

GFC CoTW

Integrative Task Force Report

Respectfully submitted,

Holly Kletke (President, ULSU)

Mark Serebryansky (VP Operations + Finance, ULSU)

Rebecca Parkkari (VP Academic, ULSU)

Ryan Lindblad (VP External, ULSU)

Amy Mendenhall (VP Student Affairs, ULSU)

Gregory Robinson (President, GSA)

Priyanka Dutt (VP Internal, GSA)

What would you do if you were tasked with balancing the 2022-23 budget and where would you suggest the budget savings/revenue increases can be achieved?

The ULSU and GSA executive teams got together to discuss this question, and came to a number of conclusions that will inform this report. The first conclusion we came to was that we will not include in this report, anything that has not already been reported through the task force process. Along with that conclusion, we recognize and accept that the Budget Advisory Committee will have to make largely impactful decisions to rectify the budget situation, and we further accept that the “face” of the UofL is going to change as a result of the decisions being made in the upcoming months. We also will not re-iterate the UofL’s budget values here, as it has been illustrated that decisions are always informed by those values, and we do trust this is the case. We will further refrain from re-iterating any sentiments that have already been reflected in the minutes of the individual task forces, as we trust those are received and considered in good faith. Therefore, in this report we would like to offer and advocate for our broad suggestions to inform the University restructuring from the student perspective. And, in the spirit of ultimately accepting the largely impactful decisions that must be made by the Budget Advisory Committee, we would like to offer some conditions to accompany the upcoming changes. And, finally, we would like to take this opportunity to offer some of our tangential feedback on the overall process of this restructuring, in the hopes that our feedback will help inform the execution of similar processes in the future.

Feedback from the process

Firstly, we want to state that we are appreciative of the fact that we were able to provide feedback on this process both during the presentations of the task force findings and at the end of the process as we write this submission. We were happy to provide concerns and feedback on behalf of the students that we represent throughout the process and overall, we felt listened to and supported by administration when we presented our suggestions and concerns. With that said, we do feel that we can provide meaningful feedback on how the process could be improved in the future, as well as parts of the process that we believe were missing or should have been expanded upon.

We would like to state that we were disappointed by the absence of an upper-administration review or task force. While we understand the concerns that it would have been difficult to conduct this task force without bias, or that to use a third-party reviewer would have meant an extra cost, we still cannot help but feel that a review should have occurred to review upper administration. To be clear this is not a suggestion that we have negative feelings towards upper administration in any way, but considering the financial burden placed on students in recent years, and the extensive restructuring that may occur in other parts of our institution, we feel it would have been a symbol of good will and unity for upper administration to have received some form of review as well. We understand it may not have been perfect for a number of reasons including cost, or potential bias depending on the process selected, but we feel as though many options would have been more positive than having nothing at all in this area.

Another aspect of the process that we think could have been improved upon is the fact that many of these taskforces had no student representation on them, and we believe that without this everyone suffers. Students are the primary stakeholder of the University and thus we want to emphasize that we feel as though not having some form of student representation

and input on some of the taskforces means that they will have suffered from not having that voice and will lack important context that only a student could provide. Students will be impacted greatly by many of these decisions and should have been included more throughout the process and not just at the end for feedback. We want to state that we hope any committees that arise out of this process will have some form of student representation on them so that the student context and voice will be considered and heard.

Regarding the actual COTW meetings, we feel as though for the most part these meetings were handled well. However, there were certain times through the process where discussion would end and be cut off rather abruptly in order to move on to a new topic even when people may still have hands up. While we know that eventually topics will need to be moved on from to begin others, we would recommend that in the future this be handled slightly different. Especially in the case where hands may still be up to comment it would be appropriate to potentially call a vote to see if members wished to continue current discussions rather than insist on cutting it off exactly when it was scheduled to be moved on from, this would at least allow GFC membership to decide for ourselves if we need to discuss a point further or if we are prepared to move on and feel we have heard enough even without those last couple hands and points to be made.

Our last bit of feedback comes in regards to this report itself, we feel as though in the future more time would be incredibly helpful, deserved, and appreciated especially for us as student leaders. We truly only had about four business days to meet amongst ourselves and write a submission and considering we already had other meetings and commitments scheduled, it made it difficult to finish by the Monday deadline. We feel as though allowing for extra time in the future would also benefit those that will read this submission as they could be getting more detail and feedback provided if we were perhaps allowed two weeks to submit this document.

Where could budget savings/revenue increases be achieved:

The overall sentiment that informed our opinions as student representatives throughout this process is: students are the largest stakeholder of the University. Therefore, we would like to recommend, where possible, that the Budget Advisory Committee accept the largest amount of recommendations from the taskforces with the lowest impact to students to achieve a balanced budget. We are in favour of those task forces that recommend centralization and sharing of resources, as we believe this to be a necessary step in finding efficiencies. Further, these budget changes represent a great opportunity to become more collaborative and efficient across the institution. We are in favour of centralizing Indigenous units and governance, career services, conference services, IT services, and the communications and marketing departments across campus. We are also highly in favour of adopting the student services hub, as we believe this will have a positive, long lasting and efficient result for students and employees alike.

We would like to illustrate some of the crucial task force recommendations that we urge the Budget Advisory Committee to stray away from until all other options have been exhausted.

- Faculty Structures
 - o One of our priorities as Students' Union and Graduate students association is to protect the freedom and agency of students to carve their own path and discover their passions at our institution. We are extremely grateful and happy

to belong to an institution that makes this especially possible through a liberal education philosophy. We are content with the diversity of programs, and would like to protect that diversity, and protect the agency of students to study and discover their passions. Therefore, we would urge that faculty restructuring only occurs if it is guaranteed to maintain the diversity of our programs. We also urge that faculty restructuring does not immediately absorb small programs, because all programs are equally important to our campus.

- Budget Model
 - o Similar to the thoughts we had about faculty restructuring, we also want to ensure that changes to the budget model protect the diversity of our programs and that resources are equitably allocated to all programs.

We would like to offer one final consideration that to guide budget discussions, from the student perspective. We would like to encourage that budget decisions be guided by the notion that our academic integrity is not sacrificed in the process of finding revenue.

Finally, in the spirit of accepting the largely impactful decisions that must be made, we would like to propose, for Budget Advisory Committee's consideration, some conditions that we would like to see accompany significant restructuring.

Where centralizing and reorganization of governance structures are necessary, we would like to strongly urge student representation to be upheld and brought forward. We would like to especially highlight the importance of including student representatives on the newly proposed Indigenous units governance model. Further, we encourage student voices to be included in conversations and decisions when opportunities from increases in funding, such as the Mastercard foundation donation, arise.

We would like to raise a concern that seemed to permeate many of the task-force recommendations over the course of the past few months, which has to do with the proposition of student labour as a cost-saving opportunity. Jobs on campus are great for many students, and we hear often that there are not enough opportunities. In general, we are in favour of identifying meaningful job opportunities for students on campus. However, we noted that those task forces that recommended the usage of student labour as a cost-saving method were not appropriately accompanied by plans, policies or tangible assurance that the labour requested will be of value to the student. We therefore insist that increases in student labour from any department cannot move forward without guidelines for individual opportunities being approved by any applicable governance system. One step further, would be to develop and provide a holistic and over-arching template (approved by GFC) that has within it the established, researched, and necessary considerations for any department looking to add student labour to their workplace.

If a change to the budget model results in incentivization or performance requirements, we would like to caution against the risk of small programs being unable to meet the basic budget requirements to remain in existence. We recommend that any performance metrics be clearly and transparently communicated, and that every effort is made to give fair and equitable resources so that all programs, no matter how big or small, are given the resources to thrive. As students who belong to a liberal education institution, we reject the notion that certain programs are "necessary" to an institution, as this suggests others may not be, and we would like the budget model to reflect the equal value of all programs. Furthermore, we would like to include here our hope that programs do not

disappear as a result of restructuring, because the diversity of our programs is vital to enrolment and retention, and students value the autonomy and freedom to choose and craft their path through University.

Finally, where the changes that the Budget Advisory Committee put forward will fundamentally change the institution as a whole, such as faculty restructuring, students would like to see changes be accompanied by a long-term sustainability plan that assures a return to the quantity of faculties and programs that we currently offer. We ask for assurance that if improvements to the budget situation come in the future, it will also result in the return of the programs, faculties, and systems that are currently present.

While the circumstances by which University of Lethbridge restructuring came about were not overwhelmingly positive, our groups view University restructuring as a great opportunity. When we return to campus in the fall, we hope that we will return to a University that recognizes students as its largest stakeholder, and to a University that protects and recognizes the importance of a diversity of programs. We wish you the best of luck in the budget decision making process, and hope that this report was helpful in guiding your discussions.