



October 10, 2015 to November 30, 2015

We are pleased to submit this update on milestones met and progress achieved on our projects and plans. For continuity, this report has been organized around the SU's promise to undergraduate students contained within its mission, vision and values framework.

OUR PROMISE: TO SERVE & REPRESENT

With the MacEwan Student Centre as our home, the Students' Union exists to serve and represent University of Calgary undergraduates.

Through a unified voice we are dedicated to:

Quality of Education

To advocate on academic matters and provide academic services and programs that enhance the quality of your educational experience

Quality of Student Life

To enhance the quality of undergraduate student life on campus

Affordability and Accessibility

To advocate for the student community on an affordable and accessible post-secondary education experience

Quality of Education

Board Agendas and Supporting Documents

On October 16, 2015 the SU received notice from the University Secretary that open meeting materials for Board of Governors meetings would no longer be made available to the public prior to Board meetings; only the open session agenda will be made available on the Board's website in advance of meetings. This is extremely concerning, because it prevents stakeholders from having a full understanding of issues being decided by the Board and creates a significant barrier for those who may wish to provide the Board with their perspective. Although stakeholders may know the list of items to be addressed, there is no mechanism for the public to gain a full understanding of issues and provide added input, either directly to the Board or through a stakeholder representative, which could be valuable context for the Board to consider in decision making. As a result of this change, any public feedback on Board decisions can only occur after decisions have already been made. We see this as a deliberate step backwards in the university's commitment to transparency and openness in decision making.

Student Representation on Faculty Councils

As noted in the SU's October report to the Board, student representation on university Faculty Councils is inconsistent and variable across the institution. Faculty Councils across the institution are currently reviewing their Terms of Reference and serious concerns have been noted in some, but not all faculties. For example, the Faculty of Nursing has refused to provide student representatives with a current copy of its Faculty Council Terms of Reference while the document is under review. Additionally, several faculties are considering removing or minimizing student representation due to significant misunderstandings about the role of stakeholder representation in decision-making and good governance processes.

Get Out The Vote (GOTV)

The SU, as part of the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations (CASA), ran a non-partisan GOTV campaign to mobilize student voters for the federal election on Oct. 19. The SU collected vote pledges from over 8,500 students and recruited over 53 volunteers who contacted students to remind them to vote and answer questions about voter eligibility and polling locations. Student volunteers conducted 124 classroom visits to inform students about the federal election and donated 338 hours during the course of the campaign.

Teaching Excellence Awards

The SU received 269 nominations from students for exceptional instructors and teaching assistants for fall 2015. We have now shortlisted the nominees down to 43 instructors and 10 TAs and are in the process of conducting class visits to survey their students. The Teaching Excellence Awards Committee will review both fall and winter nominations in March and select winners at that time.

Undergraduate Research Symposium

The SU received 144 applications from undergraduate students from nine different faculties. The Undergraduate Research Symposium working group reviewed the abstracts in late October and accepted 103 students for this year's symposium. The SU recruited over 50 judges to help adjudicate the poster presentations at the Undergraduate Research Symposium held in MacHall on Nov. 26. Over \$22,000 will be awarded to undergraduate student researchers at the reception on Dec. 2.

Quality of Student Life

Quality Money

This year, the SU has received 44 applications for Quality Money. The SU's Quality Money Committee will meet in the New Year to approve funding in accordance with the Board of Governor's annual budget allocation and the Quality Money procedures and criteria developed in consultation with university administration.

Increased Support for SU Clubs

116 clubs are currently registered in the SU's new Jr. Executive program, which encourages clubs to recruit first year students as executives-in-training who can potentially take over leadership of the club. This term, the SU is offering Jr. Executive workshops on banking, budgeting, campus space bookings, and funding applications

The SU has also revised its Clubs policies and procedures to be more efficient and improve clubs' access to services. Highlights of the changes:

- *Registered Student Organizations* – the term "SU Sanctioned" was ambiguous and confusing to many individuals and groups in the campus community. Clubs now register with the SU for access to programs, services, and other benefits. This framework better recognizes the SU's

relationship with clubs as autonomous third-party organizations that offer tremendous benefits for the student experience.

- *Provisional Registration* – Clubs that are not in compliance with the SU's procedures may have limited access to programs and services while these issues are resolved.
- *Third Party Complaints* – The SU is not able to mediate complaints between clubs and third parties, including university departments; however, the SU may investigate complaints that a club has acted in a way that violates SU policies and procedures. If a student is alleged to have broken university policy, the SU will direct that complaint to the appropriate university process.
- *Club Complaints* – Student complaints about SU decisions can be directed to the SU's Review Board – an administrative tribunal that independently evaluates whether the SU followed its own rules and acted fairly in any decision.
- *Clear Funding Criteria* – criteria for Special Event Funding, Charity Grants, and expense reimbursement are now explicitly outlined in the Student Organization Funding and Services Procedure.

Additionally, the SU has produced a new Constitution Writing Guide for clubs to help them understand governance best practices in running a sustainable and successful organization.

Club Funding

The SU's Clubs Committee has allocated over \$11,000 in Special Event Funding to registered campus clubs for initiatives that will take place in the winter semester. This funding goes toward innovative initiatives and events that provide a clear benefit to the student experience and could not occur without this funding. Initiatives funded include several cultural awareness weeks, human rights focused events, social justice issues, an Faculty of Arts research showcase, industry nights, and a mental health gala.

Stress Less Week

The week of Nov. 30 to Dec. 4, the SU provided a week of stress relieving and fun activities for students in the midst of a stressful term. These activities help students to achieve balance at the end of the semester. Activities and events included:

- Destruction Therapy – an event in the North Courtyard of MacHall that invites students to relieve stress with a bubble wrap dance floor, playdough, and kinetic sand.
- Pet Therapy – a monthly event held in partnership with the Pet Access League Society (PALS) in That Empty Space in MacHall.
- Nap Rooms – in response to surveys showing that 45% of students identify sleep deprivation is a problem during the day, That Empty Space was designated as a "nap room" with relaxing music, mats, and pillows (for students to keep).
- Massage Therapy – an event in the North Courtyard that provided students with free neck and shoulder massages to relieve tension and pain.
- Yoga – held regularly throughout the academic year, Yoga in the Space provides students with free yoga classes to enhance their physical and mental wellness.
- Art Therapy – based on research showing that creative processes can increase focus and decrease symptoms of physical and emotional distress, this event in the North Courtyard invited students to fold origami, decorate a stress ball, and colour in colouring pages.
- North Courtyard Carnival – this event in the North Courtyard included attractions including balloon animals, cotton candy, and sumo suits, as well as the colouring pages, kinetic sand, and playdough activities that had also been available to students at events earlier in the week.

The SU also distributed 750 destress packs to students studying on campus. These destress packs contained pamphlets with information about mental health resources, wellness tips, and healthy snacks.

Pet Therapy

185 students attended Pet Therapy in That Empty Space on Oct. 30. This monthly event held in partnership with the Pet Access League Society (PALS) to engage students and relieve stress.

SU Campus Food Bank

The SU Campus Food Bank provides emergency food hampers to current students, staff members and alumni who have graduated less than two years ago. During the 2014-2015 school year, the Campus Food Bank saw a significant increase in the number of hampers distributed, and adults and children fed. However, the figures from the current academic year indicate that demand may be leveling off.

| | September and October 2014 | September and October 2015 |
|------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| Number of Hampers | 62 | 57 |
| Number of Adults Fed | 83 | 86 |
| Number of Children Fed | 35 | 33 |
| Total Fed | 118 | 119 |

SU Breakfast Program

Since the 2013-2014 academic year, the SU has provided free breakfast to undergraduate and graduate students. This year, the Breakfast Program opened its doors on September 22nd. Based in the Q Centre, it runs on Tuesdays and Wednesdays from 8:30 am to 9:45 am. As shown in the table below, Breakfast Program attendance so far has increased compared to the same period last year.

| | September and October 2014 | September and October 2015 |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| Number of undergraduate students fed | 745 | 906 |
| Number of graduate students fed | 73 | 113 |
| Total students fed | 818 | 1,019 |

Q Centre Anniversary

On Nov. 3, the Q Centre celebrated its fifth anniversary. Members of the campus community were invited to enjoy cake and write testimonials on one of the walls in the space. Approximately 40 people attended for the cake cutting.

Q Centre Collaborative Events

The Q Centre worked with the Department of Philosophy, Women's Resource Centre and other groups to organize a talk by Sinclair Sexsmith, a writer, speaker and performer specializing in queer sexualities, genders and relationships on Oct. 9. Over 50 people attended this event.

The Q Centre also worked with Queer U of C and the Office of Diversity, Equity and Protected Disclosure to present the "ABCs of LGBTQ" on Nov. 6. 25 people attended this event.

MacHall Dispute

On Nov. 10, the university filed its Statement of Defence in the lawsuit regarding the ownership of MacHall. The SU was forced to file this lawsuit to protect its rights in the building. The SU has always intended to settle this matter outside court and continues to hope a mutually beneficial agreement recognizing students' interests in the building can be negotiated. Unfortunately, the university has not provided the SU with any offer for a new agreement and has ceased negotiations while the matter is before the courts.

Affordability and Accessibility

Residence and Meal Plan Fee Increases

Although the SU recognizes that the cost of goods and services is subject to increase, there are concerns that the proposed increases to the cost of living in residence are arbitrary and not related to actual cost increases. Students note that market demand for rental housing has decreased over the past year and that the proposed increases are out of line with average rental rates. Additionally, the university does not have a long range plan for residence fee increases.

Although the SU is not opposed to providing students with meal plan dollars that will meet their needs, the university has not looked at meal plan usage data in developing proposals that increase the costs of these plans. Students have also expressed ongoing dissatisfaction that those living in Yamnuska are required to purchase a meal plan, even though kitchens are available for students' use as the cost of a meal plan is significantly higher than the cost of groceries.

Future consultations with students on increases to residence and meal plan rates should address the following if student support for increases is desired:

1. The university should provide a long term plan for the cost of residence services.
2. The university should engage in consultation with students before the Residence Services budget is prepared and approved each year.
3. Proposed increases to residence fees and meal plan costs should be based on data and recognition that cost of living expenses are complex and dependent on many factors.
4. Consultation processes cannot have negative ramifications for students living in residence. Students must be free to oppose fee increases without fear of reprisal.
5. Consideration must be given to the significant benefits of living in residence and accessibility concerns. If residence living offers such substantial benefits, it cannot only be for the elite. In proposing increased costs, consideration must be given to students' ability to pay, in addition to housing market considerations.

Differential Tuition Policy

The Students' Legislative Council (SLC) has amended its policies to establish a position on differential tuition fee increases above the rate of inflation for international students. While domestic student tuition is regulated under the Post-Secondary Learning Act Public Post-Secondary Institutions' Tuition Fees Regulation, international student tuition is not, meaning that institutions may approve increases to international student tuition rates without limits. Given that several Canadian post-secondary institutions have recently implemented large international tuition fee increases ranging from 5-18% without strong justifications for how costs have increased, the SU has expanded its position on market modifier increases to apply to international student tuition increases above the rate of inflation. As with market modifier increases, the SU emphasizes the importance of predictability, accessibility, and affordability in consideration of any proposed differential fee increase.

Conclusion

The Students' Union is proud to serve and represent undergraduate students in nearly every aspect of their experience at the University of Calgary.



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