Date: Oct 31st 2019
To: Students’ Union Council
Re: President 2019/20 Report #11

Dear Council,

I am writing this report in the hard sun in Phoenix, Arizona at the OpenEd 2019 Conference! This has been an interesting few weeks, and this spooky month has come to an end; it was definitely spooky for more reasons than one. Time is just flying by, and by the time you read this, I will officially be 6 months into my term! Ah, how wild! Read ahead for some updates and I look forward to any questions.

1. Executive Committee
   - The Executive still have our Shadow Days open! Sign up here.
   - Congrats to our External Team (VP Brown, EAA Robert Nelson and our GOTV Coordinator Christian) for an incredible Federal campaign. Looking forward to continuing to do some incredible federal advocacy with CASA.
   - VP Larsen, Statt, Brown and I did an advocacy workshop with iHouse, courtesy of Councillor Gatera for the invite, and it went really well! We focused it on the UN Sustainable Development Goals as that is the focus of the work in iHouse. One group pitched an idea to solve the gender gap in STEM and Medicine fields at the UofA, and the other pitched how we can combat climate change by installing solar panels. Both groups were really well done.
   - VP Agarwal and I attended the OpenEducation19 Conference. It was the second time I’ve gone to this conference, and it was spicy for sure this year. My two panels tomorrow are: (1) “We won the affordability argument and now publishers are co-opting it. What now?”, and (2) “OER makes for a more inclusive classroom—or does it?”
     - If you have more questions about the other incredible sessions we attended, ask us at Council!

2. Internal University
   - University Budget
     - This has been my whole entire life for the past few weeks. Not only was the Provincial budget dropped, but the University is shifting to a three-year budget model which is definitely contentious.
     - While I was away in Phoenix, President Turpin and I had a few calls regarding the budget and language to be used. It’s great that the University has realized that we need more of a commitment to student financial aid, but we definitely have a lot of work to do regarding the cut of our Campus Alberta Grant.
- **Presidential Search Committee**
  - Meetings are ongoing and something we have committed to is starting every meeting with a moment to recognize our unconscious bias. I’ll be leading the next learning moment for the Committee which is something I’m looking forward too.

3. **External Advocacy**
- **Canadian Alliance of Student Associations**
  - I am the Vice-Chair of the Governance Internal Review Committee for CASA, and some of the projects I am working on re-working CASA’s election procedures, and looking at updated membership fee structure to work with our Ontario schools.
  - Nathan Sunday (in his role as VP Finance of the Aboriginal Students’ Council) attended the first Member Sponsorship Program of CASA, where they hosted Indigenous student leaders from across the country in Ottawa to provide direct feedback to CASA. From preliminary discussions, it sounded like it went really well but I am excited to hear more from him directly!

- **External Meetings**
  - Post the drop of the Provincial Budget VP Brown and I have been really busy.
  - Some major updates:
    - 1. **UASU Budget Town Hall**
      - The Exec are hosting a town hall because to be honest, we need your support. We know these changes aren’t ideal, but there are many different ways we can respond to the problem we’re facing. We want to work together to create the best solution for students. To do this, we need to hear from you. We want to hear directly from you at our Town Hall, next Thursday, November 7 at Noon on the SUBstage. **Facebook events should be live by the time you read this** - please share this with as many people as possible. There will be free cookies!
    - 2. Meeting with Advanced Education Minister Demetrios Nicolaides
      - He is meeting with students to discuss the budget. We will update you all in person on Tuesday.

4. **Internal Students’ Union**
- I am hosting **Election Workshops** this year, open to the public!! I have a lot to say about the elections and candidates wanting to run, so please feel free to reach out. Link to sessions here.
- VP Statt, GM Marc Dumouchel and I have been really hard at work developing a sustainable solution to the issue of deferred maintenance in SUB. We gave a presentation to Council and are starting broader community engagement. I am getting
together a Executive Campaign Crew to help ensure this project is reflective of students. I’m excited to continue having conversations about this topic.

- I am meeting with the Office of Human Rights and Disclosure to discuss a vision on how we can get EDI training integrated into our staff structure at the UASU. We have a staff-wide Blanket Exercise planned for January 14th at our Mid-Year Managers event.

5. External Campus Community

- I was on AlbertaPrimeTime talking about the potential impacts of the MacKinnon Report on the Post-Secondary sector. We know this report is just a set of recommendations, but when these recommendations start becoming policy, we want to be at the table to voice our feedback directly.

Thank you for reading my report and I look forward to any questions you may have either via email or during question period. My office hours will be by appointment, so please feel free to send me an email.

Cheers,

Akanksha Bhatnagar

University of Alberta Students' Union President

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