

Date: April 06, 2021

To: Students' Union Council

Re: President 2020/21 Report #21

Dear Council,

Spring is in the air, and I am so excited about the beautiful weather! I hope you all had a lovely Easter long weekend to recoup and re energize as we finish off the last month of the semester, and of my term as UASU President. As we approach the end, things have never been busier, and I am using any spare time to wrap up projects and transition my successor. Here are a few things I've been up to in the past few weeks.

Board of Governors Tuition Advocacy

As you are aware, tuition increases were voted upon at the Board of Governors meeting. I along with my student colleagues put up a [strong opposition](#) to these increases at the Board, as well as at the meetings prior to the BoG final vote. At the Board Finance Property Committee meeting, I [pushed hard](#) against the tuition increase, and proposed alternative mechanisms be put in place to ensure that student financial aid be bolstered, especially given the additional challenges students have and continue to face during this pandemic. Further to this, I wanted to ensure that board members understand that these fee increases are not just numbers on paper, but have real impacts on real students. This is why I put out a survey gathering the stories of how tuition increases are and have already been impacting students. The report can be found [here](#), and I made sure to circulate this to all the Board Members.

Further to this, I not only ensured that these stories were heard but I aimed to propose a solution to increase support for students on campus. At the February 24th, 2021 Academic Planning Committee (APC) meeting prior to the BoG vote, I put forward the [following motion](#) which did not go through:

“Agarwal moves that APC recommend to BFPC that if tuition revenues exceed expectations, a minimum of 20% of the revenue in excess of the budgeted amount be directed to additional student aid, or other programs which directly support or benefit students.”

Some good news out of all this, is that 15 percent of tuition will be set aside for student financial aid as was the case last year. Though, I have [pushed](#) for further measures to be taken as this is not enough especially this year.

Canadian Alliance of Student Associations AGM

VP Ley and myself attended the CASA Annual General Meeting last week which was quite a full packed agenda. Though we could not be in person this year of course, we were able to gather virtually with student leaders from coast to coast, continuing the CASA tradition of singing Country Roads together. At the AGM we discussed many important updates from the year, including policy updates, financial updates, discussions on inclusive branding, among others.

First Annual Alberta Student Congress

We helped organize the first annual Alberta Student Congress which was a huge success. We had about 62 student leaders attend from across the province from universities, colleges and polytechnics, and a wonderful opportunity for CAUS and ASEC students to gather together with a collective voice in strategizing the recent budget cuts to PSE. This may be the beginning of a unified student movement across the province and I am optimistic that this will be beneficial to students as we move forwards. We discussed and voted on condemning the cuts made to PSIs in the province, and called upon the government to ensure that the PSE system is predictable, transparent and equitable. We also voted on calling upon the Ministry of Advanced Education to create a set of online learning standards. Further, it was voted on that the Alberta Student Congress supports further collective action of students across the province.

Provincial Advocacy: Crippling Budget Cuts

I recently published an [Opinion Editorial](#) in the Edmonton Journal which has been making its rounds. I hope that the message was loud and clear of the importance of PSIs in Alberta. Here is a snippet:

“Strong investments in Alberta’s post-secondary sector helped make our province an economic powerhouse. Robust research programs, high-quality academic programs, and plentiful employment opportunities ensured Alberta would have one of the youngest and best-educated workforces in North America, a critical factor for attracting investment. The economic impacts of just my university, the University of Alberta, speak for themselves: a few years ago, the university had a direct economic impact in Alberta of \$12.3 billion, and organizations founded by alumni generated \$348.5 billion. Today the economic impact is higher.”

I was also recently interviewed on [Alberta Primetime](#) where I talked about how the provincial budget cuts are impacting the University of Alberta, as well as PSIs across the province.

Classes In-Person Fall 2021

The University announced plans to move in person this fall after recent direction from the Provincial Government. We continue to monitor the situation to ensure that student safety is a priority. You can watch me discussing this as well as the lack of clarity on [CityNews Edmonton](#).

As always, please feel free to contact me with any questions or comments relating to my report. My office hours are by appointment, so if you would like to meet regarding any matter, feel free to email me at president@uasu.ca

Yours Sincerely,



Joel Agarwal
University of Alberta Students' Union President