Date: 2022-10-14  
To: Students’ Union Council  
Re: Vice President External 2022/23 Report #11

Dear Council,

Below is a summary of recent activities and duties I have undertaken these past two weeks. It’s a little bit shorter this week, with a focus on important items that have arisen in the news.

CASA Member School Tours

Last week, I joined CASA’s Member Relation Officer, Wasiimah, on her visit to CASA member schools in Edmonton. Our tour began with a visit across the river to MacEwan to meet the executives of SAMU. The next day, we visited UAGSA and presented to their board and then closed our tour with a presentation to Council, which many of you saw, Wasiimah and I presented at the last council meeting. I appreciated all the questions and feedback from Councilors.

Upcoming Events

Danielle Smith was elected by the UCP as the new Premier of Alberta. Our focus will be to stay on the message of the importance of PSE and investments in PSE. In her victory speech, Smith remarked on the importance of mental health support, and I along with my counterparts hope that these words can follow in action through increased support for mental health services on campus among other things. If a strong and prosperous Alberta is the collective goal, our work will be to communicate to Premer Smith and her new team that Post-Secondary Students are vital to achieving this goal.

While we have no word yet on what her new Cabinet will look like. We know that it will have more rural representation but we will be working with CAUS to find out more. At this moment there is no indication that Minister Nicolaides will be shuffled, however, I do not want to speculate.

International Student Work Hour Changes

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada announced that starting from November 15, 2022, until December 31, 2023, international students with approved study permits will be able to work more than 20 hours per week in off-campus employment. These changes will allow international students to earn more while they are studying and extra cash will enable them to offset the increasing cost of international student tuition and the rising cost of living.

This is great news and something that President Monteiro and I as well as past executives have been advocating for a long time. This news also follows the meeting we had with MP Francois La-Londe, the Parliamentary Secretary for the Minister of Immigration, MP Blake Desjarlais, NDP Critic for PSE, and deputy critic for Immigration, and also earlier this year the House of Commons standing committee on Citizenship and Immigration study on study permit processing, where I was a witness and spoke about the easing of

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barriers to work for international students. Going forward, we will continue to work with CASA, and other stakeholders, to ensure that this program extends beyond just one year and becomes a permanent change.

Following this news, my colleague Ngoc Huynh, the Director of EDI and VP External for Mount Allison Students’ Union, and I represented CASA at a roundtable discussion organized by the Minister to hear from Atlantic Canada post-secondary institution’s concerns around study permit processing. During this discussion, CASA joined along with many others at the table calling for the removal of the need for a separate work permit on top of a study permit for students in co-op and internships. We highlighted how this is another unnecessary barrier for international students but also made the case that removal of this may enable processing wait times to reduce. We also called on the Minister to ensure that IRCC is equipped with the proper resources and changes needed to ensure that international students next year do not have to go through this again and that their permits are processed and approved in an efficient and responsive manner.

More information on this announcement:

- CASA Press Release
- IRCC Statement
- News
  - CBC / Radio Canada
  - Toronto Star
  - Brandon Sun
  - City News

As always, thank you for taking the time to go through this report. I look forward to your questions and comments.

Cheers,

Christian Fotang
Vice President External
University of Alberta Students’ Union