

**Date:** February 09, 2021  
**To:** Students' Union Council  
**Re:** President 2020/21 Report #19

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Dear Council,

**Online Learning Advocacy: GFC**

As you are aware, we have been pushing quite hard on a number of fronts to ensure online learning is both effective and inclusive for students. Certainly this pandemic has created a suboptimal learning environment where students are being forced to wake up at 3AM to attend mandatory synchronous classes because they are stuck in a different country. Further students with internet bandwidth problems are struggling to stay on top of their class work. And not to mention the immense privacy, discrimination and security issues with online proctoring. At the last GFC meeting, student leaders spoke on the topic for hours and were met with mixed responses from faculty. I want to be clear, that I fully understand that students, faculty and staff are all under a lot of pressure and hardship due to the pandemic. Many faculty as well are trying hard to accommodate students, learn how to use new online learning tools and facilitate a healthy and optimal online environment. But we also recognize that students are also still struggling. We are grateful that the university has committed to striking a task force on remote teaching and learning, and publicly made a commitment to ensuring that “courses that have a synchronous component must offer alternatives for students who can’t reasonably be expected to participate.” We as your UASU Executive will continue to push for these.

**Internal University Advocacy: CSV**

As you have been quite aware of over the past several months, the hiring of the Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Coordinator is one step closer to actualization. VP Kidd and myself attended the Joint Student / University Oversight Committee on MNIFs where we proposed an MNIF increase to the Health and Dental Plan which of course had undergone extensive consultation, a unanimous vote at Students' Council, and support from numerous student organizations across campus (COFA, EDIT, CORA, ASC, ISA, Order of Omega, Black Students' Association, University Athletic Board etc). The \$1.50 fee per Fall/Winter semester would cover the cost associated with hiring of this position. This vote passed at the MNIF committee, and will now be going to the Board Finance Property Committee, and finally the Board of Governors. This is a historic vote, and one that we hope will bring the University of Alberta one step closer to improving the safety of students.

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**Joel Agarwal, President**

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**External Advocacy**

As you are aware, the next Provincial Budget will most likely be released mid February, and we continue to push for important student considerations. We have discussed the importance of regulated tuition and have been pushing this provincially for months, along with the fact that a super board across Alberta is not a good idea. Further, the over \$100M in cuts to the Campus Alberta Grant and other cuts to PSEs in Alberta are having their effects on students already, and will only be felt deeper. Later in the week, VP Ley, VP Kidd and myself will be attending the Advanced Education Student Leaders' Meeting where we will be discussing Alberta's Tuition Policy and other topics, and where we certainly intend on pushing for provincial action on Campus Sexual Violence.

Last week, you may have noticed a few snow penguins appear at the Legislature Grounds. This was organized by student leaders in Edmonton, and was meant to be a fun way of demonstrating that students are upset about the budget cuts which have led to increases in tuition (at the University of Alberta about 25% by next academic year). Though we recognize that students cannot protest physically due to health restrictions, this penguin protest has garnered a lot of public attention on social media and traditional media outlets. We are launching our PSE campaign on Monday to push back against government cuts and we hope that the message will get across to students.

**Governance Restructuring Task Force**

Over the past week, the GRTF subcommittees have been meeting to develop plans and consultation paths for the various ideas on the table. Looking at the SRA structure which includes COFA, CORA, SRAs and their connection to Council, we are considering ways to better include these voices as part of consultation for Students' Council. Regarding the Students' Council working group, we are considering ways to better improve the culture of Council, the functionality of Council and it's transparency. There will be a series of focus groups where we will be gathering information and feedback from Current and past Councillors before making recommendations. We hope to present the preliminary recommendations at Council soon.

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](mailto:president@uasu.ca)

Yours Sincerely,

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**Joel Agarwal**

University of Alberta Students' Union President