



Dear member;

We are pleased at your enthusiasm to work with AUSU. Doing so is a great opportunity to learn a wide range of new skills. Working with a council will teach you:

- how a board/council works (you will find that all boards, including governments, have a similar structure and rules of order);
- how AU makes decisions that affect students, and how student government can affect these decisions;
- the benefits of working at a distance; and,
- how you can better connect with other AU students.

Before you run for Council, though, we want to give you a little more information about what your role and responsibilities will be, so that you can decide if working with AUSU is the right fit for you.

### **Working At A Distance:**

AUSU is a distance organization; we conduct the majority of our business through e-mail and teleconference. Although opportunities to travel for committee work sometimes arise, it's possible, and even likely, that you may never meet your fellow councillors or staff face-to-face (in fact, our staff all reside in different cities!). Likewise, you may work with, but never meet, many university staff.

### **Meetings:**

At least once a month you will be required to participate in a teleconference meeting. These are official council meetings that involve votes, vote ratifications, and open discussions regarding matters of interest to Council and AUSU members. Half of these meetings are publicly accessible, meaning that anybody can attend. The other half are closed-session planning meetings. Both types of meeting rarely last less than two hours, and it is not uncommon for them to exceed three. They have been held in the early evening

(Alberta time) for the last several years. The timing is set to accommodate most comfortably the widest number of councillors, so the current meeting time is subject to change. If you miss too many of these meetings you can be removed from Council. You may be required to attend further meetings if you join certain committees or work with university committees.

The AUSU executives sit on many committees that meet during daytime hours, and some quarterly meetings may exceed 6 hours. The executive also tends to meeting every couple of weeks for internal planning sessions, and these meetings usually last a few hours and are scheduled to best accommodate all members of the exec group. Keep these scheduling issues in mind if you plan to run for an executive position. Non-executive councillors usually don't have to do any daytime meetings, unless they opt to sit in certain committees as well.

### **Email:**

Most of the work Council does is done via e-mail. You are expected to familiarise yourself with everything that comes to you via email, and to respond actively. You will do much of your communication with council this way, so make sure you are comfortable with typing! It also helps if you are able to manage a larger volume of email from more than one account. Using an email client is recommended as using webmail will be very cumbersome. We'll provide whatever training you might need to use a client.

Sometimes a week may go by without any emails, while at other times there will be many new messages each day.

### **Time Difference:**

You should always be mindful that Council works on Alberta (Mountain) time. Meetings, vote time constraints, et cetera, will always be in Mountain Time. This can mean many hours of difference between you and the rest of Council. You should be mindful of this as it could cause serious issues for you if you can't be available at the time that is best suitable for the rest of the councillors. However, we've accommodated members in all locales, including overseas, as long as they are willing to sometimes phone in at strange hours :)

### **Active Participation:**

You are expected to do more than simply fill up space when you become a councillor. We expect that you will participate in telephone and e-mail conversations, offer ideas, comment on the ideas of others, et cetera. Working with Council is not merely a head-nodding time-filler. You are being paid, and are expected to work for that pay. In other words, showing up for a meeting is a start, but if you never contribute to a meeting, this is not adequate. However, plenty of time is provided for new councillors to learn the ropes, and we provide background and training on everything you need. Often a couple of hours a week will suffice -- sometimes more is needed.

We realise that at first you may be hesitant because you're not sure what to do or say, or you may feel you actually have nothing significant to add, and this is fair, but never be afraid to ask a question about how to proceed or to bring forward your thoughts and concerns. Remember, the students elect you because they think your opinion would be good for them, don't let them down by not providing it to Council. You should also make sure you participate in all votes that are put forward in meetings or in e-mail.

### **Councillor vs. Counsellor:**

You are a member of a council, a ruling body that makes decisions on behalf of those who elected you. You will not be working directly with students in any therapeutic or mentoring situation. In addition, AUSU Council is a decision making body, not an administrative body. Council sets policy and makes decisions about what AUSU is going to do, and then leaves it to staff to ensure that those decisions are effectively enacted. This is our governance model. We do not tend to ask councillors to do administrative work or to design media, web sites, etc. For example, the VP Finance will be required to go over financial documents and double check entries, policies, etc., but will not be responsible for bookkeeping for the organization. Councillors may come up with ideas for media, but will not be required to write or design these items. The overarching role of council is planning and policy development. Expect to be working on policies every month, and to become very familiar with this process. Council develops policies to direct staff. AUSU hires skilled staff to fulfill needed roles.

### **Student Status:**

As a councillor it is important that you remain a registered student through your term on Council, as it keeps you in touch with the needs and wants of students if you are one yourself. You may take up to a four month break from being registered in a course but cannot take off more than six months from your studies over a year or you may be removed from Council. Council may provide assistance so that you can meet this requirement. Exact specifications are set out in AUSU policy.

### **Committee Work:**

AUSU has three committees at this time: the awards committee, the finance committee and the media committee. Sitting on these committees is optional. Most committee positions are filled by an internal election. You can run for as many or as few positions as you like. Each committee does have a required membership number, however, so if the membership quota is not met, Executive may request that you fill a vacancy.

Sitting on a committee requires responding to e-mails, attending meetings and completing specific requirements for that committee. Failure to meet the duties of the committee can result in removal from the committee.

### **Training:**

You need to be committed to council to be a productive member, but you need not bring any special experience. Councils tend to have a mix of people from different skill levels, and we can provide training on board governance, policy development, and other roles of councillors.