

Date: December 01, 2020
To: Students' Union Council
Re: President 2020/21 Report #15

Dear Council,

I hope you are all doing well as we roll into final exam season.

I, alongside the rest of the Executive team, continue to be highly engaged with the University of Alberta for Tomorrow initiative. On November 23rd, we held a joint virtual town hall with the Graduate Students' Association to answer questions from students about academic restructuring, and we have been playing our part in disseminating information to students across all of our communication channels. Within academic restructuring, Faculty autonomy and identity has been clearly prioritized by students, particularly those in Faculties which serve particularly unique populations and missions (Augustana, Campus Saint-Jean, and Native Studies). We are glad to see that these values have largely been reflected in the proposals which have been prioritized. Further, we continue to advocate for the preservation or enhancement of academic quality, support services, and the student experience wherever possible.

Vice-President Academic, David Draper, has been hard at work this semester highlighting the challenges that students face during this unique year, including those associated with online proctoring. Vice-President Draper has also been actively advocating policy solutions to university administration which would be to the benefit of students' mental health, including a more compassionate approach to grading and an extended winter break. I would be remiss if I did not additionally mention that despite the challenges with student engagement in this remote environment, thanks to Vice-President Draper's dedicated work, student representation on General Faculties Council is at its highest level since at least 2009, with a legitimate chance at reaching 100% of seats filled at some time this year.

As in pre-pandemic years, November was full of advocacy towards the federal and provincial governments. Both our federal and provincial advocacy groups (CASA and CAUS, respectively, the latter of which is chaired by Vice-President External Rowan Ley) held virtual lobbying conferences in November, meeting with as many MPs, Senators, and MLAs as possible to present student issues and proposed solutions. Vice-President Ley also continues to sit as a member of the guiding coalition for the Alberta 2030 review of the post-secondary system. While we continue to engage in that process in good faith, I must say that thus far, we have been underwhelmed by the quality of work that we have seen from the government's contractor. We are also quite concerned that limitations which are being

imposed on the review by the government are preventing a truly fulsome analysis of the system from taking place, and we are worried about how much the government and their contractor are truly listening to stakeholders with open minds.

Alana Krahn, Vice-President Operations and Finance, has been playing a leading role in conducting negotiations with Edmonton Transit and regional transit operators regarding the 2021-2025 UPass contract. Although there are a few small details which remain to be worked out, I am pleased to be able to say that an agreement-in-principle has been reached which, particularly given the circumstances, is quite beneficial for students. Most notably, the transit agencies have agreed to freeze the UPass fee for the duration of the contract, which means that students will be able to have unlimited access to all seven transit systems in the Edmonton Region for a fee which works out to just \$45 per month. Outside of transit negotiations, Vice-President Krahn's primary focus has been on work advancing projects to improve the accessibility and sustainability of campus, and of our Students' Union Building in particular, utilizing resources from our Sustainability and Capital Fund.

Finally, Vice-President Student Life, Katie Kidd, has been actively working to improve the student experience at the University of Alberta, both for this year as well as once the pandemic is behind us. In particular, Vice-President Kidd has been pressing administration to take more substantive action supporting the prevention of sexual violence within the university and university-related settings, and has also been doing work to ensure that students have adequate access to mental health resources whether or not they are studying on campus.

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

Yours Sincerely,



Joel Agarwal
University of Alberta Students' Union President