

Date: 25/01/2021

To: Students' Union Council

Re: Vice President Academic 2020/21 Report #18

Howdy Council!

I hope the first month of the semester has gone well for you! I find the winter semester always seems to go by much faster than the fall. Anyways, i've been up to quite a bit since my last report, so check out below if you're curious.

Priority Vaccination for Health Sciences Students

Over the past couple of months I have been working with the Nursing Undergraduate Association and Councilor Filpovic to resolve some issues around safety on practica for nursing students. Although we have reached a solution the systemic risk is still present. Due to this concern about student safety I have decided to expand the scope of our advocacy on this issue. Last Monday I presented at the Council of Alberta University Students and made the case for why they should be advocating provincially for priority vaccination for health sciences students. That presentation went quite well and now CAUS is working with the same organization who successfully achieved priority vaccinations for paramedics. Hopefully this advocacy will bear fruit.

Students on Experiential Learning Policy Creation Process

Myself and VP Kidd have been hard at work on the drafting of a new UAPPOL policy. The working title for this policy is the "Students on Experiential Learning Policy." This policy aims to address some egregious gaps in UAPPOL. Currently their protections and guidelines for students on practica are disappointingly sparse, due to this we have worked to draft a policy to provide the institutional responsibility to protect these students. This policy drafting process is still in the early consultation phase. To date we have done consultation with the Director of the Sexual Assault Center, The Director of Student Conduct, The Dean of Students, a Vice Dean of Students, the Registrar and two Associate Registrars, The Vice Provost Programs, the Provost's office Issues Manager, and the Vice Provost Learning Initiatives. Currently there are plans to bring this policy draft to the Council of Faculty Associations' Members Services Board. We are hoping to have this policy enacted by April 2021.

Open Education Policy

Councilor Fotang, Councilor Batycki, and myself have been hard at work on the Second principles of the Open Education Policy! The second principles passed unanimously at Policy Committee and I am looking forward to passing them at council! I believe this will be the first new policy of the year, and possibly longer! This policy represents a topic that has been vital to the role of the VP-A for since prior to when I began my degree, although there has not been a formal policy guiding it. This policy seeks to guide advocacy and provide information on topics such as Open Data, Open Research, and the ever popular Open Educational Resources.

ALES GFC Seats

The Application for the final two GFC representative seats is currently live! Applications will close thursday the 28th, interviews will take place between February 1st -4th and individuals should be on the agenda for ratification by council at the February 9th meeting. Currently we already have multiple applications for the seats. Which means we are now only steps away from having every student seat on GFC filled for the first time in ever (in my, or the GFC secretary's knowledge). To put that in context we will have DOUBLED the student presence from the 2019/2020 academic year and set a new record that can only be beaten if the provincial government changes the PSLA to add additional student representatives to the General Faculties Council. I look forward to celebrating once this process has run its course.

Online learning

The General Faculties Council will be discussing the topic of online learning at their January 25th meeting. This has been an issue I have been raising ad nauseum within my term. I have pushed for a more fulsome discussion to take place at GFC, however due to the exclusive focus on academic restructuring, that has not been able to happen until now. I am looking forward to this discussion and I plan on pushing quite extensively on the various issues that have been brought to my attention over this year. Fundamentally the lack of action on the concerns i have raised over the last eight months is a disservice to the student body at this university.

Assessments during reading week

Multiple students have reached out to me about scheduled assessments during the Winter 2021 reading week. I've been raising these concerns to various Vice Provosts to ensure that students actually have a reading week as has been scheduled in the calendar. The current wording for the university calendar as that "classes are fully withdrawn" for reading week. The opinion of the Vice Provost Learning Initiatives is that this statement means courses are fully on pause and that week is treated like individuals are not enrolled in courses. I am pushing for there to be a communication to professors that they are prohibited from scheduling assessments during this break.

Minimum technology requirements for professors

Back in the summer I had worked with the university on the drafting of minimum technology requirements for students taking part in an online semester. It was an interesting process working to balance both access and ensuing students had the tools they needed to thrive. Over the course of the fall semester and since returning to courses for winter 2021, it has become clear that the lack of similar requirements for the professoriate has been harming students. Many professors may not meet the technological requirements for the courses they are teaching. Due to this I have been raising the topic of minimum technological requirements for professors teaching remote delivery courses. Hopefully some of these issues are resolved soon.

Remember, never hesitate to reach out if you have any questions, comments, or concerns.

All the best,

David Draper
David Draper

University of Alberta Students Union Vice President Academic