

Date: January 26, 2021
To: Students' Union Council
Re: President 2020/21 Report #18

Dear Council,

Well, we are in interesting times. The past year has been a challenging one, and placing student needs at the forefront is still important as ever.

Here's part of a recent [Edmonton Journal article](#) I was quoted in:

Students hit especially hard

“Joel Agarwal, president of the University of Alberta Students' Union, said in an email the pandemic continues to create challenges for students who struggle with high tuition. He said the students' union surveyed more than 5,000 students just before the pandemic hit in March and found most were working while studying, while nearly 40 per cent were working in a job unrelated to their field of study.

Most of these jobs were in the service sector.

“It's a perfect storm of problems that hit students especially hard,” Agarwal said. “When students can't work, they can't shoulder those costs, so mental health concerns are rising. Since Alberta's student aid system has the worst grants-to-loans imbalance in Canada, students rely heavily on whatever work they can find.”

Tuition is set to increase 7% this March at the Board of Governors, and I intend to push back while including students in the process. The plan is to present the case as to how tuition increases are negatively impacting students, and putting out a survey to collect stories to present at the board. If you are interested, or have any ideas / suggestions - please reach out to me.

As I noted in a recent tweet: “I am very concerned. Deregulated tuition is a bad idea - it fundamentally drives inequity. By 2023, #abpse tuition & fees will be 450% higher than in 1990 and among the highest in Canada. Without regulation, how much worse off will we be by 2030?” I am deeply concerned about a [sector level board as well as deregulated tuition](#) which would have many large scale implications for students. VP Ley and I are working hard with the Council of Alberta University Students to plan a province wide campaign to promote the importance of Post Secondary Education (PSE) later this semester. In the meantime we

are participating, along with every CAUS school in an online campaign which you can participate in [here](#).

This semester, I continue to chair the Governance Restructuring Task Force (GRTF), where we are working towards improving the effectiveness of our governance structures, while tackling some of the cultural issues brought up in past years. The GRTF will be providing a report to Council in the coming weeks.

My office hours are by appointment, so if you would like to meet regarding any matter - please feel free to email me at president@uasu.ca

Yours Sincerely,



Joel Agarwal

University of Alberta Students' Union President