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Conference Report: CAUS Changeover, May 11-May 14, 2018

What is CAUS Changeover?

CAUS is the provincial advocacy group of which the ULSU is a member. CAUS consists of delegates from the University of Lethbridge, the University of Calgary, the University of Alberta, MacEwan University, and Mount Royal University. The personnel we sent from the U of L were myself and Victoria Schindler, the current President and Vice-President External, respectively. Hailey Babb and Conner Peta, our predecessors, also came with us as Changeover allows for outgoing members to impart wisdom to those of us newly elected to office.

Friday, May 11th

On Friday May 11, we travelled to Calgary to start our CAUS transition. Upon arrival at the University of Calgary campus, Zain Velji presented to us about the political climate in Alberta, and how to effectively lobby the provincial government. This presentation gave us a new awareness about the delicate nature of advocating during an election year. It was also really interesting to note how the political climate has changed in Alberta recently, and I learned a lot of valuable information. After Zain had concluded his presentation, we listened to Conner (still active as Vice-Chair of CAUS) give us a briefing as to the conduct expected of us at this conference, as well as how the weekend would unfold. Lastly, we travelled to Canmore, our place of accommodations for the remaining duration of the conference.

Saturday, May 12th

On Saturday, we began our CAUS specific training. Our first presentation gave us an overview of CAUS' structure. We discussed timelines for when we usually convene for conferences, meetings, and about CAUS counterparts. Next, we participated in two team building activities to aid in bonding and team skills before continuing on with presentations. The next presentation concerned the Alberta Government. This was very pertinent for us, as the nature and workings of the provincial government inform how we can best advocate for students on a provincial level. I liked that we had the ability to combine our own information with the information Zain had given us: we could combine information from the two presentations to make ourselves more effective advocates. Our third presentation of the day was entitled "Canada Student Loan Program/Alberta Student Aid". This was really beneficial for me not only as a student leader, but as a student. I really enjoyed being able to learn the ins and outs of the two programs, which in turn makes it an easier topic on which we can advocate. Lastly, we had a presentation on the upcoming provincial election and the interconnected topic of a GOTV Campaign, or Get Out the Vote. Delegates from member schools discussed how to best organize these campaigns both on the provincial level, and at our own individual institutions. I am excited

to see what we can come up with here at the University of Lethbridge for the upcoming academic year.

Sunday, May 13th

Sunday was also a day full of presentations. To begin our day, we watched a presentation on Membership Expectations and Internal Communication. This presentation was extremely useful as we learned about how to best carry out our duties as primary and secondary delegates to CAUS. As with any organization, it is important to set out these expectations early so that we know how to best communicate with each other. Our next presentation was entitled "Tuition, Fees and Institutional Funding". This was a great way to discuss deferred maintenance, tuition and other fees at our institutions. Seeing as we advocated for funding for deferred maintenance during April's Advocacy Week, it was helpful to have an in-depth conversation on this as the incoming CAUS delegation. After our lunch break, we played a game of Jeopardy: Incoming Presidents against Incoming Vice President Externals. I'm very delighted to say that the President team won. Our last event of the day was our first official CAUS meeting as the new delegates. During this meeting, we elected our new Chair and Vice-Chair. They are Andrew Bieman, VP External at SAMU, and Amanda LeBlanc, VP External at SAMRU, respectively. I found this day to be very exciting as we officially began a new chapter of CAUS.

Monday, May 14th

This day was very bittersweet. It was very productive and forward-looking as we established many of our priorities for the year ahead. We engaged in activities, such as SWOT Analyses and goal setting, to decide on our priorities. This allowed us to all work together to create a comprehensive list of student issues that we believe we can work on. As the incoming CAUS, we also discussed our policy and research priorities. We decided to create a Policy Steering Committee, and I will be sitting on that as the ULSU representative. While this was all very productive, it was a sad day as we said goodbye to the outgoing CAUS members from the five institutions. We very much appreciate their hard work, and I'm so thrilled to carry the torch forward!

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me.

Very Best,

Laura Bryan
President