

Summer Report of the VPFA, 2018

If you are reading this, congratulations. Congrats because, like me, you have survived another hectic summer. Now that it is september once again we're all ready to get back to work representing the best interests of our student body. Unlike my other associates on the executive I was not elected, therefore most of did not have a chance to see my ideas and vision for the UPEISU. I see the Student Union as a service. Students pay their fees and put in their time in the organization so that the SU can provide better for the whole of the student body. Although synergy has allowed student associations to improve the quality of the student experience, I feel it is always important to improve our services, investigate new avenues, and the ensure that the students' time and money are going to good use. This is the outlook I brought to the table as your VP Finance and Administration.

As many of my projects took so long to start it can be difficult to really give a fair description of when they really started and ended. Many projects taken on by the SU are never ending rituals which are always being improved, but I tried best I can to describe what I got done on these projects in which months. While decreasing the difference on the bank reconciliation, better organizing and executing the budget, and improving our human resources practices are important parts of the job of VPFA, for the purposes of this report I will focus on projects specific to my mandate which I have completed this summer, or plan to complete during my term.

May

I dedicated a significant portion of the month of may to the onboarding process, which included meeting with various stakeholders around campus as well as off campus. Much of the process occurred within the office with Will and Melissa teaching me about the intricacies of the job, as well as how to work alongside the other staff in preparing our offices for the fall.

We did many activities as a group including the stakeholder meetings and open discussions as a staff team. I took the opportunities to meet with our other staff people; Alison O'Brien from the Cadre, and Jenna Clow and Janna Ganasen from the Nexus. At these meetings I learn quite a bit about what happened last year and so much more about what we can do to improve the performance of both businesses in the future. A few of the actionable items we decided to work on are as followed:

Cadre

- Create a new website for the Cadre
- Hire two great managing editors
- Ensure that both the cadre and volunteer opportunities are well promoted

Nexus

- Perform a review year for the Nexus and report to council on our findings
- Increase sales
- Increase promotion of the yearbook and visibility of Nexus on campus

With the SU organization as well I engaged with HR Atlantic and our lawyer about how to better improve our human resources practices and policies. We looked at our own policies to see what could use improvement and started the process of revision which continued for the rest of the summer. As well I updates all the HR forms to modernize them and improve their benefit to staff and managers alike.

June

June, like May, included a lot of stakeholder meetings, but at this point I felt comfortable enough in my decision to start getting along with some bigger initiatives. I search for and found a company ready to provide the cadre with the new website it needed, with the promise it would be done by the time school was to start. I also wrote, promoted, and reported on exit surveys for both outgoing councillors and staff. I learned quite a bit about the mindset about of outgoing organization members. These reports are available through the office of the VPFA and include some interesting findings.

I had the pleasure of attending the annual Campus Trust retreat for the third week of June, there I met the over Campus reps and health plan administrators from 11 other schools in the trust. I learned a great deal about the structure of our health plan organization, current and new services we provide, and how we benefit from being the beneficiaries of our trust. I also was fortunate to have been elected to the Board of Directors of the Campus Trust. This was an added responsibility but I felt it would be beneficial to myself as a learning experience and to the student of UPEI as it will help address the individual concerns of our students to have a member of the UPEI student body in the leadership committee of the health and dental insurance provider.

July

July was an important month for strategizing and getting work done. One of my more exciting projects I started in July was a multi-year sustainability strategy, which will look at all aspects of the SU through environmental, social, and financial sustainability lenses. While progress was made I decided to wait until the SU was operating at full capacity to see fully what is being done, what could be done, and to get feedback from important groups.

I as well took time to work on previously started projects. I did research for the final yearbook report, started work on strategies for promoting the yearbook and our insurance program on UPEI. July is also when I took the bulk of my time figuring out the events and timeframe from Financial Literacy Day, I planned for September 12 and got a series of speakers and presenters ready for that day.

July was a month mostly reserved for continuing my projects I started in May and June. Most importantly I met with Alison and Janna again to catch up and make sure we're all on the same page. I continued to work on the Cadre website with Ellen for *Hi There Designs* and to make sure that both businesses are prepared for the year ahead.

August

By the beginning of August I knew it was too late to begin any new projects, with this in mind the focus really turned to completing everything I had started. Most importantly I wanted to make sure I was personally ready for the work I had to do during the school year; committees, council, and my courses. As well my second focus was to ensure the businesses, I supervise (Cadre and Nexus) were viable and prepared for the year ahead of them.

We as a group went on a roadtrip to four maritime schools to visit their student associations to see how they operate in other schools and with other demographics. I was a worthwhile experience and I learned some interesting information and made some good contacts that I can take forward with future projects, both within the office of the VPFA and within the organization as a whole.

A lot of my energy in August went into planning staff orientation day, which occurred on August 28th in the HSB. It was an important day where we brought all of the staff of the UPEISU together and taught them the basics of the organization, human resources practices, occupational health, as well as guest presentations on Aspiria and cultural diversity. Despite it being impossible to learn about all aspects of the organization in just 6 hours, I feel that all the staff benefitted from meeting each other and hearing about the different departments of the Union from other Union employees, the executive.

The last couple weeks were very hectic (as you can imagine) getting everything ready. We put the finishing touches on the new Cadre website, got the Cadre and yearbook the promotional materials they need for the fall, and got ready for the budget and funding committees which will soon be meeting regularly. While naturally not everything got done, all of our big projects and initiatives in the office of the VPFA are either completed or on track to completion in a reasonable amount of time.

Conclusion

The summer was a short but important time for the UPEISU executive to get work done before school and council begin, and the VPFA is no exception. I believe I got a lot of work done, including improvements and initiatives to all aspects of my office (finances, Cadre, Nexus, human resources and Camps Trust) and as well prepared myself for committees, council, and class.