



Athabasca University
Students' Union

Athabasca University Students' Union

Council Meeting Minutes

APPROVED APRIL 14, 2016

Thursday March 10, 2016

4:30pm MST

Meeting Called By: Shawna Wasylyshyn, President

Type of Meeting: AUSU Regular Council Meeting

Minutes: Donette Kingyens, Communications and Member Services Coordinator

Participants

Council: President Shawna Wasylyshyn, Vice President External and Student Affairs Colleen Doucette, Vice President Finance and Administration Brandon Simmons, Councillor Philip Kirkbride, Councillor Kim Newsome, Councillor Tamra Ross, Councillor Laura Zhu

Staff: Executive Director Sarah Cornett, Communications and Member Services Coordinator Donette Kingyens, The Voice Editor Karl Low

Members: Dixie Toliver

Absence: Councillor Megan Daigneault (vacation), Councillor Pierre Plamondon (vacation)

Meeting called to order at 4:01pm MDT

Agenda and Minutes

1.0 Approval of Agenda All

Motion: BIRT Council approve the agenda as presented.

2016-03-10 Council Agenda.pdf

C. Doucette / K. Newsome

Carried 7/0

Note: File *2016-03-10 Council Background.pdf* is provided as background and should be referred to for this meeting.

2.0 Adoption of Council Meeting Minutes All

Motion: BIRT Council approve the minutes of the February 11, 2016 regular council meeting.

L. Zhu / K. Newsome

Carried 7/0

2016-02-11 Council Meeting Minutes DRAFT.pdf

Motion: BIRT Council approve the minutes of the in-camera session of the February 11, 2016 regular council meeting.

C. Doucette / B. Simmons

Carried 7/0

2016-02-11 Council In-Camera Session Minutes COUNCIL ONLY DRAFT.pdf

Motion: BIRT Council approve the minutes of the March 08, 2016 interim council meeting.

L. Zhu / T. Ross

Carried 7/0

2016-03-08 Council Meeting Minutes_DRAFT Rev1.pdf

Old Business

- 3.0 Review of Action Items** All
- The status of the action and agenda items at the bottom of the most recent council minutes were reviewed briefly. All items are either complete or satisfactorily on schedule.
- 4.0 Ratification of Email Motion** S. Wasylyshyn
- Email Motion:** BIRT AUSU approves a transfer of \$3000 from the budget for Staff Salaries (GL 5210) to the budget for Other Staffing (GL 5318) to accommodate the contracting of TPD in hiring a new part time administrative assistant.
- S. Wasylyshyn / L. Zhu **Carried 7/0**
- Note:** For email vote, M. Daigneault on vacation, T. Ross vote not received.
- P. Kirkbride / K. Newsome **Carried 7/0**
- 5.0 Motion Tabled at the Previous Meeting** S. Wasylyshyn
- 4.01 Policy 9.05 Technology Infrastructure – Web Services for Student**
- Motion:** Put the following motion back on the floor: BIRT AUSU adopt the updated copy of policy 9.05 *Technology Infrastructure – Web Services for Students* for inclusion in the policy manual.
- K. Newsome / B. Simmons **Carried 7/0**
- Motion:** BIRT AUSU adopt the updated copy of policy 9.05 *Technology Infrastructure – Web Services for Students* for inclusion in the policy manual.
- C. Doucette / L. Zhu **Carried 7/0**
- Policy_9.05_Technology_Infrastructure Exec Edits.docx*
- Council discussed whether to include the specific names of AU learning tools and management system (Moodle, Greymatter, Degree Works). The policy was changed to state “including but not limited to Moodle”.

Action and Discussion Items

- 6.0 Forensic Audit Recommendation Committee Report and Recommendations** S. Cornett
- Motion:** BIRT AUSU adopt the Forensic Audit Recommendation Committee report and the recommendations contained therein, noting that while it will not be possible to adhere to all of the timelines, council does commit to implementation in a timely manner.
- C. Doucette / B. Simmons
- 2016-02-18 FA Committee Report To Council rev1.pdf*
- The recommendations in the report involve updating eight policies which is a significant amount of work. Council agreed it may not be possible to complete the policy revisions by the end of this council term since there is only a month left and a lot of other work to be completed. However, council still wants to commit to implementing the changes as soon as possible and having a deadline for accountability.
- Motion** to amend the Motion to replace “in a timely manner” to “by the end of the fiscal year and put the recommendations on the council 2015/2016 goals list.”

K. Newsome / P. Kirkbride

Carried 7/0

Motion: BIRT AUSU adopt the Forensic Audit Recommendation Committee report and the recommendations contained therein, noting that while it will not be possible to adhere to all of the timelines, council does commit to implementation by the end of the fiscal year and to put the recommendations on the council 2015/2016 goals list.

C. Doucette / B. Simmons

Carried 7/0

Motion: BIRT AUSU thank the members of the ad hoc Forensic Audit Recommendation Committee for their work and dissolve the committee pending email adoption of their final minutes.

S. Wasylyshyn / P. Kirkbride

Carried 7/0

2015-09 Forensic Audit Recommendation TOR v2.pdf

7.0 Executive Compensation Committee Report and Recommendations

S. Cornett

Motion: BIRT AUSU adopt the Executive Compensation Review Committee report and the recommendations contained therein.

Committee
Chair

L. Zhu / B. Simmons

Carried 7/0

2016-03-02 ECRC Report To Council.pdf

Note: Adoption of this motion signifies council's general agreement with the report and its recommendations.

Motion: BIRT AUSU adopt the updated copy of Policy 2.15 Council Governance – Executive Accountability and Compensation for inclusion in the policy manual effective at the beginning of the next council term in April 2016.

C. Doucette / K. Newsome

Carried 7/0

Policy_2.15_Executive_Accountability_and_Compensation_ECRC_Edits.docx

Note: The amendments to Policy 2.15 Council Governance – Executive Accountability and Compensation will implement the recommendation about the honoraria amount and the regular review process in lieu of the automatic CPI increase.

Motion: BIRT AUSU instruct the member engagement and communication committee to determine how the executive compensation committee report will be made available to the membership.

T. Ross / L. Zhu

Carried 7/0

Note: This motion fulfills section 8.06.21 of the committee terms of reference.

Action Item: MEC Committee to determine how to communicate the report to the membership.

Motion: BIRT AUSU thank the members of the ad hoc Executive Compensation Review Committee for their work and dissolve the committee.

P. Kirkbride / C. Doucette

Carried 7/0

Note: This motion is appropriate if council decides to adopt the report and that no further research or clarification is needed from the committee.

Action Item: Staff to send a thank you card to the two non-council members that sat on AUSU's two ad hoc committees.

8.0 Policy Revisions

Executive

8.01 Policy 2.06 Council Governance – Student Representation on AU Committees

Motion: BIRT AUSU adopt the updated copy of Policy 2.06 Council Governance – Member Representation on AU Committees for inclusion in the policy manual.

K. Newsome / T. Ross

Carried 7/0

Policy_2.06_Council_Governance_Student_Reps_on_AU_Committees_Exec_Edits.docx

Action Item: Staff to update existing template for a committee application form for members and post it online.

8.02 NEW Policy 2.07 Council Governance – Member Representation on AUSU Committees

Motion: BIRT AUSU adopt the new Policy 2.07 Council Governance – Member Representation on AUSU Committees for inclusion in the policy manual.

C. Doucette / K. Newsome

Carried 7/0

Policy_2.07_Council_Governance_Member_Reps_on_AUSU_Committees_Exec_Edits.docx

Council discussed whether members who serve on committees should be ineligible for AUSU or Voice contests in addition to AUSU scholarships, awards, and bursaries. The following points were made:

- Committee members should not be eligible for awards in which an AUSU committee makes the decision to avoid the appearance of bias by giving awards to members that council is directly working with.
- AUSU and Voice contests are based on random draw instead of a decision of committee.
- The policy specifies that non-councillors are ineligible only while serving on a committee.

It was agreed that non-councillors should still be eligible for AUSU or Voice contests while serving on an AUSU committee.

8.03 Policy 6.07 Financial Management – Reserves and Investments

Motion: BIRT AUSU adopt the new version of Policy 6.07 Financial Management – Reserves and Investments for inclusion in the policy manual.

B. Simmons / S. Wasylyshyn

Carried 7/0

Policy_6.07_Financial_Management_Reserves_and_Investments_DRAFT_NEW.docx

A revised version of the policy was reviewed from edits completed on March 10 prior to the meeting.

The following points were discussed:

- Internally restricted funds are designated by council for a specific item.
- The \$150,000 minimum to be left in reserves is a contingency reserve that does not include the amounts already restricted to specific items.
- The term “internally” restricted fund is used to match the KRP audits.

The policy was updated to state that the use of funds from the contingency fund should require a two thirds majority vote of council.

Section 6.07.03 was moved to the bottom of section 6.07 for better clarity.

The wording for 6.07.11 was completely rewritten for better clarity.

Section 6.07.11.01 was updated to state “Any changes to the investment plan, or withdrawals from or deposits into the investments, will be reported to council within 5 days and included in the monthly finance committee report.”

8.04 Position Policy 9.12 Academics – Course and Program Development and Maintenance

Motion: BIRT AUSU adopt the updated copy of Position Policy 9.12 Academics – Course and Program Development and Maintenance for inclusion in the policy manual.

L. Zhu / P. Kirkbride

Carried 7/0

Policy_9.12_Course_and_Program_Development_Exec_Edits.docx

Council discussed the following points:

- AU has many out of date courses.
- AUSU has recently been raising this issue with AU over the past few months.
- AU recently proposed replacing an out of date Philosophy class with a different Philosophy class that was 10 years out of date. AUSU advocated against this so AU agreed to review the course.
- AUSU will continue to raise the issue of out of date courses in meetings with AU.

Meeting recessed from 6:12pm MST to 6:17pm MST.

9.0 Bylaw Amendment – First Reading

S. Wasylyshyn

Motion FIRST READING: BIRT AUSU council approve bylaw amendments to bring the process of AUSU bylaw amendment in line with the Post-Secondary Learning Act of Alberta, section 95 (1) and 95 (2), whereby creation and amendment of bylaw is the sole responsibility of council, by repealing the following portion of Article 10 Amendment:

These bylaws may be amended, in whole or in part, by a special resolution of AUSU as defined in these bylaws.

and replacing it with the following:

10.1 Amendment

These bylaws may be amended, in whole or in part, by motion of council passed by a two thirds majority on first reading at a public meeting of council, and passed by a two thirds majority on second reading at a public meeting of council to be held no sooner than 30 days and no longer than 90 days from the first reading.

10.2 Notice to Members

10.2.1 AUSU will provide the membership with 21 days’ advance notice of a meeting in which the first reading of a motion to amend the bylaws will be brought forward.

10.2.2 The notice to members will include the proposed bylaw amendments and the rationale behind the proposal.

10.2.3 The notice will include details of the member consultation opportunities prescribed by section 10.3.

10.3 Member Consultation

10.3.1 AUSU will provide a minimum of two member consultation opportunities, which may include town hall style meetings, online forums, or other as deemed appropriate by council.

10.3.2 A minimum of three AUSU Councillors, including at least one Executive Officer, must participate in each of the member consultation opportunities.

C. Doucette / K. Newsome

Carried 6/1

P. Kirkbride opposed

Reports

10.0 President's Report S. Wasylyshyn
2016-02 President Report.pdf

11.0 Vice President External and Student Affairs' Report C. Doucette
2016-02 VP External Report.pdf

Action Item: C. Doucette to look into when the UDL conference held in January will be airing so that AUSU can promote this to the membership.

Action Item: Staff and Executive to determine how the "AU Partners" folder in the Drive will be shared with council.

Action Item: Executive to add exam invigilation to the agenda for an upcoming meeting with Cindy Ives and Alain May at AU.

12.0 Vice President Finance and Administration's Report B. Simmons
2016-02 VP Finance Report.pdf

13.0 Executive Meeting Reports S. Wasylyshyn
2016-02 Executive Meeting Report.pdf

Note: Executive meeting reports are not public documents. Any decisions made by the Executive appear in a separate public report for ratification by Council. The Executive meeting report is circulated to Council for review and acceptance in their role as the governing council of AUSU.

14.0 Finance Committee Report B. Simmons
2016-02 Finance Committee Report.pdf

15.0 Awards Committee Report K. Newsome
2016-02 Awards Committee Report.pdf

16.0 Member Engagement and Communication Committee Report C. Doucette
2016-02 MEC Committee Report.pdf

17.0 Executive Director's Report S. Cornett
2016-02 Executive Director Report.pdf

Action Item: Determine how to facilitate meeting with the Voice and working on the AUSU Goal to support the Voice.

There was a suggestion of forming an ad-hoc committee including Voice writers, readers, staff and council, but this will need to be discussed further with input from Karl Low, the Voice editor.

18.0 Communication and Members Services Coordinator Report D. Kingyens
2016-02 Communications Coordinator Report.pdf
Newsletter Stats.xlsx

Action Item: Staff to follow up with recipients of geocache kits to obtain the location of their buried cache for AUSU to promote.

Action Item: MECC to discuss getting feedback from the members that received an AUSU 2016 Calendar.

19.0 Acceptance of Reports All
Motion: BIRT Council accept the reports as presented.
 S. Wasylyshyn / C. Doucette **Carried 7/0**

Question & Answer Period

20.0 Question & Answer Period S. Wasylyshyn
 Observers are also invited to contact the AUSU office with any questions that arise from the meeting at ausu@ausu.org , 780.497.7000, or 1.855.497.7003.

AU wants to meet with AUSU council and staff next week to discuss the University budget following their meeting with the government this week. AUSU will know more about this next week. The invite will be sent to all of council in case anyone would like to attend.

AUSU invited the new Minister of Advanced Education to the AU convocation.

Next Meeting and Adjournment

The next meetings of Council are set for:

Thursday March 16, 2016 at 4:30 pm MST – Special Meeting to Announce Election Results

Thursday March 31, 2016 at 4:30 pm MST – Special Meeting for Executive Election (Tentative)

Thursday April 14, 2016 at 4:30 pm MST – Changeover Meeting (Tentative)

Meeting adjourned at 7:05pm MST.

Summary of Action Items

Date	Status	Action Item and Responsible Party
Oct 13	Complete	Policy Revisions: Further work on policies to define how non-council members of committees would be managed. Executive
Feb 11	Complete	3.0 Review of Action Items: Executive to sent the notes made about how non-council members of committees would be managed to K. Newsome so she can begin working on the policies. Executive / K. Newsome
Feb 11	Complete	5.01 Policy Revision- Technology Infrastructure: Further work on Policy 9.05 Technology Infrastructure Executive
Feb 11	Complete	6.0 Bylaw Amendment Process: Give 21 day's notice to the membership of proposed bylaw changes. D. Kingyens
Feb 11	Complete	6.0 Bylaw Amendment Process: Schedule at least two member consultation sessions in preparation for first reading of bylaw amendments to bring the process of AUSU bylaw amendment in line with the Post-Secondary Learning Act of Alberta. S. Cornett
Feb 11	In Progress	21.0 Question & Answer Period: Contact AU about getting advertising material so that members can advertise on AU's behalf. Executive
Mar 10		7.0 Executive Compensation Committee Report and Recommendations: MECC to determine how the executive compensation committee report will be made available to the membership. MECC

Mar 10		7.0 Executive Compensation Committee Report and Recommendations: AUSU staff to send a thank you card to the two non-council members that sat on AUSU's two ad hoc committees. Staff
Mar 10		8.01 Policy 2.06 Council Governance – Student Representation on AU Committees: Staff to develop an application form to be put online. Staff
Mar 10		11.0 Vice President External and Student Affairs' Report: Look into when the UDL conference held in January will be aired. C. Doucette
Mar 10		11.0 Vice President External and Student Affairs' Report: Determine how the "AU Partners" folder in the drive will be shared with council. Executive & Staff
Mar 10		11.0 Vice President External and Student Affairs' Report: Add exam invigilation to the agenda for an upcoming meeting with Cindy Ives and Alain May at AU. S. Wasylyshyn
Mar 10		17.0 Executive Director's Report: Determine how to facilitate meeting with the Voice and working on the AUSU Goal to support the Voice. Executive
Mar 10		18.0 Communications and Member Services Coordinator's Report: Follow up with recipients of geocache kits to obtain the location of their buried cache for AUSU to promote. Staff

Summary of Agenda Items

Date	Status	Agenda Item and Committee
Oct 13		2015-2016 Budget: Consider the timing of the in-person council session. Council
Oct 26		Student Health and Dental Plan: Develop a onetime health care bursary with preference for recipients given to those who participated in the AUSU Health and Dental Plan. Awards Committee
Jan 14	closer to end of year	Communication and Members Services Coordinator Report: AUSU to consider ways to handle calendar orders for 2017, possibly including pre-orders MECC
Jan 14		Executive Meeting Reports: AUSU bylaw review Executive
Feb 11	March 10, 2016	Policy Revision- Technology Infrastructure: Revisit tabled motion on Policy 9.05 Technology Infrastructure Council
Mar 10		Communications and Member Services Coordinator's Report: Discuss obtaining feedback from members who received AUSU's 2016 Calendar. MECC



Athabasca University
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Forensic Audit Recommendation Committee Report

For Circulation to AUSU Council

Last Update: February 18, 2016

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1.0 Introduction

This ad hoc committee was created to assist council in addressing the members' motion from the 2015 Annual General Meeting, which reads as follows:

BIRT that it is recommended that AUSU engage a third party independent auditing firm, specializing in forensic audits, to perform a forensic audit of AUSU finances for the 2014/2015 fiscal year including;

- a) That the selected firm is not Kingston Ross Pasnak to maintain independence;
 - b) The goal of the forensic audit, but not limited to, is to determine whether AUSU funds have been managed correctly and in accordance with Alberta and Canadian laws and AUSU bylaws and policies;
 - c) The forensic audit report be released by September 15, 2015; if the full report is not complete, an interim report be provided by this date with anticipated completed date;
 - d) The forensic audit report be released publicly to all students via the AUSU website and AUSU mailing list with no modifications;
 - e) That a special meeting be called of the AUSU membership, similar to the AGM within 2 weeks of the final report for discussion;
 - f) That funds to finance this report to be drawn from reserve funds so as not to affect the current AUSU budget.
- Amendment: BIRT that the members recommend the forensic audit be for the past 6 months, instead of for all of 2014/2015.

The role of this committee is to study the issue of a forensic audit as described in the motion and make recommendation(s) to council that will ensure the best interests of AUSU and its members are served, and assist in council's decision regarding the members' motion.

2.0 Review of Issues Members Wanted Addressed

In an effort to understand the scope of a possible forensic audit, the committee invited all those who were in attendance at the May 2015 Annual General Meeting to attend a committee meeting on November 4, 2015, and/or provide a written submission to discuss the reasons behind the members' forensic audit motion. Of the thirteen people who were at the annual general meeting, seven members attended the meeting, and two provided written submissions. There was good dialogue at the meeting and it ended with the acknowledgement that there was helpful information provided and a comprehensive discussion.

The committee identified several issues and agreed the membership should have answers to their questions and concerns. The following is a summary of the reasons for the forensic audit motion in terms of what issues the members wanted to see addressed.

Three specific financial items of concern:

2.1 Jason Nixon collecting executive director salary

- How was the decision made?
- Was the correct process used and did those making the decision have the authority to do so?
- Was it appropriate?
- Why wasn't it communicated clearly?

2.2 Executive compensation increase

- How was the decision made?
- Was the correct process used and did those making the decision have the authority to do so?
- Was it appropriate?
- Why wasn't it communicated clearly?

2.3 General overage in budgeted expenses

- How were the decisions made?
- Was the correct process used and did those making the decision have the authority to do so?
- Were they appropriate?
- Why wasn't it communicated clearly?

General concerns:

- 2.4 Unclear decision-making processes
- 2.5 Lack of documentation regarding decisions and financial information
- 2.6 Lack of communication and transparency to membership regarding decisions and financial information

3.0 Decision Tree for Committee Recommendations to Council

The committee used the following decision tree to frame a process for the committee work. Each question was considered in sequence and the following outlines the results.

The most important consideration is to own mistakes if there were any made, and take corrective actions while protecting member funds.

3.1 Question 1: Does the committee have a reasonable understanding of the issues that the membership wanted addressed when they recommended a forensic audit?

Yes: The discussion from the meeting with those present at the annual general meeting gave the committee a good understanding of the issues. This was the most important source of information being first hand accounts of those involved at the time. The members who moved and seconded the motion were in attendance and were quite forthcoming in their participation, which was appreciated by the committee members. There was also research done by staff into the meeting itself including the agenda, motions, legal opinion sought about the motions, and council correspondence surrounding the meeting.

~~**No:** Do more research, consultation, and discussion and revisit Question 1.~~

Actions: Write a summary of the committee's understanding of the issues, and move forward to Question 2.

3.2 Question 2: Do the issues need to be addressed by AUSU council moving forward?

Yes: The membership should have clear and open answers to their questions, and their concerns should be addressed. This is a key recommendation of the committee.

~~**No:** Prepare a report to council with a recommendation that no further action is required including committee findings. Report to be delivered by committee chair at next council meeting scheduled for January 14, 2016.~~

Actions: Move forward to Question 3.

3.3 Question 3: Is it the committee's opinion that a forensic audit is the appropriate tool to address the issue? (*Need affirmative answers to the following.*)

- Is there a reasonably defined scope for a forensic audit of AUSU?
- Is there a reasonably significant benefit to AUSU to be gained by pursuing a forensic audit?
- Is there a way to quantify that benefit to compare it to the potential cost of a forensic audit?

~~**Yes:** Prepare a report to council with a recommendation for a forensic audit including issue(s) to be addressed, scope, and cost benefit analysis. Report to be delivered by committee chair at next council meeting scheduled for January 14, 2016, and move forward to Question 4.~~

~~**Note:** If council adopts the recommendation to pursue a forensic audit the committee will move forward with the remainder of its mandate.~~

No: The committee invited Dan Wiart and Ken Jacques from Kingston Ross Pasnak (KRP), the AUSU auditors, to meet with the committee to help them understand what a forensic audit is, the differences between a forensic audit and a regular financial audit, the type of instances forensic audits are generally used, and the types of information that can only be found using a forensic audit. It was agreed that a forensic audit just does not seem like the right tool to address members' concerns. All AUSU financial information is available and is being audited, and there is no evidence of actual missing funds, which is a primary reason for a forensic audit.

A forensic audit's scope is usually defined by what the actual concern is, and the members' motion was very broad and does not provide guidance as to the purpose or scope of a forensic audit. The committee also received information about a forensic audit versus a regular audit and it was noted that a forensic audit would focus on items such as:

- Reviewing transactions authorized by a person or group of persons suspected of fraud or mismanagement.
- Only specific transactions if expense reports or salaries were questioned.
- Whether certain types of transactions are in line with by-laws and policies.

With respect to costs, it would be rare for a forensic to be less than \$10K and can be as much as \$100K, and because a forensic audit requires a high level expertise from a consultant, there is a lot of detail, interpretation, and testing of hypothesis.

Forensic audits are generally used if there is an indication of significant fraud, any intention to move forward with criminal or civil action, or, if after weighting the risk/benefit there would be the potential for recovery to justify the cost of the audit.

This expenditure, without a substantial benefit in addressing the members' concerns and questions, would not be responsible use of the members' funds.

Actions: Prepare a report to council with a recommendation not to pursue a forensic audit including reasoning. Report to be delivered by the committee chair at the next council meeting. Move forward to Question 4.

3.4 Question 4: Is it the committee's opinion that there are other appropriate tool(s) to address the issue(s)?

Yes: The following points were made in the discussion:

- There are outstanding issues that should be addressed.
- A legal opinion on specific points could be sought, although executive did consult lawyers at the time of the decisions.
- There were policy gaps and executive were doing the best they could under difficult circumstances, but council should have been asked to fill policy gaps.
- Decisions were made at working meetings and the process was discussed with council at those working meetings, but documentation is scarce.
- Some members may be adamant that outside experts are brought in, however it may not be in the best interests of the membership as a whole to spend money to hire experts when we have the answers internally.
- There are no questions that a lawyer and accountant can answer that we don't have the answers to already.

The appropriate tools are:

1. **Communication:** Get the information out to the membership explaining what happened in order to fill the gaps in communication.
2. **Policy/Process/Governance:** Identify the gaps that executive and council were faced with and build better policies, processes, and governance practices.

Detailed recommendations were discussed and are documented in this report to council.

~~No: No further action required.~~

4.0 Research Findings

Extensive research went into AUSU minutes, reports, emails, and any other available information about the issues.

4.1 Jason Nixon collecting executive director salary

- Executive commissioned a report initially titled "Executive Director Succession Plan" from TPD (The Personnel Department) with council-approved funding in Sept 2014. See 2014-09 Executive Meeting Report and Council motion.

- There was indication that the report would include succession planning, wage review, and executive compensation. See 2014-09 ED Report under heading “Succession Plan”.
- There was an in-camera council meeting on October 20, 2014. No record of a motion is included in the motions record. There are no recorded minutes. There is reference to the meeting in the list of meetings contained in the October executive reports attached to the November council meeting minutes. The discussion included Jason Nixon taking on the role of executive director according to policy.
- On or about that time, councillors became aware that Jason would collect the current executive director pay. He did not collect the executive director benefits but continued to collect the president’s benefits. There was some apparent confusion about whether he collected both president and executive director pay, but he in fact did not.
- The November 2014 president’s report notes that the executive director succession plan and compensation review report is complete.
- The commissioned report from TPD titled “Executive Director Compensation Design Report” shows a recommended salary for the executive director at \$22K less than the current executive director salary. The TPD report is dated November 13, 2014, but council requested revisions and the final report was received in early to mid-January 2015.
- There is no council motion, notice in council minutes, or note in executive meeting report or president’s report, confirming Jason Nixon as filling the role of executive director or his change in compensation from the level of president to the level of executive director.
- April 20, 2015 - Jason Nixon, then president, went on unpaid leave of absence (approved by council email motion 4/24/2015, ratified 5/13/2015) and Shawna Wasylyshyn took the role as president as per AUSU bylaws. For a short period of time, this effectively made Shawna also executive director. She received only the president’s pay. Jason’s leave was originally temporary, but it became permanent in May 2015 when he was elected to the Alberta legislature.
- April 24, 2016 - email motion of council to appoint Karyna Hochachka as successful candidate for executive director (ratified 5/13/2015).
- April 27, 2015 – start date of Karyna Hochachka’s contract as executive director.
- May 2015 first payroll of the month – Jason Nixon is no longer on payroll.
- May 27, 2015 - Annual General Meeting.

Primary Concerns:

- There was little documentation of decisions made by executive or by council surrounding the position of executive director between the time when it was noted that Tamra Ross would be leaving AUSU at the end of October 2014 and the hiring of Karyna Hochachka on April 27, 2015.
- There are multiple references to a succession plan being created, and no document on record besides the TPD “2014 Executive Director Compensation Design Report”, which was late being delivered.
- Jason Nixon collected a significant executive director salary from Nov 1, 2014 to April 15, 2015, while the commissioned TPD report (dated Nov 14, 2014 but finalized early in January 2015) recommended an executive director salary \$22K lower than what he collected.
- The decision to change Jason Nixon’s compensation to that of the executive director was made by executive with no documentation and no reference to council input or policy direction.
- It took from November 1, 2014 to April 27, 2015 (almost 6 months) to get a new executive director in place. Once in place, the new executive director received a salary in line with the TPD report recommendation.
- The executive director salary in November 2010 was at the level recommended by the TPD report in Nov 2014. Between November 2010 and October 2014, there was a 27.8% increase in the executive director salary.

How was the decision made?

It appears that the decision was made by executive with some reporting to council, but reporting on the specific compensation is not clear. The succession plan which would have helped in the decision making process was not

completed on schedule. The research commissioned to TPD was significantly delayed and when it was received was not used.

Was the correct process used and did those making the decision have the authority to do so?

That the president takes on the executive director role is part of policy, but the policy is silent on the compensation. The correct process to fill any gaps in policy is to go to council. Executive does have the authority over staff compensation, however, not for an expenditure above budgeted amounts. It is not clear if the combination of continued executive director salary and the executive director severance package that resulted in an extra expense was approved by council as there are no records of the decision.

It is clear at this time that more formal council consultation and recording of process should have taken place.

Was it appropriate?

The appropriateness of the level of compensation is called into question by three items.

1. That there had been a significant increase in executive director compensation in the previous 4 years (27.8%).
2. That the commissioned TPD report, dated two weeks after the role was taken over by Jason Nixon, recommended a compensation level significantly lower (\$22K).
3. That the length of time Jason Nixon was in the role extended over a significant period of time (almost 6 months).

Why wasn't it communicated clearly?

There were significant concerns over potential breach of confidentiality.

There were gaps in both policy and processes to record minutes, record motions, and manage in-camera sessions of council.

Executive was in uncharted territory without significant governance experience or assistance by experienced staff.

Current Situation

Salary recommendations based on the TPD report have been used and current salaries are aligned with it.

The policy and process gaps have been addressed to a significant degree by the new minuting procedures for regular and interim council meetings and a comprehensive review of policies and bylaws.

Recommendations

It is recommended that policy be created specifically around compensation in the event of the president taking on the role of executive director.

It is recommended that policy be considered to limit the time period that a president can take on the role of executive director.

It is recommended that the executive committee look at a procedure for executive motions in addition to recent changes at council level.

4.2 Executive compensation increase

- March 16, 2015 Council Motion (Email Vote) - BIRT AUSU update effective April 1, 2015, in order to accommodate 12 months of pay, Policy 2,15 Council Governance – Executive Accountability and Compensation point 2.15.14 to "The President shall receive an honorarium of \$49,851.22 per year, paid semi-monthly" and point 2.15.15 to "The Vice-Presidents shall receive an honorarium of \$42,729.81 per year, paid semi-monthly". Carried 5/0 (3 abstaining).
- March 16, 2015 Council Motion (Email Vote) - BIRT AUSU approves a transfer of \$16,912.59 from the surplus in budget account 5210 office wages to budget account 5215 Executive Wages to accommodate adjustments to executive wages for the remainder of the 2014/2015 fiscal year. Carried 5/0 (3 abstaining).

- April 2015 council meeting was cancelled.
- May 5, 2015 - Both email votes were ratified 5/0 (3 abstaining). Executive councillors abstained.
- The executive wage package brought up by a non-executive councillor was discussed only in brief at the September 2014 executive meetings. Discussion was primarily by email thread amongst non-executive councillors and the executive director. No action was taken at the council level until the spring when non-executive councillors requested it be put on the council agenda.
- In 2012, research compiled on a spreadsheet and in a written report was used to put AUSU executive compensation in line with other student unions in Alberta. At the time AUSU executive compensation was significantly below the average. Row 5 of the 2012 data sheet shows that an hourly rate was calculated using a 52-week work year for Mount Royal, University of Calgary, University of Alberta, MacEwan University, and SAIT. Then those figures were averaged to create a suggested rate for AUSU at \$20/hour.
- On that same spreadsheet, rows 13 through 18 show information on council members, while the upper rows show information about executive. This could be where the misunderstanding originated. The “months per year worked” is shown in the lower section and applies to council, not executive. It is true that the other councils generally meet as a council only during the academic year.
- The written report states that the average executive rate that was adopted was based on a 52-week year although the wording is not particularly clear on the actual working year of other executives.
- It has been stated that it was reported by staff that other student union executive officers work a shorter year but that the misinformation was corrected several times. There is no record to show this.
- The end result is that the premise that was discussed by council last spring, that other student union executives only work 8-10 months per year, is incorrect. That means that the 33% increase in executive honoraria that was instituted last spring was not justified in the manner that council believed and stated to the membership.

How was the decision made?

The decision was made by a motion of council.

Was the correct process used and did those making the decision have the authority to do so?

The decision making process in using a council motion was correct and the authority was correct.

The research process failed, most likely as a result of the passage of time and the turnover of individuals, both staff and councillors.

Was it appropriate?

It has been discovered that the information the decision was based on was either incorrect or misinterpreted and the resulting decision was therefore flawed.

Current Situation

When this situation was discovered by current staff and executive officers, council was informed and began the process of reconsidering the executive compensation. A committee is now in place reviewing not only the level of executive compensation but also the process for reviewing it. A council motion has been passed that will roll the executive honorarium back if the committee does not complete its work before the end of the current council term.

Recommendations

It is recommended that council ensure the current ad hoc Executive Compensation Review Committee fulfils its mandate in a timely manner and that council duly consider the committee’s recommendations.

It is further recommended that the Executive Compensation Review Committee or a comprehensive executive compensation review process, be made permanent.

4.3 General overage in budgeted expenses

The 2014-2015 annual audit is complete and the year end variance report is attached to this report. The following is a brief summary of expenditures that were not within budget.

Bank Charges:	Expense \$932	Budget \$500	Over budget by \$432 or 86%.
Total Fees Section:	Expense 12,431	Budget \$16,000	Under budget by \$3,569 or 22%.

Technology Expense:	Expense \$1,299	Budget \$0	Over budget by \$1,299
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There was a non-budgeted amount of \$1,992 shown in the variance report. A consultant was hired to do an audit of the office computers, clean and debug them, update software, and make recommendations for backup and security. This investment in maintaining current hardware should delay the need for new hardware. The budgeted funds for staff hardware was used, but to show the amount separate from hardware purchases, it was put in a separate category on the variance report. Staff hardware is under budget by \$2,969.

Process: The executive director, in consultation with the president and VP finance and administration, hired the consultant. Funds were available in the staff hardware budget and the expense was maintenance of staff hardware. In reporting, the expense was shown in a distinct line for clarity.

Website Expenses:	Expense \$21,698	Budget \$15,000	Over budget by \$5,669 or 37%. (\$6,698 less \$1,029 late correction)
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This is attributable to fees for a consultant to assist in website maintenance prior to the new website being developed, as staff no longer had the capacity to do this work without Tamra Ross on staff. There were also \$425 + \$2310 + \$2047.50 in fees related to the proposal for the new website that were separate from the actual fees for the new website development for which a council motion approved a reserve draw.

Total Tech Section:	Expense \$26,508	Budget \$24,000	Over budget by \$1,479 or 6%. (\$2,508 less \$1,029 late correction)
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Elections	Expense \$6,111; Budget \$2,000; Over budget by \$4,111 or 205%
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Due to the purchase of Simply Voting software for the by-election. This purchase was for a full year subscription so that it could also be used for the 2016 General Election.

Telecom Meetings:	Expense \$2,600; Budget \$2,000; Over budget by \$600 or 30%
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Due to more frequent and longer meetings than anticipated.

Total Admin Section:	Expense \$8,711	Budget \$4,000	Over budget by 4,711 or 117%.
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Telephone/Internet	Expense \$7,799; Budget \$6,000; Over budget by \$1,299 or 20%.
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Total Office Section:	Expense \$69,469	Budget \$78,200;	Under budget by \$8,731 or 11%.
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Lawyer:	Expense \$20,620; Budget \$3,000; Over budget by \$17,620 or 587%.
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Legal consultations included executive director severance agreement, the effect of the Annual General Meeting motions under current bylaws and legislation, validity of bylaw sections 7.5 and 10.0, review of by-election and election policy, and advice regarding health care plan contractual obligations.

Staffing Fees	Expense \$13,430	Budget \$0	Over budget by \$13,420
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Fee paid to the hiring firm for the recruitment of the current executive director. It was not budgeted.

Process: It was an executive decision to contract a hiring firm. The fee is based on the salary paid to the new hire. The salary was set according to an independent consultant's report prepared prior to the beginning of the hiring process.

Total Professional: **Expense of \$51,091** **Budget of \$26,000** **Over budget by \$25,091 or 97%.**

Staff Salaries: Expense of \$190,488 Budget of \$175,000 Over budget by \$15,488 or 9%.

This was due to the severance package paid to the outgoing executive director and a one-week overlap for a transition between the current and previous executive director, offset by having only two staff for part of the fiscal year.

Total Staff Section: **Expense \$212,147** **Budget of \$205,000** **Over budget by \$7,147 or 3.5%.**

Gifts and Donations: Expense \$1,488 Budget \$1,000 Over budget by \$488 or 49%.

Total Promo Section: **Expense \$25,586** **Budget \$81,000** **Under budget by \$55,433 or 68%.**

Website redesign: Expense \$15,325 Budget \$15,000 Over budget by \$325 or 2.2%.

Smart Draw: Expense of \$2,330 Budget \$0 Over budget by \$2,330

Total Member Services: **Expense \$55,371** **Budget \$52,716** **Over budget by \$2,665 or 8%.**

Travel Expense \$6,429 Budget \$5,000 Over budget by \$1,429 or 29%.

Total Representation: **Expense \$26,542** **Budget \$30,969** **Under budget by \$4,427 or 14%.**

Total Expenses exclusive of amortization:

Expense \$687,760 **Budget \$764,919** **Under budget by \$77,160 or 10%.**

Amortization (intangible) Expense \$49,000 Budget of \$0 Over by \$49,000

Due to missing the line item during the budget process.

Total Amortization: Expense \$53,286 Budget of \$8,000 Over budget by \$45,286 or 566%.

How were the decisions made?

There were no specific decisions or motions of council to approve overages in the various budget expenses.

The finance committee did meet regularly to review variance reports.

Was the correct process used and did those making the decision have the authority to do so?

According to policy 6.05 section 6.05.05 there should have been council motions for several expenditures. Therefore, those making the expenditures did not have authority to do so once budgeted amounts were exceeded by more than 10%.

Were they appropriate?

In several cases the dollar amounts were quite small despite the percentage value and seem reasonable e.g. gifts and donations and bank fees.

In other cases, the larger budget section was within acceptable limits because a related item was under budget e.g. technology.

There are some larger expenditures that would have benefited from the transparency of a council motion e.g. elections, teleconferences, legal fees, staffing fees.

Why wasn't it communicated clearly?

Challenges with processes, staff and council changeover are the most likely reason for lack of communication.

Current Situation

It has been a challenge with new staff and new VPFA getting up to speed to date but the audit process is complete and went well and focus is now on current year finances and getting the reporting caught up and on time. Council and staff are more aware of policy requirements and have demonstrated this with the motion to approve the Mail Chimp expense.

Recommendations

Continue awareness of, and compliance with, the policy requirement for expenses above budgeted amounts.

Consider amending policy to include a dollar value as well as a percentage value required for council approval.

General concerns:**4.4 Unclear decision-making processes**

AUSU has improved in this areas as follows:

- Council and staff getting up to speed on processes and policies.
- Improved meeting processes are in place resulting in more transparency and documentation.
- Thorough policy and bylaw review has been started.
- Improved transparency to the membership through more communication.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the executive director facilitate council education by ensuring thorough orientation and governance training and that councillors continue to take responsibility to ensure they are aware of governance, policy and procedures.

It is recommended that council complete bylaw and policy review by end of 2016.

4.5 Lack of documentation regarding decisions and financial information

AUSU has improved in this area as follows:

- Improved meeting processes for council, executive, and committees.
- Minutes for in-camera council session are being kept.
- Improved documentation overall.

Recommendations

It is recommended that Complete review of all financial management policies by end of current council term.

It is recommended that council continue with meeting processes and documentation and adopt a habit of continual improvement in this area.

4.6 Lack of communication and transparency to membership regarding decisions and financial information

AUSU has improved in this area as follows:

- More awareness and willingness to change culture to a more engaged and transparent one.
- Better documentation.
- Open forums at public meetings.
- Minutes from interim/working meetings.
- Social media posts of motions.

- Thorough review of financial policy.

Recommendations

It is recommended that regular financial reports be posted on the AUSU website similar to meeting minutes.

It is recommended that council and staff continue their efforts at increasing transparency to the membership regarding decision and financial information and adopt a habit of continual improvement in this area.

5.0 Summary of Recommendations

Members' questions and concerns

The membership should have clear and open answers to their questions, and their concerns should be addressed. This is a key recommendation of the committee. It is recommended that this report be formally adopted by council at the March 10th regular meeting, that the report be made readily available to the AUSU membership immediately thereafter, and that each of the committee's recommendations be included on council's action sheet to be tracked.

Jason Nixon collecting executive director salary

It is recommended that policy be created specifically around compensation in the event of the president taking on the role of executive director. This may be considered by the executive compensation review committee as an addition to their current mandate or by council as a whole. This should be completed in the current council's term

It is recommended that policy be considered to limit the time period that a president can take on the role of executive director. This may be considered by the executive or by council as a whole. This should be completed in the current council's term.

It is recommended that the executive committee look at a procedure for executive motions in addition to recent changes at council level. This should be completed by the end of the current executive's term.

Executive compensation increase

It is recommended that council ensure the current ad hoc Executive Compensation Review Committee fulfils its mandate in a timely manner and that council duly consider the committee's recommendations. This should be completed by the March regular council meeting.

It is recommended the Executive Compensation Review Committee or a comprehensive executive compensation review process, be made permanent. This should be completed by the end of this council's term.

General overage in budgeted expenses

It is recommended that the VPFA, executive director, and finance committee continue their awareness of, and compliance with, the policy requirement for expenses above budgeted amounts.

It is recommended that council consider amending policy to include a dollar value as well as a percentage value required for council approval. This should be complete by the end of this council's term.

General concern over unclear decision-making processes

It is recommended that the executive director facilitate council education by ensuring thorough orientation and governance training and that councillors continue to take responsibility to ensure they are aware of governance, policy and procedures.

It is recommended that council complete bylaw and policy review by end of 2016.

General concern over lack of documentation regarding decisions and financial information

It is recommended that Complete review of all financial management policies by end of current council term.

It is recommended that council continue with meeting processes and documentation and adopt a habit of continual improvement in this area.

General concern over lack of communication and transparency to membership regarding decisions and financial information

It is recommended that regular financial reports be posted on the AUSU website similar to meeting minutes.

It is recommended that council and staff continue their efforts at increasing transparency to the membership regarding decision and financial information and adopt a habit of continual improvement in this area.

6.0 Conclusion

The committee determined that a forensic audit is not the right tool to answer the membership's questions. All AUSU financial information is available and is being audited, there is no evidence of actual missing funds, and no outstanding issues that should be addressed.

The issues presented were primarily due to:

- Gaps in both policy and processes,
- Concerns over a potential breach in confidentiality, and
- The executive being in uncharted territory without significant governance experience or assistance.

The issues are all currently being addressed by AUSU to a significant degree as follows:

- Greatly increased transparency with the membership, including:
 - Open forums during public council meetings.
 - Public posting of all motions.
 - Regular reporting on current AUSU initiatives.
 - Greater frequency of newsletter and news updates.
 - Significant increase in social media presence.
- A thorough policy and bylaw review being undertaken by council.
- New minuting procedures for regular and interim council meetings as well as in-camera sessions.
- Current staff salaries are aligned with the commissioned TPD staffing report received January 2015.
- Current executive salaries are being reviewed by an ad-hoc Executive Compensation Review Committee.
- Staff and council are more up to speed on processes, procedures, and policies.
- Financial audit process is complete and went well.
- AUSU is focussing on current year finances and getting the reporting caught up and on time.

There are ways that AUSU can continue to address concerns that are summarized in section 5.0 Summary of Recommendations. Most of these recommendations can be implemented by the end of this council's term and none involve significant, if any, expenditure.



Athabasca University
Students' Union

Athabasca University Students' Union

Executive Compensation Review Committee Report

Prepared: February 19, 2016

Last Update: February 28, 2016



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This report is respectfully submitted to AUSU Council by committee members AUSU Member Scott Jacobsen, Councillor Philip Kirkbride, Councillor Kim Newsome, Councillor Pierre Plamondon, Councillor Tamra Ross, VP Finance and Administration Brandon Simmons (non-voting), and committee chair Executive Director Sarah Cornett (non-voting)

1.0 Introduction

At the January 14, 2016 council meeting, the following motion was adopted.

Motion: Whereas council has agreed that the executive honoraria needs a full and considered review to ensure that the best interests of AUSU are served, and

Whereas a majority of council agrees that the preferred time for an amendment to executive honoraria is at the commencement of a new executive term, and

Whereas council understands that because of the current timelines, it is necessary to ensure that those considering a position on the executive for the next term have assurance of what the honorarium will be,

BIRT the executive honoraria will be researched by committee with a target of March 1, 2016 for a report and recommendations to council for review, and that if a decision can not be made with full consideration of council before the beginning of the subsequent executive term, the default executive honoraria will be set at \$32,746.40 for the Vice Presidents and \$38,221.34* for the President, until the committee and council can complete the review.

* There was a typographical error in the motion that is corrected here.

It was noted that the dollar amounts listed in the motion were based on the compensation prior to the October 2014 compensation increase, and incorporate the October 2015 CPI increase.

Council also adopted terms of reference for an ad hoc executive compensation review committee (Policy 8.06) in order to undertake the work articulated in the motion.

Those terms of reference state the objectives of that committee as follows:

- To ensure a fair compensation and benefits package for Executive Officers to AUSU.
- To ensure a regular, consistent, and transparent process of review of Executive Officer compensation and benefits.

The committee was specifically asked to develop an executive compensation review process within AUSU bylaw and policy requirements that includes:

- Variables to be considered such as AUSU's unique character as a distance learning institution with a national scope, hours of work, level of responsibility, etc.;
- Comparable organizations for analysis;
- Timelines for periodic review of the compensation and benefits package;
- The steps to follow to make changes to the compensation and benefits package;
- Timelines for periodic review of the executive compensation review process itself; and
- The steps to follow to make changes to the executive compensation review process.

The committee was further charged with executing the executive compensation review process that they developed and making recommendations to council on the current executive compensation for consideration.

This report contains a comprehensive explanation of the committee's work. It begins with a discussion on what a compensation philosophy is and how it frames an organization's compensation policies, and goes on to recommend a specific ten-point compensation philosophy for AUSU.

Putting that philosophy into practice, the committee then considered each of its ten points in a progressive process that lead to the recommendations that council requested. Those recommendations, for both the specific compensation levels for the incoming executive, and for an ongoing process for executive compensation review, are also contained in this report. The recommendations cover the Compensation Philosophy, executive Benefits, executive Honorarium for upcoming council term, the Compensation Review Process, and immediate Action items for council consideration.

2.0 Compensation Philosophy

A compensation philosophy assists in determining the level of compensation for a position under review. It contains overriding principles that parallel the organization's vision, mission, and mandate, as well as its view of the position and how compensation should be determined.

A compensation philosophy should be stable over time and, therefore, must be well documented. If the organization changes its internal culture or the context of the position itself changes, it will be reviewed and adjusted and might be clarified as the need arises. However, the compensation philosophy should be considered ongoing guiding principles for application to the compensation review process. Data and people may change yearly, but the compensation philosophy will ensure consistent application.

The Executive Compensation Review Committee completed significant research and considered multiple factors in developing the compensation philosophy for the AUSU executive compensation. The research can be found in the appendices of this report, and details of the factors that have gone into the recommended philosophy are discussed in the subsections below.

The recommended AUSU executive compensation philosophy is summarized as follows:

1. **Total Compensation:** Compensation includes honorarium plus those benefits that are readily measurable as cash equivalent and are consistently, if not universally, beneficial to individuals in the position.
2. **Honorarium:** AUSU will provide an honorarium rather than a competitive wage. However, an honorarium does not imply an insignificant amount.
3. **Alberta Student Unions:** Alberta Student Unions provide the most applicable comparable data. Alberta student unions have made an effort to standardize executive compensation and AUSU should be aware of its role in this process.
4. **Other Student Unions:** Student unions in other provinces should be considered to the extent that they can indicate the trends across Canada but they are not directly comparable organizations.
5. **Other Sectors:** Student unions are unique and other business or non-profit sectors do not offer directly comparable organizations.
6. **Use of Comparable Data:** Data from comparable organizations should be considered, but are one of many factors to be considered. Compensation can be set above, below, or at that of comparable organizations based on the other factors within the philosophy. If AUSU data is within 5-10% of the median of the data from the comparable organizations, it means we have a starting point that is in a reasonable range based on this particular factor.
7. **Athabasca University is Unique:** AU membership is unique with respect to demographics such as age, financial circumstance, and life circumstance, and this should be considered when setting executive compensation.
8. **AUSU Itself is Unique:** AUSU executive is different from other student union executive as it is more administrative, while others are more governance focused with more administrative support from staff. The relationship between risks, rewards, and responsibilities inherent in the executive positions are factors to be considered, particularly considering the blend of administration and governance.
9. **AUSU Financial Considerations:** In the final analysis, AUSU's own internal financial situation is the primary factor to be considered.
10. **Regular Reviews:** Regular reviews should take the place of automatic increases. Cost of living should be a factor to be considered, but annual cost of living increases should not be automatic. If a change of less than a threshold amount (to be determined) is indicated by the comparable data and the internal finances, there is no need to do a full compensation review from first principles. If comparable data and internal finances indicate a change greater than that threshold, a compensation review should go back to basic principles and full consideration of all aspects of the philosophy.

2.1 Total Compensation

Compensation includes honorarium plus those benefits that are readily measurable as cash equivalent and are consistently, if not universally, beneficial to individuals in the position.

Compensation that is other than monetary could be perceived as a positive or negative benefit to the position depending on the individual. For example, providing parking vs. working from home – not everyone would prefer to work from home, it really is an individual perception. The same principles could be applied to travel – it could be a perk or an unwanted part of the job. However, things such as course benefits should be considered a positive for everyone since AUSU councillors are students and are expected to continue their studies throughout their time on council.

2.2 Honorarium

AUSU will provide an honorarium rather than a competitive wage. However, an honorarium does not imply an insignificant amount.

honorarium: An honorarium is an *ex gratia* payment (i.e., a payment made without the giver recognizing himself as having any liability or legal obligation) made to a person for his or her services in a volunteer capacity or for services for which fees are not traditionally required. This is used by groups such as schools or sporting clubs to pay coaches for their costs.[1][2] Another example includes the payment to guest speakers at a conference to cover their travel, accommodation, or preparation time.

In Canada, honoraria are considered salary and thus, taxable income under the Income Tax Act.[5][6] In the case where a gift is substituted for honorarium (gift *in lieu* of money), it is still classified as a taxable benefit by Canada Revenue Agency.[5]

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Honorarium>

honorarium: a payment for a service (as making a speech) on which custom or propriety forbids a price to be set.

wage: a payment usually of money for labor or services usually according to contract and on an hourly, daily, or piecework basis —often used in the plural.

<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/wage>

From a general compensation philosophy perspective, there is a basic difference between an honorarium-based philosophy and a wage-based philosophy.

A wage-based philosophy implies competitive compensation package to attract individuals and compensate them for their skills, experience, and tasks at fair or competitive market value.

An honorarium-based philosophy implies a level of appreciation or reward for a volunteer position or volunteer services, but does not necessarily mean an insignificant amount. Compensation needs to be at a fair and reasonable level, i.e. not a simple token of appreciation for volunteering.

An honorarium-based philosophy is appropriate for AUSU for the following reasons:

- Executive officers are elected, not hired, and there are no hiring processes such as resumes, references, skills testing, etc.
- AUSU members have a wide range of life and work experience. AUSU has had and will have some executive officers with lots of experience and some with very little.
- There is no requirement of experience, skills or competencies to be on council or to run for an executive position.
- There is no guarantee of the level of experience executive officers will have so compensating on the basis of specific experience is not possible.
- Staff provides professional support and specific skill sets.

2.3 Alberta Student Unions

Alberta Student Unions provide the most applicable comparable data.

Alberta student unions made an effort to standardize executive compensation and AUSU should be aware of its role in this process.

The role of student unions, their mandates, and the pool of candidates for executive positions are unique. Student unions in Alberta exist under the same legislation and essentially the same economic environment.

In the past three to five years, the student unions in Alberta made an effort to bring their executive and council compensation in line with each other. While AUSU is not obligated to be part of this alignment, there are factors to consider if it chooses to not consider the closest comparable organizations in this regard.

2.4 Other Student Unions

Student unions in other provinces should be considered to the extent that they can indicate the trends across Canada but they are not directly comparable organizations.

Research shows that there is a very wide range for executive officer and council compensation for student unions across Canada. It was noted that the Alberta student unions were within the range found at some other Canadian student unions, and so are not in a class completely removed from other provinces.

2.5 Other Sectors

Student unions are unique and other business or non-profit sectors do not offer directly comparable organizations.

There are no other directly comparable organizations identified at this time. Other non-profits generally hire a paid executive officer and rely on volunteer or very small honoraria for board chairs, and so on. The variety in size, mandate, and revenue in the non-profit sector makes it difficult to compare other organizations to a student union.

2.6 Use of Comparable Data

Comparable organizations should be considered, but are only one factor to be considered. Compensation can be set above, below, or at the comparable data based on the other factors within the philosophy.

Compensation should consider the ball park of range paid by comparable organizations, and this can serve as a useful starting point for determining actual numbers. If AUSU data is within 5-10% of the median of the data from the comparable organizations, it means we have a starting point that is in a reasonable range based on this particular factor. However, all other aspects of the compensation philosophy must be considered too. The compensation will be moved up or down while considering each of the other factors.

2.7 Athabasca University is Unique

AUSU membership is unique with respect to demographics such as age, financial circumstance, and life circumstance, and this should be considered when setting executive compensation.

Circumstances of the students vary widely at AU, but many are students with other major commitments including family and/or employment in addition to school. Compensation should not be so low as to eliminate candidates because they are working or caring for family and can't afford to be on executive. Executive positions must be accessible to members.

2.8 AUSU Itself is Unique

AUSU executive is different from other student union executive as it is more administrative, while others are more governance focused with more administrative support from staff.

The relationship between risks, rewards and responsibilities inherent in the executive positions are factors to be considered, particularly considering the blend of administration and governance.

AUSU VPs commit to 30 hours per week and the President commits to 35 hours per week, and they are required to work evenings, to travel, and to deal with time zones. This can be a benefit to some but can also require more juggling of other responsibilities.



The 'Triple R' Model of risk, reward and responsibility

officers at AUSU have a more hands-on operational role with AUSU, and administrative tasks that take up a large portion of AUSU executive time. It can be argued that this entails more risk and less reward than in more governance based organizations.

While most other student union executive officers in Alberta are able to spend between two and five hours per week on their course work, and take significant time off during mid-term and final exams, this is not true for AUSU executive officers.

While all student unions executive officers in Alberta work all year round, AUSU activity does not slow down between April and September to the same extent that activity slows at the traditionally structure institutions. Athabasca University committees do not meet during the summer and policy work slows which reduces those aspects of the AUSU executive officer's work, but the time is used for completing projects, budgeting, and planning for the next term.

There are generally higher administrative staff levels even accounting for the different type of work that other student unions do such as staffing and running small businesses and organizing student events. Executive

2.9 AUSU Financial Considerations

In the final analysis, AUSUs own internal financial situation is the primary factor to be considered.

The financial situation within AUSU is the primary factor that must be considered in order to protect the member resources. Regardless of all other factors, AUSU must operate within its means and what it can afford to offer as compensation must be the primary consideration.

Resources must be reasonably balanced between administration and member services, but it is not easy to draw a simple line in a budget between the two categories. Executive officers, council members and staff all contribute to providing member services as well as taking care of routine administration. No member services could be provided without a level of administrative support.

It may be useful to consider ensuring the combined executive, council and committee compensation is a certain percentage of the operating budget or annual dues revenue. It may also be useful to compare the executive compensation to council, committee, and staff compensation to ensure internal equity in relation to other volunteers and staff within AUSU.

2.10 Regular Reviews

Regular reviews should take the place of any automatic increases. Cost of living should be a factor to be considered, but annual cost of living increases should not be automatic.

If a change of less than a threshold amount of **5%** is indicated by the comparable data and the internal finances, there is no need to do a full compensation review from first principles.

If comparable data and internal finances indicate a change in compensation greater than 5% (increase or decrease) over the previous amounts, it should trigger a more in-depth discussion and a fuller explanation of the recommendations. The compensation review should go back to basic principles and full consideration of all aspects of the philosophy.

3.0 The Numbers

3.1 Identification and Valuation of Benefits

AB Student Unions

The benefits that are provided by other Alberta student unions and those currently provided by AUSU for executive officers were reviewed by the committee. It was noted that some can be seen as a benefit that would be applicable to most, if not all, potential executive officers, with a cash value that can be readily calculated. Others may be applicable to some people but not to others, or may not have a cash value that can be readily calculated as part of a compensation package. Those in the former group, having a widely applicable cash value, will be considered as part of the numerical value of the total compensation package. Those in the latter group, while they may be offered, will not be considered as part of the numerical compensation amount. It may be that they would not be applicable to most executive officers (i.e. some may or may not need parking or transit passes, some may not need health insurance while others might). It may also be that the equivalent cash value is not quantifiable.

“Widely Applicable Cash Equivalent” Benefits:

- RRSP contribution has quantifiable cash value and is a benefit to anyone.
- Paid in-class hours is a benefit for all students and can be assigned a value based on an hourly rate and the number of allowable hours.
- Tuition is a benefit that is applicable to all students, and while there are differences in tuition fees from one school to the next, an equivalent value of Athabasca University course fees can be applied to determine the equivalent cash value of the benefit.

“Other” Benefits:

- Parking, transit passes, or any type of travel allowance is not needed by everyone, and at AUSU travel expenses will be reimbursed if related to specific AUSU business.
- Health insurance premiums are not needed by all, and because executive officers are short terms positions it is not something of significant value.
- Cell phone and other technology allowance is generally needed to facilitate communication but the value depends on what each individual may need and the cash value can vary widely.
- Vacation, sick days, and flex days are an important benefit but it is difficult to assess the value in the context of the flexibility that different executive officers have for scheduling their working hours. Some have time off during exams, some have busier summer months, some have specific office hours, etc.

It was decided that RRSP contribution and tuition allowances would be considered as having an equivalent cash value that would be calculated as part of the compensation amount.

Other benefits will be considered as part of the compensation but not as part of the calculation of cash value when comparing hourly or annual amounts with other organizations.

AUSU Current and Proposed

The following is recommended for AUSU moving forward:

- No RRSP contribution. This is too difficult to administrate with a small staff and executive.
- Continue with the current tuition reimbursement for one 3-credit course per six-month period at the rate applicable to the person’s place of residence. Equivalent cash value for the compensation calculation will be at the Alberta resident rate.
- Continue with the cell phone, data package, and technology benefit but research a reasonable rate for a basic data and long distance package and be more specific as to the maximum value and how the benefit will be applied. The choice of an allowance to compensate for increased usage for an individual’s personal package or the use of an AUSU device with a package paid by AUSU is recommended.
Staff to research the possible rates and make specific recommendation for amounts.
- Continue the health plan benefit as it is used currently.
Staff to research the possible rates and make specific recommendation for amounts.

3.2 Mean and Median of Direct Comparable Data

It is important to note that depending on the sample size and the variation within the sample, both mean and median calculations can be useful. Since this part of the process is only the first step in determining the final value of the compensation package, both mean and median should be considered in context.

The approximate hourly rates for executive officers of the student unions at Mount Royal, University of Alberta, MacEwan University, SAIT, NAIT, and the University of Lethbridge were calculated. The annual honorarium, the value of RRSP contribution, and the value the tuition benefit (set equal to two 3-credit Athabasca University courses for Alberta residents) were used to calculate total compensation value. A standard 52-week year, and the expected work hours per week less the allowable class time, was used to calculate the hourly rate.

University of Calgary data was not available.

The hourly equivalents ranged from \$18.83 to \$25.56.

The mean (average) is \$21.59.

The median is \$21.36.

It was noted that having the mean and median fairly close indicated that there are no significant outliers in the data set. While University of Lethbridge was significantly lower in 2012 that is no longer the case. This indicates that the attempts of the Alberta student unions to be consistent has been in play.

3.3 Applying Variables

Athabasca University is Unique

Should student body demographics and distance learning format affect compensation up or down, and if so, by how much?

Athabasca University is unique but the ways in which it is unique do not suggest that the compensation for executive officers should be significantly higher or lower than at other student unions at this time.

Factors such as broader demographics and the flexibility of on-line learning could be a benefit or a challenge depending on individual circumstances.

That the current mean and median values of the comparable data are at a reasonable level for compensation for AUSU, and the honorarium based philosophy for AUSU executive compensation, substantiate this conclusion.

AUSU Itself is Unique

Should the small staff, hands on nature of AUSU executive officers, working conditions, hours worked (no class time and busier summers), affect compensation up or down and if so by how much?

AUSU executive officers do work under different conditions and with different tasks than others may but again, these factors may be a benefit to some and a challenge to others so are not quantifiable as one or the other.

While AUSU executive officers do work throughout the summer months, there are no AU meetings to attend, and AUSU work has more of a focus on planning rather than advocacy and policy review.

The ability to claim class time as working hours has been added to the mean and median comparable hourly rates. Beyond that, there is no solid rationale for moving the compensation up or down at this time based on AUSU's unique character at this time.

AUSU Financial Considerations

What can AUSU afford and is it in reasonable proportion to other expenses, operational or otherwise?

AUSU fiscal considerations at this time do not indicate that executive compensation should be significantly higher or lower than the comparable mean or median. If council applies the committee's recommendations, executive compensation for this fiscal year will be lower than budgeted.

3.4 Final Recommendation

The 2014-2015 executive officer honoraria prior to the significant increase was \$37,389.50 for the president and \$32,048.16 for the vice-presidents.

The Average Core CPI that was approved by council for October 1, 2015 was 1.02225, and would have brought the president's honorarium to \$38,221.27 and the vice-president's to \$32,761.23.

AUSU does not offer an RRSP contribution but does offer two 3-credit courses per 12-month term. The current value of this benefit for Alberta residents is \$667 x 2 or \$1334 (non-Alberta residents is \$781 x 2 or \$1,562).

The AUSU president is currently required to work a minimum of 35 hours per week while the vice-presidents are required to work a minimum of 30 hours per week. There is no allowance for class time.

The hourly executive compensation rate for AUSU president, using 2014/2015 rates with 2015/2016 CPI increase, tuition benefit at the Alberta resident rate, and 35-hour week would be \$21.73.

The hourly executive compensation rate for AUSU vice-presidents, using 2014/2015 rates with 2015/2016 CPI increase, tuition benefit at the Alberta resident rates, and 30-hour week would be \$21.86.

These figures are higher than the mean or median of other Alberta student unions but would be lower than MacEwan so within the current range.

The hourly rate, without the tuition benefit, is \$21 for both president and vice-presidents and this is the rate the committee recommends to council for the beginning of the next council term in April 2016. As noted above, the annual president's honorarium would be \$38,221.27 and the vice-president's annual honorarium would be \$32,761.23.

AUSU does not currently and should not offer an RRSP contribution.

AUSU does now and should continue to offer two 3-credit courses per 12-month term at the rate applicable to the executive officer's place of residence.

AUSU should continue to expect the president to work a minimum of 35 hours per week and the vice-presidents a minimum of 30 hours per week.

With respect to other benefits, it was suggested that some research be done to see what a fairly basic health insurance package would cost an individual so that the current value of the benefit can be evaluated. Research about what a basic data and long distance call package for a cell phone would cost would allow a value for this benefit to be included in the compensation policies. It was noted that clearer wording about how the technology benefit is to be applied is required.

4.0 Ongoing Process for Executive Compensation Review

The following components of an ongoing terms of reference or process for executive compensation review is recommended by the current Executive Compensation Review Committee.

4.1 Frequency of compensation review

A review every two years will provide consistency while not overdoing process and increasing administrative tasks unduly.

There should be a provision that council can reduce the compensation level at any time if deemed necessary based on a significant change in AUSU financial resources.

4.2 Current council setting compensation for next council

A council should set the level of compensation for the next council rather than for themselves.

The timing should be such that the process doesn't get lost in the election and the incoming executive officers know what compensation to expect.

Time is needed to collect comparable organization data, consider all of the factors outlined in the philosophy, and complete the process so the 3rd quarter of the second year for the two-year council term may be the appropriate time.

4.3 Council or committee to review compensation

A sub-committee of council is more efficient for research etc. Committees ensure that the proper focus and time is given to the topic. They can deliberate and ask very specific questions while being controlled by a term of reference. A committee allows councillors who may not want to get into the details to opt out of the committee work but still fulfill their responsibility in the council decision.

Committees also allow the opportunity to bring in outside expertise that may not be within council. This can come from membership in some cases.

The committee would provide a recommendation to council, and all of council would vote on the recommendation. Council as a whole has this financial responsibility and duty.

The compensation review committee should work with the finance committee and should have some members in common with the finance committee.

The committee report to council should include financial and any other anticipated effects of any recommendation.

4.4 Executive participation in reviewing compensation

There will be less conflict of interest with the recommended timing of the review.

Optics at the committee level should be considered.

Consultation with current executive is more important than voting rights as most decision at the committee level are consensus based.

At council level, all executive officers should vote because the whole board has responsibility, including fiduciary and governance responsibility, for AUSU.

Abstentions should be used only on rare occasions where there is very clear and significant conflict of interests outside of AUSU.

4.5 Process Considerations

A more standard methodology of collecting comparable data such as a set questionnaire or survey should be developed.

Data collected can be shared with all participants as an incentive to participate.

AUSU may even ask all Alberta student unions to chip in to have an outside consultant do in depth research periodically, with AUSU as the leader.

The findings and the report to council should also be in a standardized format so they can be compared over time.

Reports need to include reasoning behind any recommendations or conclusions.

This committee should put AUSU in the position today to develop a comprehensive history moving forward.

4.6 Significant Changes in Compensation

As noted in section 2.10 Regular Reviews, if comparable data and internal finances indicate a change in the compensation greater than 5% (increase or decrease) over the previous amounts, it should trigger a more in-depth discussion and a fuller explanation of the final recommendations. The compensation review should go back to basic principles and full consideration of all aspects of the philosophy.

If the committee recommendation is for more than a 10% increase over the previous rates, a two-thirds majority of council should be required to pass the motion to accept the recommendation.

5.0 Summary of Recommendations

The following is a summary of recommendations to council:

Compensation Philosophy

1. That council adopt the compensation philosophy detailed in section 2.0 of this report, recognizing that it contains overriding principles that parallel the organization's current vision, mission, and mandate, as well as its view of the executive positions and how compensation should be determined.
2. That council review, adjust, and clarify the compensation philosophy as the need arises, particularly if the organization changes its internal culture or the context of the executive positions change.

Benefits

3. That council not institute an RRSP contribution for executive officers.
4. That council continue with the current tuition reimbursement for one 3-credit course per six-month period at the rate applicable to the person's place of residence.
5. That council continue with the cell phone, data package, technology benefit but research a reasonable rate for a basic data and long distance package and be more specific as to the maximum value of the benefit and how it will be applied. The choice of an allowance to compensate for increased usage for an individual's personal package or the use of an AUSU device with a package paid by AUSU is recommended.
6. That council continue the health plan benefit with its current wording and amount.

Honorarium for upcoming council term

7. That council set the president's honorarium to \$38,221.27 for a minimum of 35 hours per week and the vice-president's to \$32,761.23 for a minimum of 30 hours per week effective at the beginning of the next council term in April 2016.

Compensation Review Process

8. That council set the level of compensation for the next council rather than for themselves by timing executive compensation review for the 3rd quarter of the second year in a two-year council term.
9. That council maintain a provision that it can reduce the compensation level at any time if deemed necessary based on a significant change in AUSU financial resources.
10. That council assign the executive compensation review to a sub-committee of council under a terms of reference that includes:
 - A mandate to provide a recommendation to council,
 - The ability to bring in outside expertise that may not be within council, possibly from the membership,
 - A requirement to work with the finance committee and have some members in common with the finance committee,
 - A requirement to consult with current executive in some manner,
 - A mandate to develop and use a standard methodology of collecting comparable data such as a set questionnaire or survey, and to share that data with participating organizations,
 - Instructions that if comparable organization's mean or median data and AUSU finances indicate a change in the compensation greater than 5% (increase or decrease) over the previous amounts, the review go back to basic principles with a full consideration of all aspects of the philosophy, a more in-depth discussion, and a fuller explanation of the final recommendations,

- Instructions to provide a report to council in a standardized format so it can be compared to other reports over time, and that includes the reasoning behind any recommendations or conclusions, and comments on financial and any other anticipated effects of the recommendations.
11. That council as a whole continue to fulfill its fiduciary and governance responsibility by considering the committee report and making the decision on executive compensation, and that executive officers not abstain from voting unless there is a clear and significant conflict of interest external to AUSU.
 12. That if the proposed executive compensation is for more than a 10% increase over the previous rates, a two thirds majority of council be required to adopt the increase.

Immediate Action

13. That council amend policy 2.15 Executive Accountability and Compensation, section 2.15.14 to set the president honorarium to \$38,221.27, and section 2.15.15 to set the vice-president honorarium to \$32,761.23, effective at the start of the upcoming council term in April 2016.
14. That council further amend policy 2.15 Executive Accountability and Compensation, section 2.15.17, by repealing the current wording:

2.15.17 Executive honoraria shall be adjusted by the Core Consumer Price Index (CPI) ... at the beginning of each fiscal year. If the CPI increase is negative, pay shall not be reduced.

and replacing it with:

2.15.17 Executive compensation shall be reviewed in the 3rd quarter of the second year in each two-year council term, and set for the next council prior to the commencement of its term.

2.15.17.01 Council may reduce the compensation level at any time if deemed necessary based on a significant change in AUSU financial resources.

2.15.17.02 A two-thirds majority vote of council is required to increase executive compensation by more than 10%.
15. That council put on its action list, an item to develop terms of reference for an executive compensation review committee, to be completed within the first year of the upcoming council term.

6.0 Conclusion

The committee had several very comprehensive discussions ranging from the general philosophy of compensation and how it reflects AUSU itself, to the specifics of individual benefits and their cash value. It reviewed historical and current data and consulted with past and present AUSU staff and executive officers. Committee members each provided research to the committee, participated in email and group discussion, and assisted in the creation of this report.

The committee recommendations include the executive compensation (honoraria and benefits), for the upcoming council term beginning in April 2016, and also the institution of a consistent biennial process of executive compensation review to ensure consistency and compensation based on thoughtful and thorough analysis.

The process was both consultative and consensus based, and the committee feels that a good and fair process has lead to recommendations that are good and fair for AUSU, its membership, and its executive officers.

The committee respectfully requests that council consider adoption of the recommendations contained in this report.

The committee members will be pleased to provide any follow-up research or clarifications requested by Council before this ad hoc committee is dissolved.

Appendices

The appended spreadsheet contains the data collected in 2012 and in the fall of 2015 with supplemental information collected by committee members in early 2016.

It also shows the methodology for calculating the mean and median of comparable data used by the committee in formulating its recommended compensation levels.

The summary table is shown below.

	SAMRU	U of C SU	U of A SU	MacEwan	SAIT SU	NAIT SU	U of L	AUSU VP Current	AUSU Pres Current	AUSU VP Proposed	AUSU Pres Proposed	
Exec Honorarium	38000	0	37236	37650	40000	36000	30000	43851	50960	32761	38221	Exec Honorarium
RRSP				1000	1200							RRSP
Parking	850				1670	240						Parking
Health Benefit	400			232	235	235	275	1200	1560	1200	1560	Health Benefit
Health Benefit	235											Health Benefit
Transit				162.50			289					Transit
Phone/Data/Tech	420			540	900	420	300	600	600	review	review	Phone/Data/Tech
Tuition	1334			1334	1334	1334	1334	1334	1334	1334	1334	Tuition
Other							300					Other
Other							400					Other
Professional Development				500	750							Professional Development
Total (Hon, RRSP, Phone)	39334	0	37236	39984	42534	37334	31334	45185	52294	34095	39555	Total
Hours	35	35	35	35	35	37	35	30	35	30	35	Hours
Vacation Days	15		15	15	15	10	10	15	15	15	15	
Sick Days				12	6		5	5	5	5	5	
in class hours					3	3	3					
# of Executives	3	4	4	4	3		4	3	3	3	3	
# Office Staff	11		10	11	9		7	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	
Approx Hourly Wage	21.61	0.00	20.46	21.97	25.56	21.12	18.83	28.96	28.73	21.86	21.73	
Mean w/o AUSU	21.59											
Median w/o AUSU	21.36											
	indicates estimates have been used and explained in comments											
	indicates the category used in calculating mean and median											

File: *Alberta Council Compensation 2012 & 2015.xlsx*

AUSU Executive Report

Shawna Wasylyshyn, President

Prepared: February 29, 2016



Current Issues

Committees:

AU Board of Governors – No meetings this month.

Sub Committees:

BOG Institutional Advancement – I attended this meeting in person in Edmonton on February 18. Exciting plans are underway for a new marketing campaign for AU.

BOG Academic Affairs – No meetings this month.

BOG Honorary Awards – The honorary awards committee met in camera on February 25.

BOG Presidential Search – The search is underway and the committee continues to receive updates from the HR firm.

General Faculties Council – No meetings this month.

Sub Committees:

Student Awards Committee: Met via teleconference on Feb 2, the name of one award was changed, no other business to report.

GFC Exec: I had to miss the Feb 24 meeting due to other AUSU business.

SRM Project – Student Advisory Group: No Meetings this month.

AUSU MECC: Met on Feb 16 via teleconference, details in the MECC report.

AUSU Awards: No Meetings this month.

AUSU Finance: Met on Feb 29 via teleconference, and the committee is now up to date on approvals for AUSU finances.

AUSU Forensic Audit Recommendation Committee: The committee has submitted their report and recommendations. A big thank you to all committee members for their hard work and diligence in putting together such a comprehensive document. The report will be brought to council at the March 10 council meeting for adoption, and a plan will be created to move forward on the committee's recommendations.

AUSU Executive Compensation Review Committee: The committee has completed its work, and presented council with a recommendation to be accepted at the March 10 council meeting. Council certainly appreciates the efficiency with which this committee has completed its report. The policy for Executive compensation has also been placed on the agenda for adoption on March 10, in alignment with the committees recommendation.

CASA: I was honored to have spent 6 days in Ottawa, representing AUSU and CASA in several meetings on Parliament Hill. We advocated for students on subjects ranging from student loan repayment assistance, the Post-Secondary Student Support Program, paid internships and more. I have sent council the documents we used during Advocacy week, so they are abreast of the PSE issues at a national level. During my time in Ottawa, I participated in the following meetings:

- MP Ziad Aboultaif with representatives from UofA and SAIT.
- MP Richard Cannings with representatives from Kwantlen College and St. Francis Xavier.
- MP Kelly McCauley with representatives from Mount Royal U. and UofA.
- Senator Salma Ataullahjan with representatives from Kwantlen College and U of Waterloo.
- Senator Jim Munson with representatives from AUGSA and U of Waterloo.
- MP Bryan May with representatives from SAIT.
- MP Karen Vacchio with representatives from Red River College and Brock.
- Senator Lillian Dyck with Brandon Simmons, also from AUSU.

CASA Committees: At CASA plenary on Feb 28, all remaining policies were passed by the membership. I am pleased to announce that the position on the TRC Recommendation; which I played a role in writing was passed unanimously. All of the committees are done their work for this term, and will pick up again after CASA Foundations in Ottawa, in May. It is my recommendation that AUSU send all 3 executives to CASA's Foundations conference. It is at this meeting that all of the Board and committee positions are elected for the next year. In order to best represent our membership and receive the largest benefit from our CASA membership – our association should be as heavily involved as possible.

Faculty Councils:

Faculty of Heath Disciplines: No meetings this month.

Faculty of Business Undergraduate Program Council: No meetings this month.

AUSU Business

Staffing – Administrative assistant, Suzanne Diaz de Sandi worked her last day at AUSU on Feb 26. Staff and Executive have begun the process of hiring a replacement, with the help of hiring agency “The Personnel Department”.

AUSU Policy and Bylaw Revisions – AUSU Executive has put together a recommendation, based on our legal opinion; for a process to amend AUSU bylaws. Council voted unanimously in favor of proceeding at the February 11 Council meeting. During the membership consultation, there were some questions raised as to the validity and necessity of the proposed process. We have called a special

February 2016

meeting of Council to address these concerns at the Council level and determine how Council as a whole wishes to proceed.

General Election – Nominations closed for the AUSU general election and the candidates were announced on February 22. I was very surprised to see only 9 candidates running for a position on council. With so much interest in our planners, geocaching and CRO position I was expecting a few dozen candidates at minimum! That said, the list of candidates appears very strong and the members will still have their say through the “yes/no” ballot. The results of the election will be announced on March 16.

New Minister of Advanced Education – In early February, Marlin Schmidt was named by Premier Notley as Alberta’s new Minister of Advanced Education. I was honored to be invited to a teleconference meeting with the Minister; where he pledged his commitment to meet with students across Alberta. Following the meeting, I contacted the AU President, Board Chair and Secretary; suggesting that we draft a formal, joint invitation to the Minister to invite him to visit our campus and meet with students. It has now been nearly one month since this message was sent, and although I did receive positive feedback about the suggestion; no movement has been made on putting the invitation or the meeting together. I will work with AUSU Executive and staff to set up our own meeting with Minister Schmidt.

Meetings with Key Individuals at AU –

Dr. Veronica Thompson – AUSU Executive met with Dr. Thompson on Feb 2. A great discussion was had surrounding FHSS strategic plan implementation, and communication with students.

Dr. Margaret Edwards – Following the January FHD Faculty Council meeting, Dr. Edwards invited several members of her faculty and staff to attend her meeting with AUSU. Alain May also was in attendance, with AUSU Executive. A thorough discussion was had about student concerns about changes to the LPN-BN program, as well as concerns surrounding clinical placements. Dr. Edwards encouraged us to contact her as soon as problems arise, rather than waiting to see if more students contact us. She suggested we should send her an email any time, and not wait for our next meeting with her. A complete synopsis of our meeting with her can be found in the Google Drive in the file that bears her name.

AUSU Members – I hosted an AUSU meet up in Edmonton on February 10, and was thrilled to have a fantastic conversation with 2 AUSU members. This meeting was so inspiring, I suggest we continue to host meetups across Canada.

Meetings

1 – AUSU Exec
2 – GFC – SAC
2 – Dr. Veronica Thompson
3 – AUSU/AUGSA
3 – Dr. Margaret Edwards
8 – Minister of Advanced Education
9 – AUSU Exec
10 – AUSU Membership Meet-Up
11 – AUSU Council
16 – AUSU MECC
17 – AU Student Consultation Town Hall
17 – AUSU Exec
18 – AU Institutional Advancement
20 – Candidate Orientation
21 – CASA in Ottawa
22 – CASA in Ottawa
23 – CASA in Ottawa
24 – CASA in Ottawa
25 – CASA in Ottawa
26 – CASA in Ottawa
27 – AUSU Member Consultation
29 – AUSU Exec
29 – AUSU Finance
29 – AUSU Legal Counsel

Hours

Weekly Breakdown

Week ending:	Hours
Feb 7	28.75
Feb 14	34.5
Feb 21	52
Feb 28	63
4 week average	44.6

Timesheets and Compliance

I have reviewed Colleen Doucette's timesheets and found them to be within policy requirements. At the time of writing this report, I have not received timesheets from Brandon Simmons for the weeks ending Feb 21 or Feb 28.

AUSU Executive Report

Colleen Doucette, VP External & Student Affairs

Prepared: February 26, 2016



Athabasca University
Students' Union

Current

Committees

FHSS Faculty Council Meeting

The FHSS met on February 5th. The meeting featured a presentation from ProctorU, the company that we selected to run our Virtual Exam Invigilation Pilot program. This was a great opportunity for the faculty committee to see how the pilot will work and provided a venue to pose questions direct to the company. No date was indicated as to when this pilot will start. I will advise council as soon as I hear. There were the regular course changes that were reviewed. A detailed presentation regarding the Bachelor of Human Resources and Labour Relations program was given which included course changes. The 2017 fiscal year budget was reviewed with a lively discussion on cost savings within the faculty. Finally, an update on the Educational Review was given by Veronica Thompson, who also reviewed the FHSS Implementation Strategy and Ad Hoc Committee meeting.

FHSS Ad Hoc Committee Meeting

The FHSS Ad Hoc Committee met on February 8th. This was a review of the day and a half presentations but also input from each member of the committee on what they felt the major themes were in the presentation and subsequent review by FHSS. I put forth that the major themes were the importance of student engagement and student/student, student/tutor interaction. These are highly important in order for students to have a successful course experience.

ALEC

The ALEC met on February 9th. There was a discussion on how the university will move forward regarding IT support for learning and teaching over the next 5-7 years. There was also a discussion on what needs to be done to enable academics to access Moodle courses within and across faculties including identifying the ICT Services Advisory Group whom the request for change would need to be submitted to. A recap of the January Impact UDL conference was given and a learning

resource review. During the roundtable, I indicated that AU needs to ensure that students with disabilities get the services that are required and follow up is needed. For instance, a student who orders their course through disability services gets a guaranteed print textbook, but some are not getting those.

STUDENT EXPERIENCE TEAM (SET)

SET met on February 12th. We discussed SET & Working Groups and highlighted communication about SET to rest of AU about what we are doing and we want to have some tangible outcomes to talk about. We had a presentation on “Alfresco” which is an AU internal software program that allows committees/faculties to share documents rather than emailing them around. Although this is not for AU students, anyone who is on an AU committee would be able to have access.

The Orientation Group discussed what’s been going on in their group, including:

- Completed full review of the orientation in terms of accuracy and consistency and all changes put in place;
- The group has accepted responsibility for reviewing the Student Handbook;
- There is far too much information in the orientation so they will cross review orientation info and review areas that this group was not responsible for developing;
- They will be discussing accessibility with a goal to making the orientation fully accessible (using UDL).

The Core Competencies/Skills Training Group discussed their mandate which will be to develop a student experience culture across AU:

- Help staff connect the work they do with the big picture of providing an excellent student experience, contributing to the success of our students and developing relationships;
- Help staff understand what AU is all about;
- Provide refresher coaching and training and shift our understanding that training is continuous learning and growth;
- Mandatory learning opportunities.

Service Standards Group discussed the following:

- Students are asking: “Who do we contact when I’m not getting a response?”
- ACTION: We need to inform students about the Expect the Best Get the contact info in a better place that is available to students.
- NEED: A “who do you call” for students maybe on main AU webpage

Accessibility Group discussed:

- Thanks to Carrie for her work in doing the UDL Conference, really well attended, really good conference;

- Carrie said she had great volunteers, good contribution/support, participants took away;
- 145 attendees, 45 presenters/on panels/ on site & virtual;
- AMI TV was present and will feature the conference on their television station on March 10. **AUSU will promote this on our social media outlets to raise awareness.**

Meetings

Meeting with Veronica Thompson

(Detailed minutes of this meeting can be found in the Drive.) This was a very good meeting that touched on AUSU's survey and the Ad Hoc FHSS Committee to which I am representing as a student. Dr. Thompson the importance of service standards and encouraged AUSU to continue directing students who have issues to contact their course coordinator. With respect to the Priority 1.1 strategic plan implementation, it was suggested that not enough students participated in the discussion that was held over 1 ½ days. This was due to the short notice and the extremely long duration of the presentation. I suggested having mini-presentations, no longer than 1 hour, condense the major presentations given and give students time to register for it. As part of the ad hoc committee, this was brought to everyone's attention and was wholeheartedly agreed upon. I believe the sessions will be held March 9-10, 2016 but these are tentative.

Another topic of conversation was old and outdated textbooks being used in current courses. Dr. Thompson is aware of some courses and FHSS is looking into it but advised AUSU that if we hear of any other courses to please bring it to her attention.

Meeting with AUGSA

See meeting notes in the President's Report.

Meeting with Dr. Margaret Edwards

(Very detailed minutes can be found in the Drive.) This was an extremely intense meeting with quite a bit of excellent conversation regarding the LPN-RN program. Much of the information that is being circulated over social media was addressed and Dr. Edwards did a great job of clarifying many issues that were confusing. I would encourage Council to read the detailed minutes on the drive, as there is simply too much to type in this report. (If you can't find it on the drive, please let me know and I'll forward you a copy.)

Meeting with AU/Ceridian/Student Lifeline

This meeting was set up in response to a Facebook posting by a student on the AU Facebook page regarding AUSU's Student Lifeline Program. At the end of this meeting, it was determined that the strategy going forward is to ensure our marketing and communications to students clearly states the "up to 3 session – short term model" that is part of the program. AU, AUSU, and Ceridian's Triage Centre will all focus on getting this message out.

AUSU MECC:

Please see MECC Report for this Council Meeting.

AU'S WEBSITE REVIEW:

This was a presentation by AU on their new website which will be launching March 1st. It was an opportunity for stakeholders to get a glimpse of what they have been working on. Their goal was to improve their website as a tool for retention and recruitment, create a better user experience.

The website is fresh and engaging, the icons are large and easy to read/recognize. The news area is great and is in-line with other major website in highlighting current events (i.e. Twitter, Facebook, etc.) A few questions regarding the Library and Alumni were posed and the moderator was going to discuss these issues further with those who posed the questions off-line.

As with anything new, this will take some getting used to but it's a step forward for AU in getting up to date with their technology.

Meetings

February 1 – Executive Meeting
February 2 – Meeting with Veronica Thompson
February 3 – Meeting with AUGSA
February 3 – Meeting with Dr. M. Edwards
February 5 – FHSS Faculty Council Meeting
February 5 – Meeting with AU/Ceridian/Student Lifeline
February 8 – FHSS Ad Hoc Committee Meeting
February 9 – Executive Meeting
February 9 – ALEC Committee Meeting
February 11 – February Council Meeting
February 12 – Student Experience Team Meeting

March 2016 Council Meeting

February 16 – MECC Meeting

February 17 – Executive Meeting

February 23 – AU's Institutional Website Review Meeting

Hours

Weekly Breakdown

Week of:	Hours:
Feb 1 - 7	30.5
Feb 8 - 14	31.0
Feb 15 - 21	30.0
Feb 22 – 28	28.0
4 week average:	29.9

Timesheets and Compliance

I have reviewed Shawna and Brandon's timesheets for February and found that their weekly averages for were in compliance with policy.

February 2016

AUSU Executive Report

Brandon Simmons, VP Finance & Administration

Prepared: March 3, 2016



Committees

Finance Committee:

See finance committee report.

AU Finance & Property Committee Meeting:

A special meeting of the finance and property committee was called and I was able to attend the meeting in person. The meeting was in Camera so I can not share what was discussed but I can report that overall it was a great meeting that allowed me to advocate on behalf of AU students and have some great discussions with AU Executives. As a result of being able to attend the meeting in person I was also able to have a discussion with Alain May in regards to the E-Text review committee. She said that they are just filling the last committee position and then they will be undergoing a comprehensive review of the E-Text initiative. The plan is to find a solution to address the concerns of students regarding the E-Text situation.

FST Faculty Meeting:

We were given an update of the various initiatives being taken in the FST. One initiative that was discussed was that they are looking at implementing additional certificates in the area of ITS to help broaden their course offerings. They also discussed that they are trying to get course revision times down so that they can keep all courses up to date and the biggest struggle with this is a lack of resources. There were also a number of changes to course names for some of the architecture programs to align AU's courses with the courses of their partner architecture institutions.

February 2016

ERP SAG / Pedagogy & Research SAG:

In both the ERP SAG and Pedagogy & Research SAG we went over the new decision matrix that came out of the planning sessions last month. In the meeting it was decided that all of the current projects will be run through this new decision matrix to see how the projects are prioritized based on new process. This will be a test to see if the new decision matrix has the desired effect that the committee is hoping for.

National Advocacy Team:

We met mainly via email but while we were together in Ottawa we sat down to try and write the draft outline of our visioning document. From the discussion the role of the national advocacy team will be two fold. The first role will be to coordinate smaller advocacy campaigns throughout the year. Simple advocacy campaigns to help keep awareness for the needs of students. The second role will be to help individual CASA member schools organize their own advocacy campaigns and meetings.

AUSU Business

There have been a lot of meetings this month and some great work has been accomplished in the various committees. The ECR and Forensic Audit committees have worked very hard and the reports coming out of these committees are very well done and will be a benefit to the organization. Along with all of the other meetings I had the opportunity to go to Ottawa for CASA's Lobby Con. At this event I was able to meet with multiple MP's and Senators and advocate for the needs of students. We asked everyone we met with to give us their support in six main areas They were:

1. Increasing the weekly student loan limit from \$210 to \$245
2. Increasing grants by 50% and extending grants to graduate students
3. Increasing the repayment assistance income threshold to \$30,000.00
4. Removing the 2% educational funding cap for First Nations and Indigenous Students
5. Increasing research funding by 10% and allowing for student representation on research granting boards.
6. Investing \$80 million per year in co-ops, internships, and apprenticeships

February 2016

From the meetings that I had these asks were very well received and I was able to get a number of letters of support to help us push these initiatives. It was great to be able to connect with MP's and help them understand just how important investing in education is.

We had lots of feedback from MP's about how highly they thought of CASA and were glad for the work that we were doing. CASA was able to have just over 160 meetings during the course of the week. We were also able to hear from multiple parliamentary staff members that CASA is thought of as the most predominant advocacy group for students. It was a great opportunity to help move the needs of students forward and hopefully we will be able to see many of these issues looked at by the government over the next couple of years.

Meetings

February 1, 2016 – Executive Meeting
February 1, 2016 – ECR Committee
February 2, 2016 – Meeting with Veronica Thompson
February 2, 2016 – Forensic Audit Committee
February 3, 2016 – Meeting with AUGSA
February 3, 2016 – Meeting with DR. Margaret Edwards
February 9, 2016 – Executive Meeting
February 9, 2016 – ECR Committee
February 11, 2016 – ERP SAG
February 11, 2016 – Council Meeting
February 12, 2016 – Pedagogy & Research SAG
February 14, 2016 – ECR Committee
February 17, 2016 – FST Faculty Meeting
February 17, 2016 – Executive Meeting
February 18, 2016 – Finance & Property Committee Meeting
February 18, 2016 – Student Academic Appeals Committee
February 22, 2016 – ECR Committee
February 24, 2016 – National Advocacy Team Meeting
February 21 - 28, 2016 – CASA Lobby Con and AGM

February 2016

Hours

Weekly Breakdown*

Week of:	Hours:
February 1-7	25
February 8-14	30
February 15-21	35
February 22-28	84
4 week average:	43.5

Timesheets and Compliance

I have reviewed Shawna and Colleen's timesheets and found that their weekly averages for February were in compliance with policy.

February 2016

Committee Report

Finance Committee

Prepared by: Brandon Simmons, Chair

Date: March 3, 2016

Committee Members: Brandon Simmons VPFA (Chair), Tamara Ross, Pierre Plamondon, Phillip Kirkbride, Laura Zhu, Shawna Wasylyshyn, Megan Daigneault, Kim Newsome



Monthly Activity:

In our last meeting it was identified that a number of balance sheet items seemed off so a lot of work went into finding out why this was. The problem was that The Voice records did not have an unrestricted funds account set up on their books and that caused a bit of mix up with the equity accounts. Along with those equity accounts there was also some mix up separating the assets properly between AUSU and The Voice.

The actual amounts if you combined AUSU and The Voice's balance sheets matched 100% to our audited financial statements but there was a need to do some reclassifying to make sure that the numbers properly represented each organizations equity accounts. Our bookkeeper was notified and the item has been documented for next years audit to ensure that this does not happen again like it has for many years. There was also some discussion about possibly hiring an accountant once a year to verify some of these higher level items. These items are not material enough for an auditor to adjust for and they are over the experience level of the majority of bookkeepers so hiring an accountant at year end to do a few hours of work may be a feasible option and it will be explored. With these changes in place the finance committee was able to approve the balance sheets from the past meeting that had been tabled as well as approve January's financials.

The finance committee was also able to have a short discussion regarding the philosophy towards our reserves as well as what needs to happen with our investments. The overarching theme was that we need to ensure that we are receiving return on our investments. In the short run it was identified that we have some fixed costs that are hamstringing the organization the largest one being a \$60,000.00 lease. This has been identified and other cost saving initiatives are being explored so that we can get the budget balanced. With that said we will need to withdraw money from investments so it was agreed that we would let our investment advisor know our situation and see if he suggests any change in regards to how our investments are set up.

February 2016

This may result in us facing higher investment fees but we did budget for this situation just in case. This may help us to protect ourselves from more significant losses due to the current economy that we are in. We will not be switching firms at this time as a decision of that magnitude would require a great deal of research and thought but it may be something that is explored down the road depending on the advice we receive from our advisor.

Committee Report

Awards Committee

Prepared by: Kim Newsome, Chair

Date: March 1, 2016



Athabasca University
Students' Union

All Business Conducted By Email

Committee Members: Kim Newsome (chair), Shawna Wasylyshyn, Megan Daigneault, Philip Kirkbride, Laura Zhu, Sarah Cornett (ex-officio).

Activity This Month

There were no applications reviewed by the committee this month.

Motions/Decisions

There were no motions/decisions this month.

Awards Overview

Award	Apps	Approved	Denied	Notes	Remaining Awards	Remaining Budget
Academic Achievement Scholarship	62	2	60		2	\$2,000
AUSU Bursaries	11	5	6		5	\$5,000
Computer Bursaries	3	2	1		6	-
Travel Bursaries	1	0	1		-	\$4,000
Emergency Bursaries	3	2	1		1. \$330 2. \$495	\$5,175

March 2016 Council Meeting

Student Service Award	8	2	6		2	\$2,000
Returning Student Award	23	2	21		2	\$2,000
Balanced Student Award	31	2	29		2	\$2,000
Totals:	214	17	197			

*** The table includes only the applications that were reviewed by the Awards Committee. It does not include any applications that were disqualified and did not meet minimum criteria. Disqualified applications do not get sent to the committee.

Committee Report

Member Engagement & Communications Committee



Prepared by: Colleen Doucette, Chair

Date: February 29, 2016

Meeting: February 16, 2016

Committee Members: VP External and Student Affairs Colleen Doucette, Chair; Councillor Philip Kirkbride; Councillor Kim Newsome; Councillor Tamra Ross; President Shawna Wasylyshyn

Staff: Executive Director Sarah Cornett; Office Administrator Donette Kingyens

Activity this month

MODEL UNITED NATIONS

BACKGROUND: A student contacted AUSU to ask us to create a Model United Nations, based on the Harvard World Model United Nations, with a suggestion of conferences in "Alberta, California (a hub), and internationally". The student felt it would not include much funding, and that they would be willing to head this up themselves.

After the committee requested more information, a formal proposal was submitted from the interested student. AUSU's President contacted other university student unions across Canada to find out if they are involved in a Model UN for their students. There were several responses. In particular, Brock University used to manage a Model UN club but recently discontinued doing so as it was too much work for one person and is proposing this be handled by an instructor or faculty especially for attendance at the Model UN Conference, which is put on externally. Other universities have the model UN as a specific part of a credit course, managed by the university itself, although some of them apply for funding to the students' unions to go to the conference itself.

MECC decided that a Model UN program would be outside of the scope of what AUSU is able to offer at this time and that it would not be a benefit to the majority of AUSU members given the cost and time that would be involved. S. Wasylyshyn would be sending out a message to the student who proposed Model UN to AUSU to advise of our decision.

It was noted, however, that we do currently have a travel bursary which students could apply for to attend a conference or event for an AU course.

BRAINSTORMING SESSIONS – APP & NEWSLETTER

MECC did an incredible job working together to bring forth numerous ideas on promoting the mobile app and the newsletter in the coming months. Due to the great amount of ideas, it was decided that we will table any further marketing campaign ideas/brainstorming sessions to May 2016.

AUSU Ad in AU's "Open Magazine"

Open Magazine invited AUSU to post an ad for their 2016 magazine (2 issues, Spring and Fall) which will be displayed on the back page alongside an AUGSA ad. In the past AUSU created an ad about just one AUSU service, but we changed it to be a more generic ad outlining all of what AUSU is, with the hopes of driving traffic to our website and social media platforms. Here is the ad: (Well done, Donette!)



AUSU
ATHABASCA UNIVERSITY
STUDENTS' UNION

Representing
Athabasca University
undergraduate students
since 1992.

 facebook.com/AthaUSU

 twitter.com/AthabascaUSU

AUSU is an independent, student-run organization representing the undergraduate students of Athabasca University.

Our mandate is to advocate for universal accessibility to quality post-secondary education, promote and participate in developing open and distance education, and provide services that are important to our members.

We offer many services to our members, including advocacy at the national, provincial, and institutional level, student award and bursaries, a free mobile app, online course evaluations, Student Lifeline 24/7 health & wellness program, lynda.com membership, and more.



ausu@ausu.org

www.ausu.org

1-855-497-7003

FORUMS

BACKGROUND: The committee agreed to test out the forum for the upcoming elections. Various council members reviewed the forum and were pleased with it. It uses the same software and layout as AUSU's previous forums, which will help our member's transition.

I.M. Well

AUSU's broker for the Student Lifeline program offered AUSU access to the "I.M.Well Program". This campaign is often launched prior to the Student Lifeline program, to create awareness, improve interaction, and reduce the stigma of mental health. It was suggested that since AUSU went directly into the Student Lifeline program, we should still have the opportunity to participate in the I.M.Well program.

The committee discussed that since we just launched our new Student Lifeline program, it could get confusing to launch a different mental health program that does not directly feed into the Student LifeLine. Since our only form of communication with the membership is our newsletter and social media, we do not want to send out too many messages other than those driving traffic to the Student Lifeline program, and do not want to make it difficult for our members to know what the program is actually called.

S. Wasylyshyn would be sending out a message to AUSU's broker to advise of our decision.

REVIEW OF PAST BUSINESS

- Mobile App Brainstorming: Create a living word document on the drive for the committee to list ideas for promotion. – This is completed.
- Mobile App Statistics: Contact Oohlala to find out statistics on how many people deleted the app, and how many of the current registered users are actively using the app. – This is completed. Information was retrieved from Oohlala and circulated to MECC. If anyone else is interested in receiving this data, please let Donette know.
- Mobile Device Statistics: Contact Nancy Parker at Institutional Studies with AU to find out if they have stats on how many students use mobile devices. – This is completed. AU did not have statistics specifically on how many students do or don't have mobile devices but they did provide statistics on how many students access the website or myAU through a desktop computer or mobile device.
- Research Conference info from AUGSA: Contact AUGSA to find out more about what their graduate research conference involves - Executive did have a meeting with AUGSA in which they discussed the research conference. AUGSA said when they originally planned conference they received a low number of submissions, so they had a brainstorming session on how to fill more spaces, which included the idea to include undergraduate research projects.
- More Newsletters: AUSU to start putting out 2 newsletters a month. – This is being done.

- Newsletters Statistics in Report: D. Kingyens to start listing a table of past 12 months of newsletter stats in her monthly reports. – This is being done.

NEXT MECC MEETING – It was decided that since MECC has done some excellent work over the past few months and have a great source of marketing initiatives to continue to promote over the next couple of months, the next MECC meeting will be scheduled for April, 2016.

Activity Report

Executive Director

Prepared: March 4, 2016



Athabasca University
Students' Union

Overview

The bulk of this past month has been dedicated to:

- council and executive support,
- committee support work, particularly the executive compensation review committee, the forensic audit recommendation committee, and the finance committee,
- election administration,
- hiring of a new administrative assistant, and as always
- policy review,

as well as day to day management tasks.

The executive committee has continued to be busy this month and both of our ad hoc committees have proceeded to the point of having their final reports to council ready for this month's regular council meeting.

Everyone in those two groups has done some great work and I am particularly pleased that each has a member from outside of council. I hope we can continue to give our members, who may not be able to commit to a full two-year term on council, more opportunities like this to contribute their time and skills to AUSU. The more engaged members we have the more we all benefit.

As AUSU gets closer to the end of a challenging council term I am impressed and grateful to each councillor who has rolled up their sleeves to contribute, participate, and represent their view to the group. I think everyone has learned and improved and that AUSU has benefitted. And we have more work to do!

Administration

Office & Staff:

Administrative Assistant Suzanne Diaz de Sandi gave notice prior to the end of her probation period and left AUSU at the end of February. Council approved a reallocation of funds from the salaries budget which had some room, to staffing services budget, so that the services of an employment agency could assist with hiring a replacement. The process worked very well and I would personally like to thank council for that support.

TPD provided AUSU with a number of quality applicants that far exceeded what general advertising did last fall. Shortlisting, testing, reference checking and interviewing of candidates by TPD before providing me with six candidates to interview, all scheduled on one day and within a week of our request, meant that Donette and I could ensure communication, committee, policy, and election work continued virtually uninterrupted and the March council meeting has the agenda and reports that it needs this close to the end of the current council term.

A new administrative assistant, Jamie Mulder will start in the first week of April and work a rotating three day per week schedule at the AUSU office. I am sure Jamie will be a valuable member of our team.

March will be a challenge as Donette takes on a number of administrative tasks that she is very well versed in and I try not to let her carry the full load of both her position and the temporary vacancy.

Finances:

First quarter reports have been reviewed and approved by the finance committee and circulated to all of council. Financial policies will be all up to date when Policy 6.07 which is on the council agenda for March 10 for consideration. I have been working with VPFA Brandon Simmons.

Committee Support

Executive Compensation Review Committee

This ad hoc committee met twice in January, three times in February, and once more on March 1 and is ready to submitted its report to council at the March 10th meeting. One recommendation will bring the executive compensation within the range of the other major student unions in Alberta. In my opinion, the most important recommendations will create a thorough, consistent, and regular process of executive compensation review for AUSU moving forward.

The committee's public member, Scott Jacobsen, is a candidate in council election which speaks to the role committee's can serve in member engagement for AUSU.

Forensic Audit and Recommendation Committee:

The Forensic Audit and Recommendation Committee met twice in February and has their report to council ready for the March 10 council meeting.

The report contains several recommendations for council and the committee worked very hard to ensure that the questions and concerns of the membership that lead to the members' motion for a forensic audit are addressed while protecting the members' money.

The recommendations center on transparency and communication, governance processes and policy to provide sound and consistent decision making, and financial policy and processes to ensure good stewardship of member resources.

Many of the recommendations either have already or soon will be implemented and the remainder will be either started before the end of this council term or put firmly on the action list for the beginning of the next council term.

Finance Committee

The committee met once in late February and has now caught up in approving all the financial reporting to date. The discussions on investment and reserve policies continued and an updated Policy 6.07 Financial Management: Reserves and Investments, is on the March 10 council agenda.

AUSU Student Services

Communication and Member Services Coordinator Donette Kingyens has now been five months in her current role. She is monitoring student services, keeping me in the loop with any issues, and reporting to council on usage and member inquiries each month. From now on I will leave that reporting to her and will not duplicate efforts in my reports.

The Voice

The Voice continues to put out great content and sent out a readership poll with results published in February. March and April will see Karl Low and I brainstorm to bring some ideas to council for ways to fulfill the new addition to AUSU goals from the February 11 council motion.

The Voice – Support The Voice as an important member service and form of communication of AUSU

1. Work collaboratively with The Voice to help create a meaningful action plan to improve the publication and increase readership by
 - Providing support to The Voice as requested to ensure a successful consultation process
 - Reviewing and making recommendations to the action plan as presented by The Voice
 - Supporting the implementation of the action plan through non-financial resources as agreed
2. Work collaboratively with The Voice to develop a procedure to review and reassess the action plan on a regular basis that shall include
 - Inviting The Voice to meet with council to discuss the successes and challenges at defined points in the action plan
 - Making recommendations to The Voice on potential ideas where AUSU can help with the identified challenges

Governance

General Election 2016:

The election was launched with five short-listed candidates being interviewed and the CRO taking office on February 4th. The nomination and orientation process went smoothly and nine nominees were confirmed for the campaign with just one requirement, to reconfirm their intent to run, left to go. The election discussion forum was launched but despite candidates being encouraged to use it and being promoted in the newsletter, on the AUSU website, and through social media, it has had very little traffic, even by most candidates.

The simply voting system is populated with the Yes/No ballot question and will be ready to launch at the beginning of the voting period on March 11.

Meetings

February 1	Executive Meeting
February 9	Executive Meeting
February 17	Executive Meeting
February 29	Executive Meeting
February 11	Council Meeting
February 2	Forensic Audit Review Committee Meeting
February 18	Forensic Audit Review Committee Meeting
February 29	Finance Committee Meeting
February 9	Executive Compensation Review Committee Meeting
February 16	Executive Compensation Review Committee Meeting
February 22	Executive Compensation Review Committee Meeting
February 1, 2	CRO Interviews
February 18	Nominee Orientation Session
February 20	Nominee Orientation Session

Activity Report

Communications Coordinator

Prepared by: Donette Kingyens
Prepared: March 2, 2016



General Administration Issues

- **Student Inquiries**
 - Received a few emails from students required personal advocacy with AU, including one issue with a student being dropped from the Nursing placement list a month before the deadline, and one in which AU lost a student's exam and penalized the student for it.
 - Numerous inquiries from students who needed to be directed to AU as they did not realize we are not the same organization (*ie: transcript requests, course materials requests, etc*)
- **Administrative Assistant**
 - Continued working with Suzanne on various tasks and provided written or verbal instructions for numerous tasks.
 - Suzanne's last day with AUSU was February 26, so I will be assuming the majority of the Admin tasks until the new Admin Assistant comes on board.
 - Sat in on interviews for the new Admin Assistant and assisted in decision.
 - Have worked on some of the internal instruction manuals to prepare for the new Admin Assistant.
 - Cleaned up admin assistant desk.

Projects

- **Promotional Merchandise**
 - All of the new AUSU swag has been received with the exception of the USB's, which we should receive early March (delay in creation due to Chinese New Year).
 - The flashlights we ordered were not very good – cheap plastic that easily broke and the batteries did not all work. The company agreed to replace them for free with a flashlight of our choosing, so we received 3 samples and chose the best new sample. The new flashlights will be received in early March.
- **Google Drive**
 - Current Drive structure is confusing so have been working on a project to clean it up.
 - Main issue was that different folders were owned and shared by different users and have transferred from different accounts due to staff changeover, so every user sees the folders differently and in some cases they are buried in a complicated structure.
 - The new structure will have the parent folders all 'owned' by ausu@ausu.org with an easy to follow structure.
 - There will be 4 main folders (Council, Executive, Administration, and Committees) and each council member will just have the folders pertinent to their role shared with them. The intent is to delete all other files once everything has been properly placed

in the new structure and existing council has had time to check it over, so going forward files will be easier to find within the main parent folders.

- I made a backup of all files I could access from all AUSU staff account, and copied in all of the files that are needed to each folder in the new drive structure.
- The new drive will be ready to launch before the new council comes on board so that only the new folders will be shared with them.
- Will schedule a date for council for the “changeover” to happen as some working files will need to be moved at the last minute, as well as a double-check that all folders in the new Drive are up to date.

- **Website Projects**

- Will continue working on a series of FAQ’s for the AUSU website. This is a long term project as I am doing research on the AU website and AU Facebook forum for common inquiries and answers.
- Working on a page for the website listing AU Services and Links, hope to have this launched by next month.

- **Councillor Manual**

- Completely rewrote and redesigned the Councillor Manual.
- Checked all of the facts presented in the manual and updated them as many were old or incorrect.
- Combined numerous sections that were repetitious and reorganized the topics so they flow better.
- Created an interactive table of contents.

- **Forensic Audit Committee Report**

- Assisted with creation of the report for FAC due to the ED’s broken arm.

2016 Election

- **Forum**

- As of the end of February only 5 candidates in the 2016 election have posted in the election forum, and only 2 have answered the question I posed: “Why do you want to run for AUSU council?”.
- Asked the CRO to send a reminder to all candidates about the election forum on February 29.

- **Ballots**

- Have created the ballots for the upcoming election with a “Yes” or “No” option for each candidate. The system will not allow us to randomize the list of candidates names, so we will have to list them alphabetically.
- Sent test ballots to CRO to preview
- The member list used for the voters list is the most recent list received from AU on February 29, 2016.
- Ballot ready to go out on March 11 at 12:01am MST, with reminders on March 12 and March 14 for those voters that did not get log in to vote.

Services

- **Statistics on Services Provided for the Month:**

Month	Smart Draw	Lynda	Calendars	Geocache	Grad Cards	Welcome Email
Feb 2016	5	18	11	16	63	393
Jan 2016	12	33	68	n/a	95	607
Dec 2015	23	29	1,262	n/a	66	480
Nov 2015	5	20	10	n/a	55	368
Oct 2015	2	31	12	n/a	n/a	389
Sep 2015	5	16	22			750

- **Calendars/Planners**

- Received 11 requests for 2016 Calendar in February, even though it is not advertised on any of our sites
- Received notice from the AU Collaborations Department that in the past AUSU send a box of calendars for each of the main campuses as well as the collaborative campuses (Edmonton, Calgary, Lethbridge, Grande Prairie, Lloydminster, Medicine Hat). They indicated they were very disappointed we did not have any as they were very popular and students have been asking about them. Assured them we will keep that under consideration when planning for 2017.

- **Lynda.com**

- Note: In September 2015 I purged all users who had not accessed their account in over a year.

Month	Total Accounts:	New Accounts	Videos Viewed	Hours viewed	Avg. min. per login	Certificates completed
Feb 2016	413	18	2977	204	43	51
Jan 2016	395	33	1544	103	21	22
Dec 2015	362	29	3398	230	28	56
Nov 2015	333	20	4383	303	40	101
Oct 2015	313	31	1386	87	15	13
Sep 2015	282	16	3953	270	57	74

Social Media & Marketing

- **Newsletters**

- See “**Newsletter Statistics.xls**” in report folder.

- **The Voice**

- Sent Voice ads for each Voice publication in January (Feb 5, 12, 19, 26).

- **Website**

- Updated Elections page.
- Posted February Executive Blog.
- Posted numerous policy updates.
- Posted all newsletters to the archives
- Created and posted news article about the Geocaching initiative
- Posted numerous events including the bylaw member consultations and upcoming council meetings
- Schedule dmore polls from recommendations from MECC (and social media posts to go out the day each new poll pops up)

- **Mobile App**

	Total Registered Users	Social Connections in last 90 days	Campus Activity in last 90 days
Feb 2016	1,866	184	2,074
Jan 2016	1,771	388	3,899
Dec 2016	1,362	328	3,286
Nov 2016	1,177	275	2,621
Oct 2016	1,073	318	
Sep 2016 (Launch)	881		

- Updated Employment tile to point to correct webpage
- Oohlala provided some statistics on the number of active daily users, and the data shows an average of 107 active users per day (from Sep 1 to Feb 10).

- **Website Polls**

- *February is tax time! Do you know how to claim student deductions?*
 - Yes 12
 - No 5
 - Not Sure 2
 - Other 1
 - **Total Responses:** 20
 - **Posted:** Feb 1 – Feb 14
- *If you have taken a course that has an etext, have you:*
 - Used only the etext 11
 - Bought the textbook through AU 6
 - Bout the textbook though another source 9
 - **Total Responses:** 26
 - **Posted:** Feb 15 – Feb 29

I also created a poll on the **AU Facebook Forum**, in response to a twitter conversation with AU, I shared an article AU posted about Music for Learning, and @AthabascaU responded “we'd love to hear what the students' music for studying is, too! Any insight for us?”

- *“What kind of music do you study to:”*
 - None 16
 - Electronic 9
 - Classical 8
 - Rock 6
 - Other 5
 - Alternative 4
 - Hip Hop 2
 - Pop 2
 - Jazz 1
 - New Age 1
 - **Total Responses: 54**
 - **Posted: Feb 29**

- **Social Media Statistics:**

- **Facebook**

Month	Total Posts	Total Likes	New Likes	Average post reach	Overall Impressions
Feb 2016	59	720	16	141	26,474
Jan 2016	37	707	28	154	20,180
Dec 2015	38	681	32	109	9,262
Nov 2015	49	654	20	83	8,508
Oct 2015	68	641	18	82	12,881
Sep 2015	32	628	22	100	7,688

- **Twitter**

Month	Total Posts:	Total Followers	New Followers	Retweets	Link Clicks	Overall Impressions
Feb 2016	65	588	17	29	80	13,011
Jan 2016	36	584	18	14	34	10,403
Dec 2015	34	579	12	12	37	11,075
Nov 2015	53	577	12	11	92	11,704
Oct 2015	68	574	24	40	60	7,650
Sep 2015	27	561	17	20	51	7,440

AUSU Newsletter Statistics

[illegible]

Topics
Election Candidates, Executive Election, Council Changeover, Voting Perod, Appeals
Bylaw Revisions, Member Consultations, Bylaw Forum, First & Second Reading of the Motion
Election ONLY
Election ONLY
Election, Geocaching, Twitter contest, Meet&Greet, Student Spotlight, Tuition & Taxes, Voice
CRO ONLY
Mobile App, Tweetchat, Student Lifeline, AU survey results, Student Spotlight, Course evals, the Voice, Calendars out of stock
Election Policy Updates ONLY
AU Services Survey ONLY
Calendars, Smart Draw, the Voice, Holiday Closures
Survey ONLY
Survey, Holiday Closure, Awards Recipients, Student Spotlight
Health Plan ONLY
Course Eval, Lifeline, Meet&Greet, Student Spotlight, Undergrad Orientation
Awards ONLY
Get out the Vote ONLY
Awards, Course Evaluations, Student Spotlight, new website, GOTV
Get out the Vote ONLY
Mobile App ONLY
GOTV, Student Spotlight, Lifeline, The Voice, New Council
Student Lifeline ONLY
By-election, Lifeline, Forensic Audit Survey, Mobile App, University Rankings Survey, Spotlight
Elections ONLY
SmartDraw, Services Survey results, CASA, Award Winners, Spotlight, Course Evals, Planners, Press release, Exec Blog
Career links, Services Survey, Convo 2015, Convo Lunch, Grad Bears, Lynda.com, The Voice, Bursary, Health & Dental
Survey, The Voice, Council, Health Plan, Council meeting, Exec Director hiring, Lynda.com