

**Date:** 09/21/21

**To:** Students' Union Council

**Re:** President's Report 08/24/21

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Hi Council,

I hope your first three weeks back in class have been good, and that you weren't too distraught by the sudden cancellation of classes on Thursday and Friday. Despite the dire provincial health situation, we believe it is relatively safe for in-person classes to proceed with mandatory vaccination, and the university and government agree. It is appalling to me, though, that we are in this position. The complete failure of leadership by the provincial government on COVID-19 is a stark reminder to all of us in positions of authority of the importance of accountability, integrity, and thinking ahead. I think constantly about the people affected by the near-collapse of our healthcare system and our province's very uncertain future in the coming months.

### **COVID Advocacy**

As you all know, the executive team has consistently advocated for a safe return to in-person classes. We believe that the vaccination mandate announced by the University is an essential part of that, and we fully support the University's decision. Please see our statement [here](#), and comments to the Edmonton Journal [here](#). The feedback and comments we have received from students are 90%+ in favour of the vaccine mandate and remaining in-person, and we have advocated accordingly.

We are continuing to support in-person classes despite the present state of public health emergency due to the high vaccination rate on campus. No outbreak has yet been attributed to academic activities at U of A, likely due to our mask mandate and vaccination rate (which will only improve). The only outbreak associated with the community so far was at Beercade and likely due to unvaccinated individuals dancing without masks in close proximity with community members. However, we are prepared to reevaluate our position if there is an outbreak on campus or the situation changes in other ways. Public health is always our first priority.

### **Allegations against Ricardo Acuña**

I should begin this section of my report with a content warning as it involves sexual violence. Ricardo Acuña, the President of the Academic Staff Association, has been accused of sexual assault and inappropriate behaviour towards numerous women. The UASU has issued a [statement](#) calling on Acuña to resign from his positions of power on campus or to be removed, mainly because of the unacceptable position of power he holds in a community with many people who could be at risk, but also because of his

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**Rowan Ley, President**

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conflict of interest regarding AASUA's advocacy against policy changes to better protect students from predatory behaviour by instructors. We continue to take this very seriously and will change our relationship with AASUA until Acuña is removed.

### **Get Your Shot contest wrapup**

A project that has been taking up about 20% of my time this week has been wrapping up the Get Your Shot contest. In total we finished with nearly 9,000 entries, ran under budget, and massively increased engagement with Perks. While it is impossible to know how many people were vaccinated because of the incentive, if the number was even in the hundreds (which I think is realistic) I feel the contest was a success. Increasing community buy-in and support for vaccination is important as we move into a period where they become mandatory, though nobody anticipated that at the time that we started the contest. I have been in touch with our donors to thank them for their generosity in supporting the project, allowing us to run a \$40,000 contest at minimal cost to the UASU.

For transparency reasons, we publish a list of winners which can be found [here](#). All winners have been contacted and we are arranging distribution of prizes.

As always, get in touch if you have any questions or concerns!



University of Alberta Students' Union President  
**Rowan Ley**