

# REPORT

## TO THE COMMUNITY



# 2020 - 21

UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY STUDENTS' UNION



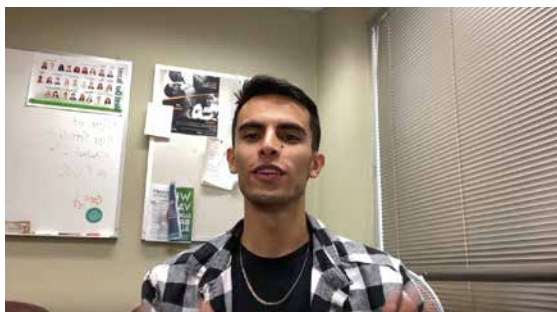
The Information Centre also served as a temporary front desk for the SU main office.



Justin Gotta, Faculty of Arts Rep., was one of several SLC members that contributed online content to help welcome new students during orientation in September.



A group of SLC members produced a short video in honour of Transgender Day of Visibility.



2 Assad Ali Bik, VP Student Life, appeared in a video for the SU Club Awards.

## STRATEGIC AND ANNUAL OPERATING PLANS

The Students' Union is guided by a **strategic plan** which is reviewed and renewed every three years. This plan illustrates the vision, mission and values of the SU and guides the allocation of resources towards student priorities. The 76th executives drafted and the Students' Legislative Council (the SU's elected highest governing body) approved the strategic plan for the SU for 2019-2022.

Each year, the SLC also approves an **annual operating plan** which is developed by the executives to direct their work for their term. The 78th executive created their plan for 2020-2021 with goals divided into three key priorities: engage with students, strengthen the organization, and prioritize advocacy.

## THIS REPORT

*This report aims to inform students and the campus community on the progress and changes completed by the SU over the 2020-2021 academic year. Want more information? You can check out our website or reach out to one of our student executives – they're always happy to speak with students! You can find their contact information on our website.*

**Want to keep up with the SU? Visit our website or follow us on your favourite social media platform!**

[www.su.ucalgary.ca](http://www.su.ucalgary.ca)







# STRENGTHEN THE ORGANIZATION

*The SU continues to be a model for student associations across the country in terms of governance policy and practice (including transparency and accountability to students), management of our spaces on campus, staffing, and financial sustainability.*





## LEGISLATIVE CHANGES

The Students' Legislative Council (SLC) made several notable changes to several SU policy documents with the goal of increasing accessibility, incorporating student feedback, and building on best practices in student governance. During its term, the SLC:

- Renewed the Tuition and Fee Accountability Policy, the Mental Health Advocacy Policy, and the Campus Infrastructure Advocacy Policy for additional three year terms;
- Approved amendments to the GFC Attendance Policy and Union Bylaw to end the practice of individual excusal motions for eligible absences of elected representatives who are absent from a SLC or GFC meeting, and enact a formal declaration system administered by SU staff;
- Approved amendments to the Elections Policy and Union Bylaw so that a "yes/no vote" or vote of confidence system can be implemented in SU Elections, which introduces a ballot question for candidates running unopposed in SU Elections instead of candidates being provisionally acclaimed following Nomination Days;
- Approved amendments to the Quality Money Committee Terms of Reference to ensure consistency with internal procedure documents;
- Removed the requirement that the CRO of an SU Election be an Active Member of the SU, allowing for a wider pool of candidates to be considered for the role;
- Removed auditing a course as an enrollment option for SU Executives as an eligible option in the Union Bylaw to ensure compliance with University of Calgary policies.

## GENERAL ELECTION 2021

The 79th SLC was elected in the SU General Election in March, 2021. There were 30 candidates for 27 positions with 13 positions acclaimed and four positions left vacant. Voter turnout was 3,055 students. The pandemic-related restrictions made engaging with students especially difficult this year, which affected the number of students running and voting.



# FINANCES

UCalgary students continue to enjoy some of the lowest student union fees in the country while at the same time they benefit from the large number of businesses, programs, and services offered by their SU. This is possible through the strong financial stewardship of student money by the SU. Each year the SLC approves an annual operating budget of nearly \$13 million.

In accordance with the Union Bylaw, the Operations and Finance Committee and the General Manager authorized one extra-budgetary expenditure to a maximum of \$1,200 during the 2020-2021 year to fund the attendance of a member of the Executive to the Council of Alberta University Students (CAUS) Counterparts Conference in Lethbridge. However, this trip did not go forward due to the COVID restrictions.

We run multiple, successful businesses in Mac Hall, and the profits from these continue to make up about 90 percent of our annual revenue.

***The annual operating budget is available for review, along with a breakdown of fees and the SU's financial statements, on our [website](#).***

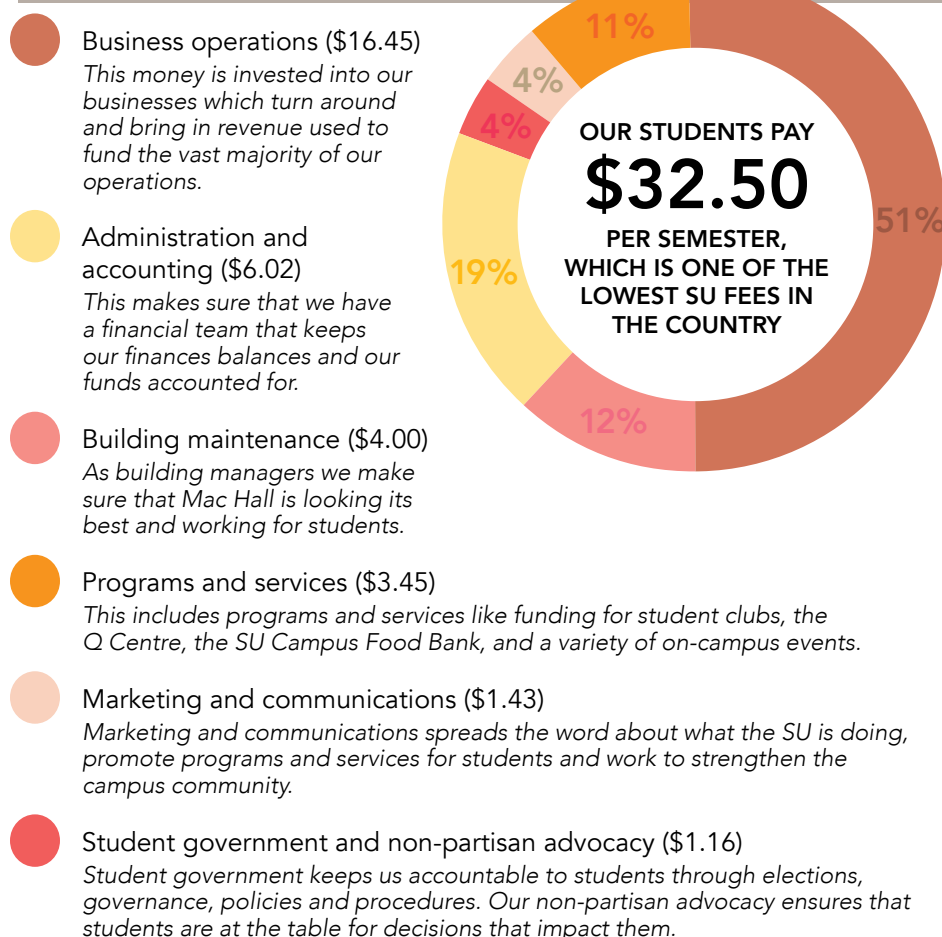
## 89% OF OUR REVENUE COMES FROM OUR FAMILY OF BUSINESSES\*:



*\*In 2020-2021, the SU's business revenue was dramatically reduced, due to impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.*

MacEwan Student Centre (lease revenue)	\$700,173
MacEwan Conference and Event Centre	\$273,780
Stör	\$100,192
Bound and Copied	\$90,938
Mac Hall Concerts	\$5,374
The Den	\$695

## 11% OF OUR REVENUE COMES FROM STUDENT FEES:



***UCalgary students have not had an increase in the SU operating fee since 1995.***

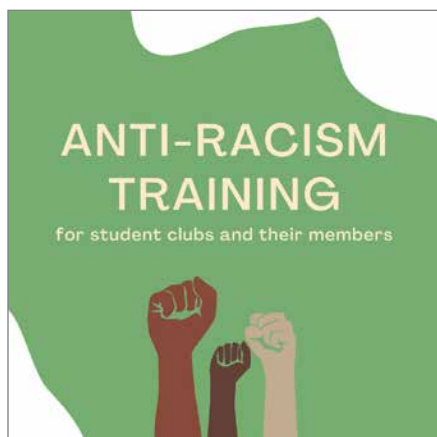
## FUNDING FOR CAMPUS IMPROVEMENT

The SU approved funding allocations for 20 projects, totaling almost \$2.15 million, that benefit students through the Quality Money and Sustainability Fund programs. These include:

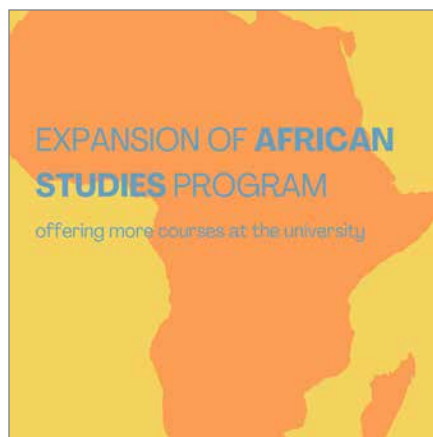
- Creating a single-use, accessible and gender-inclusive washroom in the MacEwan Student Centre
- Renewing the SU's Sustainability Fund
- Renewing and modernizing the SU's Pride Scholarship that supports LGBTQIA+ students and advocacy on campus



- Initiating the Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity (IDEA) Awards, scholarships that will support students working towards greater equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) in their communities
- Establishing a fund to assist SU-registered clubs in accessing anti-racism training for their members



- Establishing a fund to encourage the creation of free, open educational resources (OERs) for students
- Funding student jobs in Libraries and Cultural Resources to encourage the adoption of OERs
- Implementing more suicide awareness and prevention training at the SU Wellness Centre
- Ensuring access to UpToDate, a point-of-care medical resource database, for MD students
- Expanding the African Studies program offerings in the Faculty of Arts



- Creating a bursary for international students in financial distress
- Launching a wellness app for UCalgary students
- Renovating a study space in Earth Sciences
- Establishing a fund to help students who have been

financially impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic

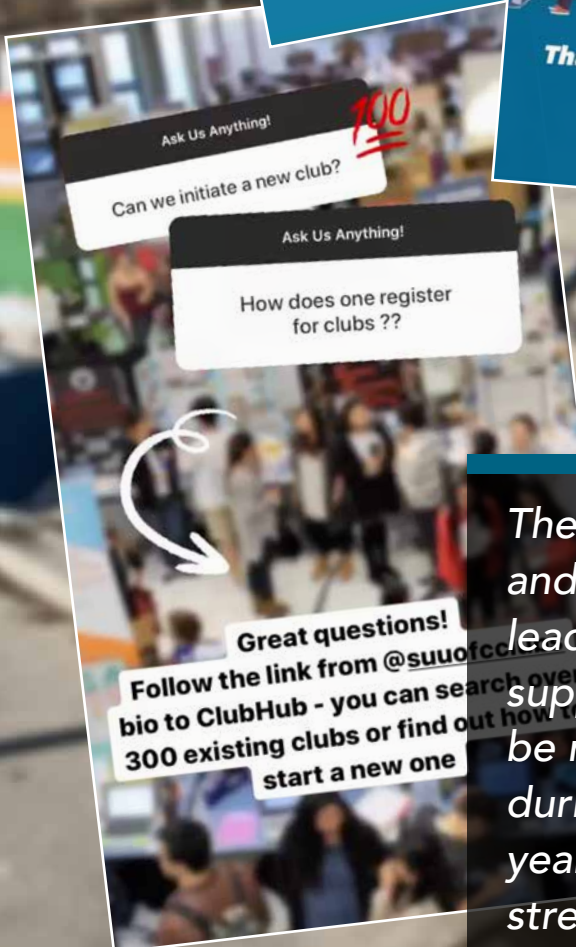
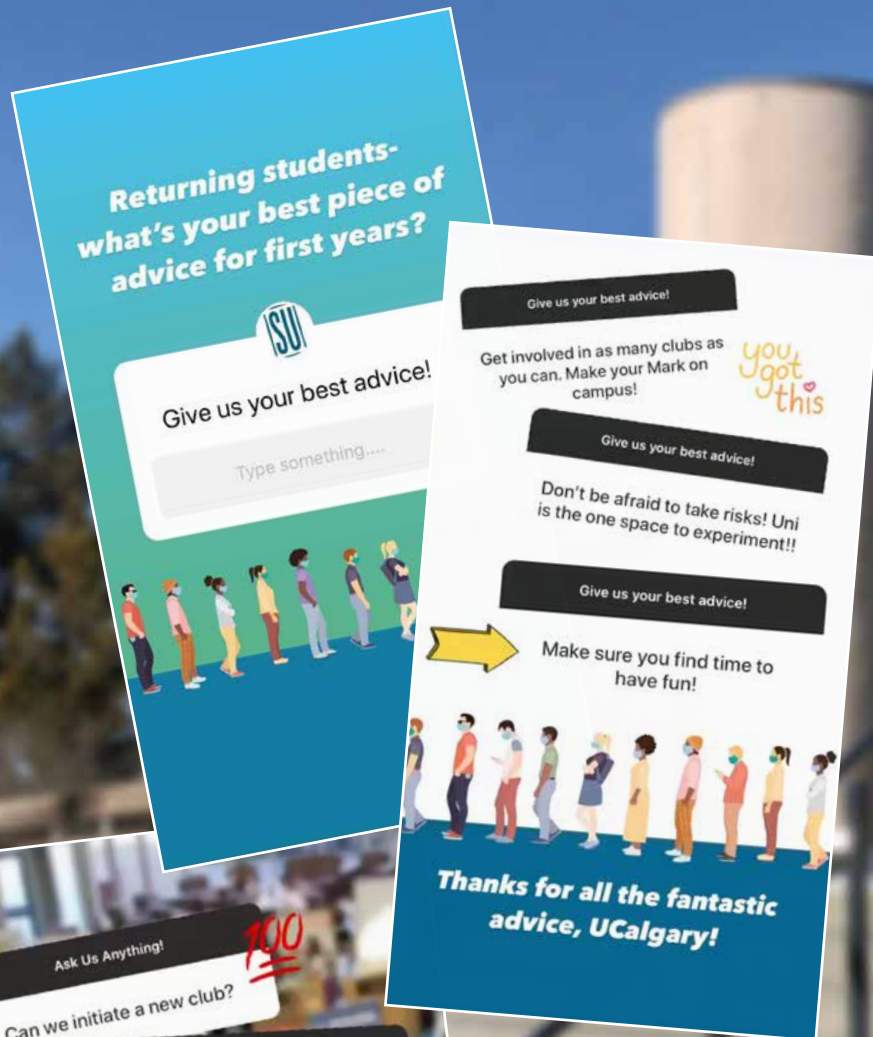
- Renovating a study space in Social Sciences
- Updating the interactive directories in the MacEwan Building



- Creating the Violet King Engaged Scholar Award, a scholarship supporting students who are Black, Indigenous, or people of colour (BIPOC)
- Providing free menstrual products in all MacEwan Building washrooms
- Building an interactive native plant and pollinator learning garden at the Barrier Lake Field Station



# ENGAGE STUDENTS



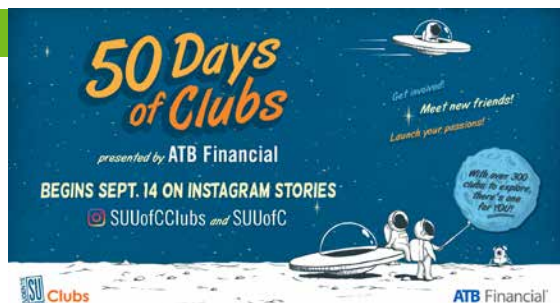
The SU offers a wide range of services, programs, and scholarships, hosts events, provides student leadership development opportunities, and supports student initiatives. Many of these had to be reimagined and adapted for an online audience during the COVID-19 pandemic. Throughout the year, we continued to engage students via live-streamed events and social media.



SU Executives welcome students virtually during orientation days.

## FIRST YEAR ORIENTATION

First year students began their academic careers online this year. The SU participated in a virtual orientation event using our Instagram account, where we posted welcome content, fielded questions from students, and provided links to a central landing page on the SU website.



50 Days of Clubs drew attention through the fall semester, helping connect students to their peers. Student clubs found creative ways to connect virtually, hosting events like bake-a-longs and open mics.

## CLUBS

The SU provides supports for student-led activities on campus through our clubs system. Clubs who register with the SU have free access to space, funding, and various other kinds of assistance throughout the year.

During a typical year, Clubs Week is a signature event for the SU. While we couldn't host large gatherings in person, we replaced September's Clubs Week with 50 Days of Clubs, providing virtual space for clubs to recruit new members by sharing daily posts across our accounts on Instagram. January's Clubs Week was hosted virtually through a feature on our ClubHub platform.

## UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH SYMPOSIUM

This symposium is designed to encourage and celebrate undergraduate research across faculties. Each year students are encouraged to submit their projects to compete for awards in various categories. The Undergraduate Research Symposium was also moved online this year - participants submitted short video presentations that were hosted on YouTube. 28 awards totalling \$22,500 were given out.

## REFUGEE STUDENT PROGRAM

Working with the World University Service of Canada (WUSC) and the University of Calgary, the SU sponsors two refugee students to come and study here each year. Not only do we offer financial support, we also assist these students in becoming acclimated to ensure they will be successful. This year, the COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on the Student Refugee Program's regular processes including travel restrictions and immigration procedures, and WUSC was unable to facilitate the arrival of students in Fall 2020. The SU expects the program to return to normal for Fall 2021.

## SEX WEEK

In February, we adapted Sex and Gender Wellness Week to an online platform. Various on-campus groups hosted six virtual events via Zoom, and we posted daily social media content including a makeshift "resource carnival".





## Q CENTRE

The SU's Q Centre for Sexual and Gender Diversity strives to create a safe, comfortable, and open space for LGBTQIA+ students. November 3, 2020 marked the ten-year anniversary of the Q Centre. We celebrated the occasion online with a video message from the community and a live speaker event on Facebook, where James Demers did an engaging presentation on the history of queer spaces.

## WELLNESS WEDNESDAYS

This year, we moved Wellness Wednesdays online and expanded it to include Fitness in the Space and Pet Therapy. We were able to offer monthly Yoga videos on Instagram and Pet Therapy through our Stories which allowed students to send and share photos of their own pets. Additionally we made DIY videos to help spark creativity and stress relief, including making an activity jar, a tasty dessert recipe and guide to dying clothing naturally.

## STRESSLESS WEEK

At the end of every fall term, the SU organizes activities to help students combat stress we were able to move to Instagram to continue it this year. This year, we offered several activities, including yoga classes, crafts like a gratitude jar, spa face masks, and DIY aromatherapy body scrub, and book and movie night recommendations. This is an integral part of the SU and its commitment to good mental health.

## MEET YOUR CITY COUNCILOR

In October, we hosted a two-day event to engage students in city politics. Meet Your City Councillor was hosted on Zoom and livestreamed over Facebook. VP External Marley Gillies interviewed five councilors over two days.

## TEACHING EXCELLENCE AWARDS

Since 1984, the SU have recognized outstanding teaching at the University of Calgary with the Teaching Excellence Awards (TEA). TEA are the only teaching awards on campus where students determine the nominees and winners. This year, 1,356 students submitted nominations and the SU honoured 40 instructors and teaching assistants for their commitment to student success. The TEA ceremony was once again cancelled due to the pandemic. Instead, our TEA committee members joined together virtually to create a celebratory video to honour this year's winners. The full list of award winners and the virtual ceremony video is available on our website.



In honour of the Q Centre's tenth anniversary, the SU hosted a virtual talk by James Demers on the value of community.



The SU hosted monthly yoga videos via Instagram.



VP External Marley Gillies hosted a virtual event inviting students to meet their city councillors.



The Teaching Excellence Committee met virtually to create a video celebrating the winners.



## VOLUNTEER SERVICES

Since 1993, the SU's Volunteer Services has provided volunteer opportunities and social services to students and other members of the campus community. Not only do we operate as a volunteer centre, connecting students with volunteer prospects both on and off campus, we also run ten of our own volunteer programs that students can get involved with.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, our Volunteer Services program remained closed, with the exception of the SU Campus Food Bank, the Information Centre/Lost and Found, and the Q Centre, which was offered in a virtual environment.

## CAMPUS FOOD BANK

The SU's Campus Food Bank (CFB) provides 7-day emergency hampers to campus community members. They also offer other programs designed to address student hunger on campus. SU volunteers

perform client intakes, pack food hampers, and assist with general food bank operations. Last year, due to the pandemic and closure of campus, the CFB was closed over the summer. In mid-September, two volunteers joined one student coordinator to get the CFB up and running again. Over the two semester, 76 hamper requests were completed, with the majority happening over Zoom video-conferencing for the first time. Curbside pick-up was implemented this year and the CFB fed 98 individuals, including 39 children.

The first annual Fall Harvest Food Drive was immensely successful. The CFB raised over \$6,000 in donations and collected close to 3,500 food items. Last year, more than 15 children received holiday gifts thanks to 14 community sponsors involved in the Campus Food Bank's Adopt-a-Family program.

### Fines for Food

In the winter semester, we partnered with UCalgary's Parking and Transportation Services on a new initiative called Fines for Food.

This pilot program encouraged the campus community to pay their outstanding parking tickets during the last week of March, promising that half of the revenue would be redirected to the SU Campus Food Bank. Through this program, we collected \$5,682 for the SU Campus Food Bank.







# PRIORITIZE ADVOCACY

*Despite province-wide post-secondary sector budget cuts, the SU continues to have tremendous success representing the needs of students to the university and all levels of government. Our advocacy efforts continue to be effective, and we saw progress and successes on multiple issues over the past year.*

## COVID-19 Supports

After a series of important advocacy wins at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, including the introduction of a Canada Emergency Student Benefit (CESB) for students who do not qualify for the Canada Emergency Relief Benefit (CERB), increased Canada Student Grant limits (now \$6,000 for full-time students) for 2020-21, the expansion of the Canada Summer Jobs program to create an additional 76,000 student jobs, and the campus-wide implementation of an optional CR/F grading system for students during the winter 2020 semester, the SU spent the entirety of the past year working to ensure that students had the necessary supports in place to cope with the shift to online learning. Our many wins for students included:

- The SU successfully advocated against the use of remote exam proctoring software at the University of Calgary – this software invades students' privacy, has been shown to increase student stress and is imperfect in that it unfairly targets and falsely accuses BIPOC students of cheating. The university committed to not use this type of software for the entirety of the last year.
- The SU argued for the CR/F grading system introduced at the end of the last academic year to be continued throughout this year. In response to this, the university introduced a limited CR/F grading system for the fall and winter semesters where students could opt to take a "credit received" option in one course per term. The university also committed to implementing this system permanently starting in the 2021-22 academic year.
- The SU raised student concerns about the use of a D2L function that forces students to answer questions sequentially and prevents them from returning to change previous answers. In response to our pressure,

the Provost of the university issued a letter to all instructors discouraging this practice.

- Finally, the SU secured for students a 24-hour window when writing exams online. This meant that students must be given the option to start a timed test within a 24-hour window. Some professors did this by simply giving everyone a 24-hour window. Others simply gave students the option to request a flexible start time. Related to this, the SU also successfully secured 50 percent extra time for students to complete timed assessments online.

In terms of financial supports, the SU pushed hard to ensure that students did not have to pay for services and facilities that they could not access this year. The results of this was the waiving of the Campus Recreation and Athletics fees for undergrad students in the fall 2020 and winter 2021 semesters. This was a savings of \$89.23 per semester for full-time students.

Finally, the SU was successful in advocating for increased access to printers for students living in residence, a need that was not anticipated as normally they could access library printers. Starting November 1, students could book a 30-minute appointment at one of four designated kiosks to print, copy, or scan.

## UPass and Calgary Transit

With the UPass program suspended, the SU worked collaboratively with UCalgary, the Graduate Students' Association (GSA), and the Students Association at Mount Royal University (SAMRU) to lobby the City of Calgary to create affordable access to public transit for students. As a result, to offer books of ten single-use tickets at a 40% discount for students.

## Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Policy

When the university opened up

their Sexual Violence Policy for revisions in the summer of 2020, the SU pushed for recognition, within the policy and its related processes, that people from equity seeking groups such as racialized communities, people with disabilities, and members of the LGBTQIA+ community experience this violence in different ways and therefore a "one-size-fits-all" approach to sexual violence prevention on campus won't work. The SU was successful in getting specific language about the importance of this "intersectional lens" added to the policy.

## Alberta 2030

After nearly two years of signaling major changes to the post-secondary sector, including how universities would be funded by the provincial government, the province released its Alberta 2030 report this year. The Alberta 2030 initiative purported to re-imagine post-secondary in Alberta. The SU was gratified to see that the government backed off several of its initial proposals that would have hurt students, harmed institutions, and created unnecessary red tape. The SU worked hard to advocate, influence, and cooperate with the provincial government on this initiative. Thanks to a







concerted effort from students, faculty, and administrators the final report proposed something very different than the complete overhaul that was expected. For example, the government backed off its plans that included extensive performance-based funding for institutions as well as a proposed centralized board to oversee all post-secondary institutions in Alberta.

### **Alberta Budget 2021**

Despite strong advocacy from the SU and the Council of Alberta University Students (CAUS), the provincial advocacy group that we belong to, the severe provincial cuts to the post-secondary sector continue. Nearly \$90 million has been cut from the UCalgary since 2019 and has returned the institution to the same level of funding it had in 2011 when it had far fewer students. In addition, the province eliminated the tuition tax credit which supported students and their families when it came to paying tuition. In essence, this amounts to a \$200 million tax increase on students and their families. The SU is very concerned that funding cuts, tuition increases, and the lack of employment opportunities in Calgary and Alberta will force students and young people to leave the province. Once students and new graduates leave, they are very unlikely to come back. The SU will continue its fight against these significant

and misguided post-secondary cuts and demonstrate how university students and graduates can propel Alberta forward in the post-pandemic world.

### **Campus Mental Health Grants**

Alberta campuses rely on predictable funding from the provincial government to ensure accessible, comprehensive mental health services and support on-campus for students. After successfully advocating for a one-year extension to this program in Budget 2020, the SU again advocated ahead of Budget 2021. These efforts were successful, and the post-secondary mental health grant program was renewed for three years. This means that the university has stable and predictable funding for the next few years to plan out its mental health supports for students. The SU will continue to demonstrate to government just how important this funding is especially as students return to campus this fall.

### **Student Jobs**

The SU has advocated steadily for a student job program similar to the Summer Temporary Employment Program (STEP) that was cancelled by the provincial government in 2019. The SU surveyed UCalgary students during the summer of 2020 and discovered that nearly forty-five per cent of students surveyed couldn't find summer work or had a job opportunity cancelled

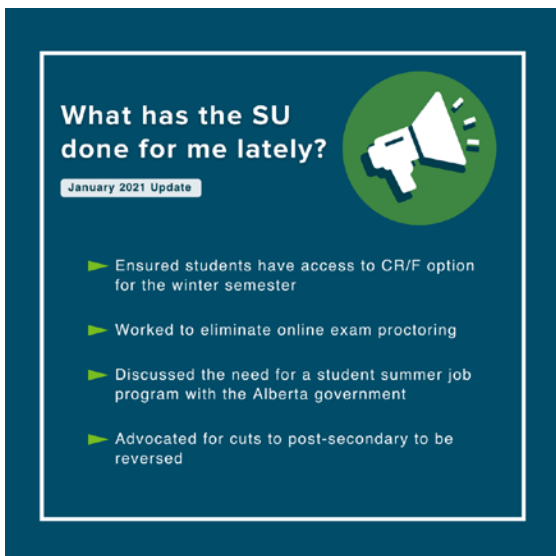
due to the pandemic. Heading into the summer of 2021, history was about to repeat itself. The provincial government was touting the Mitacs program and hinting that a jobs program that would benefit students was coming. Unfortunately, Mitacs largely benefits graduate students when it comes to work integrated learning. In addition, the Jobs Now program announced by the province in March 2021 does not benefit students as employers only receive the full amount of funding after fifty-two weeks of employment. While this may benefit new graduates seeking their first job after university, this is not ideal for summer employment. The SU continues its advocacy in this area and is working hard to ensure that students aren't left behind as the post-pandemic recovery occurs.

### **Parking**

As a result of ongoing SU advocacy, the university agreed to permanently enact the exam parking rates they introduced last year as a pilot program, something else we have advocated very strongly for. This means that parking rates during exam periods for lots 10, 11, and 32 will be half-price permanently.

### **Student Bill of Rights**

Some universities have student bills of rights (SBOR), documents in which students' rights are summarized and outlined in a clear and succinct way. This year, the



SU and GSA have authored our own SBOR and lobbied the university to implement it. While a great deal of the document is simply a summary of already-existing student rights, the hope is that this will not only help students to understand their rights but help to have them enforced as well. Adoption of the SBOR will be a positive step in ensuring students are respected members of the university community.

### Bookstore Privatization

Near the end of the winter semester, the SU became aware that the university was looking to outsource management of the University Bookstore an American company. The bookstore currently sells textbooks as close to cost as possible and maintains a book loan program. The SU is concerned that this is at risk if the university pushes forward on privatization.

Also concerning is that students were not consulted on this at all and the SU only became aware of it from bookstore staff. This is unacceptable and we made this clear to the university. Although they initially refused to meet with us on this topic, they relented after considerable public pressure. After several meetings, we were able to extract several important commitments from the university:

- Textbook markups will not happen
- Students will not be forced to purchase from the bookstore
- Students will be able to purchase second-hand books from Bound & Copied or elsewhere
- The Book Loan Program and the Book Buyback Program will be maintained
- Costs for other materials sold at the bookstore will not rise unreasonably

While this is positive, it remains unclear how the university would enforce these commitments. It also remains unclear at this point what will happen to current student employees who work there. This is concerning and so the SU will continue to push the university on this into the next academic year.

### Return to In-Person Classes

Early in 2021, the Government of Alberta announced its intention to have students return to campus for in-person learning this fall. The announcement at the time was short on detail and came out at a time when COVID-19 cases were increasing very quickly across Alberta. The SU responded and said that while students generally want to return to in-person classes, this must be done safely with a detailed plan discussed with Alberta Health Services. The SU continues to advocate to the university on student needs ahead of a re-opening in September.



# 78<sup>TH</sup> STUDENTS' LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL



**Frank Finley**  
President



**Semhar Abraha**  
Vice President Academic



**Marley Gillies**  
Vice President External



**Assad Ali Bik**  
Vice President Student Life



**Mohammad Ali**  
Vice President  
Operations & Finance



**Fayo Abdi**  
Faculty of Arts Rep.



**Justin Gotta**  
Faculty of Arts Rep.



**Caitlin Hornbeck**  
Faculty of Arts Rep.



**Malika Qurishi**  
Faculty of Arts Rep.



**Jasleen Brar**  
Cumming School of  
Medicine Rep.



**Pranav Khosla**  
Cumming School of  
Medicine Rep.



**Shagufa Farheen**  
Haskayne School of  
Business Rep.



**Aly Samji**  
Haskayne School of  
Business Rep.



**Deyana Altahsh**  
Faculty of Kinesiology Rep.



**Dalal Souraya**  
Faculty of Law Rep.



**Jonah Feng**  
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**Juan Sanchez**  
Schulich School of  
Engineering Rep.



**Bharat Uppal**  
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**Pragya Chopra**  
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**Chaten Jessel**  
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**Jovanna Rodney**  
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**Douglas Doyle-Baker**  
Faculty of Veterinary  
Medicine Rep.



**Naomi Shaw**  
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Education Rep.

