

**Date:** 12/15/2020

**To:** Students' Union Council

**Re:** BoG Rep 2020/2021 Report 14 - **Reputation and Restructuring**

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Dear Council,

### **Concerns about my Work**

1. Councillor Dixon and I met and discussed concerns she raised last meeting. My mistake was not starting with the basic fact that I always tell the board student concerns as I learn about them. With these concerns I aim to connect reasons that the board can appreciate as to why the concerns matter for them, because although I am always willing to communicate what I hear from students, the efficacy of my messaging may depend on the case I build around the concern; details around problems are often helpful for finding solutions and reaching compromises if necessary. This latter sentence was my leading point whereas I should have begun with, "I always tell the board what students think."

### **Academic Restructuring**

1. This process has been a wild ride. **Submitting this before Friday's board meeting I will vote for GFC's recommendation in the spirit of respecting the academic council's preference and therefore the will of student representatives. The university community needs trust between stakeholders and administration which is why I believe it would be most harmful at this juncture for the board to reject GFC's recommendation, even if they do not see it as the best model for the institution.** This said, I voted for the College Model at GFC on the following grounds:
  - a. Steven Dew, Provost, will not be as effective in his mandate with 20 people reporting to him as their leader as opposed to 7 ([as per this org. chart](#)), which is closer to standard practice in the business world<sup>1</sup> which I reference only to consider feasibility, not to say UAlberta should think primarily like a business. His lack of efficacy due to being overloaded may rob everyone affected by his academic decisions of his potential to operate better with less direct reporters, having offloaded some responsibility to executive deans.<sup>2</sup>
  - b. If executive deans oversee colleges, deans will be freer to oversee their faculties. Without projecting characteristics onto people filling the executive dean positions, having another person and their office be tasked specifically with targeting and coordinating interfaculty and college opportunities holds promise for every stakeholder in the institution. Tasking deans more prominently to their faculties allows them to give all their energy to those faculties, capitalizing on intrafaculty

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.range.co/blog/reporting-ratios>

<sup>2</sup> Read about Steven's role [here](#).

opportunities that executive deans are not necessarily looking for. Specializing mandates to inside and outside faculties eases workloads, maximizing leadership quality in each area. More people can mean more, better work.

- i. As per the [Shared Services Model cost comparison table](#), it and the original College Model save the same amount of money and the College Model implements an additional three people and their offices (which could probably be compared to deans and their associates) to support UAlberta's academic mission. Why would we reject the opportunity to spread out the workload of university leadership for a relatively similar price tag to not having them?**
  - c. Reorganizing deans into colleges without changing their reporting hierarchy may perpetuate existing positive and negative aspects of deans' interactions. Executive deans are not a perfect solution but a new voice and perspective may encourage unique change in a better way than slightly transitioning the governance structure by altering the deans' council model will.
  - d. Determining the direction of UAlberta's academic mission with 14 deans may be harder than with 3 executive deans because decisions generally take longer to be made with more people and this generality is important when considering the quickly approaching need for a balanced budget to deliver to the Albertan Government this March. Having executive deans does not mean inclusivity and fair representation of deans' opinions will be lost as long as the people hired for these positions are well chosen, follow their mandates and are held accountable. We cannot realistically predict whether they will better serve students than the current deans' council does or not but I understand we all project the best and worst onto these theoretical positions according to our experiences and biases.
2. I also heard lots of critiques of the College Model and recognize their importance. UAlberta has to get EDI right. Executive deans have to be just leaders. Administration needs to monitor deans' councils and Steven's ability to handle that many people reporting to him with both qualitative and quantitative metrics which people should be able to publicly access in accordance with the principle of transparency, improving upon a far too private initial planning process. We need to see if we have achieved change for the better or preserved the status quo for students, staff and faculty at UAlberta.

Thanks for reading!



University of Alberta Undergraduate Board of Governors Representative

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