



Office of the Vice President Student Affairs

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January 2021 Report
Contribution Hours: 157.5

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Territorial Acknowledgement

Oki, I acknowledge and honour the traditional territories of the people of the Treaty 7 region in Southern Alberta, which includes the Blackfoot Confederacy (comprising the Siksika, Piikani, and Kainai First Nations), the Tsuut'ina First Nation and the Stoney Nakoda (including the Chiniki, Bearspaw, and Wesley First Nations). The City of Lethbridge is also part of the Métis Nation of Alberta, Region III. The Blackfoot name of the University of Lethbridge is Iniskim, meaning Sacred Buffalo Stone. Thank you for the privilege of working, learning, and living in this place. I am grateful and I am committed to doing my part in responding to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 94 Calls to Action in my day-to-day life.

Adapted from the [University of Calgary](#) and the [University of Lethbridge](#).

Comments

January has been a busy month with executing major projects and juggling some ongoing ones. With the annual Students' Union elections coming up, I am excited to soon welcome the next team of elected representatives and support the next VP Student Affairs in this complex, but rewarding role.

Clubs

Spring Clubs Week ran online from Monday, January 11 to Friday, January 22. Similar to Fall Clubs Week, the Students' Union directed people to the Clubs & Greek Life List on the SU website, as well as the SU Discord server (<https://discord.gg/NqTMuMD>). Additionally, there was a larger focus on promotion. I had the opportunity to do an

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Instagram takeover on the @ulethbridge page and advertise about Clubs Week and the other work that I do. I also coordinated with university communicators in order to forward the message about Clubs Week to the whole student body. We also tried out an Open Zoom Session, where clubs could sign up for a 30-minute slot to use as they wish. Overall, Spring Clubs Week saw a lot more activity and the digital infrastructure that was built up on the Clubs & Greek Life List and Discord server can always continue to be a venue to promote clubs, in addition to in-person opportunities to promote clubs.

Clubs' Council met early in January in preparation for Clubs Week, as well as to gather data on how current club processes are functioning. I gathered quantitative and qualitative data specifically about the overall experience of clubs with the event proposal process. This refers to how clubs submit information about their activity through a Google Form. This is then reviewed, the event is officially sanctioned, and the club is supported with the relevant event logistics. There was valuable data gathered and is currently being analyzed internally within the SU to identify areas of improvement and implement changes that can improve club experiences. For the Clubs' Council in February, I plan on continuing this participative approach to encourage more two-way communication, transparency, and accountability between clubs and the SU. I will be gathering more data about how Spring Clubs Week went, along with data on what clubs want for Fall 2021. While the future is uncertain, knowing what clubs value will be able to assist the SU with planning multiple options and select the best one based on the COVID-19 restrictions at the time.

Lastly, Nicholas Canning (UVolunteer Program Coordinator) and I met with Brandy Old (Manager of Agility) to discuss ways to integrate volunteerism more into the fabric of the university. We discussed a new platform called [Harness](#) that Agility is currently exploring. It is essentially an online platform meant to encourage entrepreneurial initiatives. There is an exciting long-term opportunity here to involve clubs within the platform. For example, they could understand the needs of non-profit organizations in the local Lethbridge community and develop innovative projects as a club to support them. As this platform gets established within Agility, we will be exploring the exact details of how clubs can be involved.

Programming

On January 28, the "Finding Identity: An LGBTQ2S+ Conversation on Intersectionality, Mental Health, and Allyship" was hosted. The product of several months of work, this event was a cross-institution partnership and featured speakers Ben O'Keefe, Jack Saddleback, and Tiq Milan, and hosted by Kat Blaque. A recording of the event can be accessed here: <https://www.facebook.com/UASUualberta/videos/129711732332110>.

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In January, I also partnered with the University of Lethbridge Art Gallery to host a trivia night on the theme of 2020. Another trivia night will be hosted on Thursday, February 25! I am also currently in the process of organizing Last Class Bash, which will occur on Tuesday, April 13. With ongoing COVID-19 restrictions, it will be an online event, but re-imagined in a way that will hopefully still be engaging and a worthwhile celebration to end off this academic year.

I have been working with William Baliko, the SU's Clubs & Student Involvement Assistant, to expand the SU Discord server so that it can serve as a more multifaceted hub for student engagement. Channels have been added for studying, productivity, sharing resources, along with plans to host movie nights and coffee chats right within the server. We have also added tags for people to tag which faculty and country they are from. Check it out here: <https://discord.gg/NqTMuMD>.

GBA+ Conference

Several SU representatives attended the GBA+ (Gender-based Analysis Plus) Conference held on January 12-13, 2021. As defined by the Canadian government, GBA+ is "an analytical process used to assess how diverse groups of women, men, and gender diverse people may experience policies, programs and initiatives." In essence, the conference provides a wide breadth of training around equity, diversity, and inclusion, and the usage of GBA+ as a methodology in organizations. Attendees left feeling more equipped to apply an intersectional approach and critical eye to how the SU is currently functioning. While it is just a first step, the long-term goal is to have GBA+ firmly integrated within the SU so that it can better ensure that its decisions, policies, and programs are best serving all students.

Committee Work

For clarity, committee work can be divided into internal committees (i.e. within the SU) and external committees (outside of the SU). For internal committees, I chaired the meetings for the GA Transition Committee and ULSU Awards Committee. I have identified significant gaps in how the SU's transition processes have been running, which has led to an overall lack of institutional continuity. Researching into other Students' Unions, I have tried to get our Students' Union up to a higher standard and follow best practices. The result of this work is a Transition Manual which student representatives can refer to throughout their term, as well as a much more fleshed-out transition process that will better equip elected representatives with the skills they need to better serve students. GBA+ will be integrated as part of the transition process. For the SU Awards Committee, I have also taken steps to standardize the process for award selection. In line with what the University of Lethbridge does to select their awards, I am implementing a ranking system where

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committee members will independently review all the award nominations, assign numerical values based on a rubric of criteria, and then I will compile all the scores in order to determine the highest ranking nominees. This will be followed by a discussion meeting to select the final recipients.

In terms of external committees, I am a member of the Fall 2021 Teaching and Learning Committee (formerly called the Fall 2021 Task Force). This university committee is examining all the details of Fall 2021 and will be compiling a series of recommendations to present to the President's Executive. Several different working groups have formed and are also developing recommendations to report back to the Fall 2021 Teaching and Learning Committee. Specifically, I have been co-chairing the Student Wellness, Support, and Community Building Working Group with Mark Slomp (Executive Director, Student Services). Working with the various student services departments, as well as representatives from the Students' Union and Graduate Students' Association, we have developed a series of 7 recommendations that aims to address the challenges that students are facing in terms of isolation, disconnection, mental health, and access to supports.

General Faculties Council

General Faculties Council (GFC) is a governance body that is responsible for the academic affairs of the University. A number of student representatives sit on GFC, alongside university administration, and faculty members. A special meeting of GFC was held on January 25 in order to discuss the Transformational Task Forces. In brief, these 21 Transformational Task Forces pertain to a wide range of university functions, and are designed to assess the function to determine if there are operational efficiencies that can be implemented to reduce costs. See this publicly available document for more details:

https://www.uleth.ca/sites/default/files/2020/11/transformational_restructuring_task_forces_gfc_response_nov_23-20_final.pdf

The result of the January 25 meeting and a subsequent GFC meeting on February 1 was passing a motion to form a "committee of the whole." This means that GFC will have access to review all of the reports from the task forces and provide its own recommendations as the University undergoes this process of fundamental restructuring in response to budget challenges. The next GFC meeting will be on March 1 at 3:00 PM. All GFC meetings are open to non-members, unless otherwise stated, so if you wish to listen in on the meeting you are welcome to contact Jodie Gallais (Jodie.gallais@uleth.ca) for the meeting invitation.

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Committee Meetings Attended

- Student Wellness, Support, and Community Building Working Group - Jan 14 & 28
- Fall 2021 Teaching and Learning Committee - January 19
- Preventing Sexual Violence Action Committee - January 21
- Campus Collective Centre Board Meeting - January 22
- CKXU 88.3 FM Board of Directors Meeting - January 24
- General Faculties Council - January 25

These are some of the meetings where I represented the student voice, but does not capture the full detail of the work that I do. If you have any questions or want to chat more about this report, please send me an email!

With gratitude,
Richard Lee-Thai