



## Report to the Board of Governors from the University of Calgary Students' Union

May 29, 2020

The SU is pleased to submit this update on the organization's governance, programs, services, events, and advocacy.

### SU Governance

The 78<sup>th</sup> Students' Legislative Council (SLC) officially took office on May 4, 2020. Despite occurring remotely this year, incoming SU Executives and Faculty Representatives continue to participate in a rigorous orientation and training program to introduce and prepare them for their new roles as student leaders and advocates.

For Executives, this orientation process has included job shadowing and a virtual retreat with the outgoing Executives, issue-based orientation and transition sessions, provision of transition resources, and skills training. Incoming SLC members have received a handbook and transition resources provided by their predecessors and will receive orientation sessions and training for SU and university governance processes, including Robert's Rules of Order.

There are currently no vacancies on SLC; however, the SU's Review Board and Tribunal, the judicial branch of the organization, are both seeking students to serve two-year terms. Vacancies will be filled by appointment.

### SU Programs and Services

Following the advice of Alberta Health Services (AHS) and the University of Calgary's decision to move to online course delivery, the SU cancelled all events for the remainder of the semester (beginning in mid-March). This included events such as Brain Break, Fitness in the Space, all SU-registered club bookings, Pet Therapy, and Bermuda Shorts Day (BSD). Cancelling these events was a difficult, but necessary measure to protect the health and safety of students.

Sadly, we also made the decision to cancel Colour Night, the SU Teaching Excellence Awards (TEA) Gala, and the SU Club Awards Banquet. These events are typically dedicated to recognizing the accomplishments of the 77<sup>th</sup> SLC, outstanding instructors, and amazing clubs respectively. We have made efforts to ensure that they are all still recognized, albeit online. Both SU Club Awards and TEA winners were celebrated remotely in April and May respectively, and an online Colour Night transition between the 77<sup>th</sup> and 78<sup>th</sup> SLC occurred on May 1. The SU also recognized the work of the SU's Committee of 10,000 – they successfully selected 12 charities and non-profit organizations from across Calgary and split \$24,000 in grant money among these organizations.

The SU Hardship Fund continues to operate, with over 100 applications received since mid-March – this is directly related to students experiencing undue financial hardship related to COVID-19. The SU Travel and Conference Fund also continues to provide reimbursements for students who

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have attended program-related conferences – many conferences have been cancelled or rescheduled due to travel restrictions nationally and internationally.

All SU-owned and operated businesses remain closed. This includes The Den and Black Lounge, Bound and Copied, the Stör, and MacEwan Conference and Events (MCEC). SU Volunteer Services has also cancelled all scheduled spring and summer programming and is on hiatus until further notice. Due to these closures, specific data on SU programs and services is unavailable for the months of March through May.

## Advocacy Initiatives

Despite the significant challenges posed by COVID-19, the SU has successfully continued to advocate for the needs and priorities of undergraduate students during this time. Recent advocacy wins for the SU include the following:

- The campus-wide implementation of an optional CR/F grading system for the winter semester.
- Confirmation that spring/summer courses will proceed online, with a reduced fee schedule that reflects the current accessibility of programs and services.
- A six-month moratorium on student loan repayment by both the provincial and the federal government.
- Federally, the introduction of a Canada Emergency Student Benefit (CESB) for students who do not qualify for the Canada Emergency Relief Benefit (CERB), increased Canada Student Grant limits (now \$6,000 for full-time students) for 2020-21, a Canada Student Service Grant (CSSG) for students who volunteer during the summer (between \$1,000 and \$5,000), an additional 76,000 student jobs, additional financial support specifically for Indigenous students, and an increase in allowable work hours from 20 to 40 for international students working in essential services

We have also worked collaboratively with UCalgary and the Graduate Students' Association (GSA) to lobby the City of Calgary to relax the city's requirements for the Calgary Transit Fair Entry program during this time. Considering the temporary suspension of the UPASS program over spring/summer, our hope was that students will be able to access the low-income transit pass offered by the city – regardless of their collective household income. Many students have moved home, making them ineligible for the Fair Entry program as it currently stands. While The City will not be relaxing rules specifically for students, they indicated that our input will be considered as part of our ongoing review to reduce barriers to participation for all current and potential program participants.

We are also continuing our critique of the province's forthcoming implementation of performance-based funding and associated performance metrics. Both the SU and the Council of Alberta University Students (CAUS) have called for a one-year pause in the overhaul of the post-secondary sector's funding structure, specifically that the province holds off tying metrics to funding for the 2020-21 year. Currently, the implementation of performance-based funding has been temporarily delayed through the end of May. Furthermore, the Government of Alberta

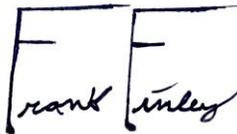
has been receptive to our suggestion to reduce the overall number of funding metrics faced by post-secondary institutions.

## Conclusion

SU Executives and SU staff have been working from home and we look forward to welcoming students back to campus when it is safe to do so. While difficult, we know that physical distancing is the best way to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and to protect each other, our extended families, and our campus community. As this is a rapidly changing situation, we are encouraging students to remain informed by checking their email regularly and referring to both the university and Government of Alberta websites for up-to-date information.

The Students' Union is proud to serve, represent, and support undergraduate students in every aspect of their experience at the University of Calgary despite the unprecedented circumstances we are currently facing.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Frank Finley'. The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line above the letters.

**Frank Finley**  
President  
Students' Union, University of Calgary