

**Date:** November 17, 2020  
**To:** Students' Union Council  
**Re:** President 2020/21 Report #14

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Dear Council,

I want to give a quick update on how the Executive team is fighting for student priorities in the academic restructuring process.

Earlier this year, we saw the provincial government impose sweeping cuts that are causing the elimination of more than a thousand full-time jobs at the University of Alberta alone. The University faces unprecedented pressure to cut costs and jobs while meeting the rapidly-changing demands of the COVID-19 pandemic. Student leaders, universities, colleges, and staff associations across Alberta have fought to slow or reverse these cuts as much as possible. This is a critical time to make sure the University hears and respects students' voices.

Over the past few months, the University has engaged in an ambitious restructuring project, the University of Alberta for Tomorrow initiative. UAT is a complicated, opaque process with the potential to improve and/or damage the student experience in any number of ways. We successfully pushed for undergrad and grad student representation on the Academic Restructuring Working Group, where I've been making your input unavoidable for decision-makers.

The Executive team has pushed the University on top student priorities, and we're starting to see results.

We've strongly supported preserving the identity and autonomy of faculties, especially Campus Saint-Jean, Augustana, and the Faculty of Native Studies. We're pleased to see the current scenarios respect our input on this.

We've consistently pushed to preserve and strengthen access to academic advisors, including Indigenous academic advising services. We're happy that the Provost has publicly stated that keeping advisors in faculties is a priority. At Students' Council, at the Council of Faculty Associations (COFA), and on social media, students are deeply concerned about front-line student services (counseling, advising, sexual violence response, etc.), plus impacts at the department and program level, and equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI). We're urging University administrators to actively seek out and hear students' voices on

these issues and more. That means the University needs to work harder to inform, engage, and listen.

While we continue to oppose the cuts that put the University in this position, we hope that the UAT process will also bring some benefits for students. We hope the University can enhance efficiency and interdisciplinary opportunities in ways that focus on the student experience.

We want to hear more from students, so we're running a virtual town hall with the Graduate Students' Association on November 23rd from 12:00PM - 1:00PM. We promise to take your input and concerns to the University at the highest levels.

Meanwhile, we and our partners across Alberta are still fighting the root cause of the problem: the provincial government's unprecedented cuts. We hope the University finds stable funding and sees as little damage to the student experience as possible.

My office hours are by appointment, please email me at [president@uasu.ca](mailto:president@uasu.ca) and I would love to meet virtually with you.

Yours Sincerely,



**Joel Agarwal**  
University of Alberta Students' Union President