

Date: June 16, 2020
To: Students' Union Council
Re: President 2020/21 Report #4

Dear Council,

A lot has happened in the past two weeks to say the least. I was excited to attend GovCamp part 1, which will be my third and likely final GovCamp of my student experience. I am excited to get to know you more in an online setting. It is crazy to think that we're already a month and a half into our terms. Over the past month, the members of our Executive team have gotten settled into their new roles, and have begun work advancing a range of advocacy priorities and other initiatives.

As you are likely aware, the Government of Alberta announced earlier this week that implementation of its proposed performance-based funding model will be delayed until the 2021-2022 academic year. The UASU executive have been calling on the government to take such action for months, particularly in light of the COVID-19 pandemic and the rampant unpredictability that it has brought for the post-secondary sector. We are pleased that the government finally decided to listen to students after months of pushback. Further to this, the Ministry [announced](#) that they are scrapping expenditure cap targets planned for this year which helps the university quite substantially. However, we continue to have serious concerns with the government's proposed model, and we sincerely hope that the government takes this year to engage stakeholders and make meaningful changes to their proposed approach on this matter.

In response to the BLM movement, we are in the process of creating an Equity, Diversity, and Inclusivity (EDI) Committee and intend to work closely with the Black Students' Association (BSA), Aboriginal Students' Council (ASC), the International Students' Association (ISA), and other groups in forming this. The committee will guide the UASU as we examine our personnel practices to ensure we aren't creating unintended barriers. We want to find the best ways to measure diversity within our staff and volunteer base and aim to ensure current and former volunteers have clear, safe, and confidential ways to report EDI issues and submit complaints. We hope to have a draft of terms of reference for this committee next week.

1. Internal University

Academic Restructuring Working Group (ARWG)

- I attended the Academic Restructuring [Town Hall](#) which Dr. Bill Flangan hosted. The attendance was well over 2000 individuals which shows that the campus community is quite engaged in this process
- VP Draper brought brought the discussion of Academic Restructuring to the Council of Faculty Associations for discussion and thoughts, I am hoping that the university will bring this more to students for feedback in addition to the town hall and current governance process
- The draft principles which will guide the process of were approved at Academic Planning Committee (APC), where Councillor Bose and I sit as the two undergraduate students. I'm happy to chat about them if you have any questions

Fees Negotiations

- **Upass:** In continuation from last meeting, VP Krahn, VP Kidd in conjunction with the GSA have been negotiating fees, I am excited to see the progress on this file in the coming weeks
- **MNIFS:** We have been pushing the university on various fronts for the reduction of certain fees for the Spring and Summer semester, which were successful (Athletics and Recreation Fees, PAW Centre fees, UPass). We are in current meetings with the university discussing the prospects of reducing or cutting certain other fees for the Fall 2020 semester (including the Athletics and Recreation Fee, and the PAW centre fee among others). We were able to push for a 30% reduction in the Athletics and Recreation fee, and I am hopeful that our advocacy will bring forth fruitful results on other fronts

3. External Advocacy

The UASU Executive team is very concerned about the cuts that have been proposed for Campus Saint-Jean (CSJ), the only French-language post-secondary campus in Canada west of Winnipeg. If these cuts proceed as planned, as many as 44% of courses currently offered at CSJ will be lost, which would be detrimental to all current and future students seeking to complete their post-secondary education in French. Our team is working with other community stakeholders to advocate on behalf of CSJ students and make the case for the provincial and federal governments to properly support this unique academic community.

Council of Alberta University Students (CAUS)

- We've been finalizing our [CAUS](#) advocacy priorities for the year which include the following broad categories:
 - Fair value for tuition
 - Healthy and safe campuses
 - Protection for students in the COVID recession
 - An end to the new red tape on universities

In other news, huge shout out to Councillor Simran Dhillon, Councillor Adarsh Badesha and Ajay Gill for their successful work in fighting the fentanyl crisis and winning the World's Challenge Challenge (WCC). Take a look at their incredible work [here](#). The opioid crisis is a hugely important cause to fight for, and I am always excited to see Science and technology used to fight for important causes (my inner Science student speaking).

As always, I'm happy to meet for an e-coffe with you if you ever want to chat about anything!

Yours Sincerely,



Joel Agarwal

University of Alberta Students' Union President