest a representative position on Council. Besides the two annual retreats, Councillors are not provided with significant professional development opportunities.

Solutions/Recommended Steps:
It is recommended that DG work with GM, CAC, and the President to explore professional development opportunities for Councillors.
Appendix 1

Students’ Union Council Engagement Task Force Terms of Reference

Purpose
Engagement with the student body and Good Governance of the Students’ Union are critical success factors outlined in the SU’s Strategic Plan. Furthermore, the continuous review of the SU and its practices is another principle outlined in its Strategic Plan.

The SU Council Engagement Task Force will examine ways for Students’ Council to be more engaging. This will involve a systematic review of Students’ Council’s bylaws, standing orders, and its general practices to increase Council’s visibility to the greater student population, make Council more inclusive to traditionally underrepresented demographics, and empower members of Council to better connect with their constituents.

Scope
The task force will provide recommendations to the Students’ Council before January 31, 2014 that will seek to address the following issues:

• **Visibility** – How can Students’ Council increase its visibility to the greater student population?
• **Inclusivity** – How can Students’ Council eliminate barriers to participation and expand opportunities for involvement with Students’ Council?
• **Connection** – How can Students’ Council better connect with its representatives and further empower its Councillors?

Meetings
Meetings will be held biweekly until the end of January 2014.

Membership
• 1 Students’ Union Executives;
• 1 Representative of the permanent members of Students’ Union Council Administration Committee;
• 1 Representative of the Students’ Union Elections Review Committee;
• 1 Representative of the Students’ Union Bylaw Committee;
• 2 Representative from Students’ Council who are not members of the Executive Committee, the Elections Review Committee, or permanent members of the Council Administration Committee; and
• 3 Student-at-Large positions selected by the aforementioned members.

Resource Personnel
• Chief Returning Officer
• Speaker of the SU
• Discover Governance
• Department of Research and Political Affairs