

# **Summer Report - VPAX**

*September 9th Council Meeting*

*The following document is a summary of the tasks, activities, and accomplishments of the office of the VPAX over the months of Summer 2018.*



## **Policy Updates for September 2018**

- *A03 - Establish a Multi-Year Funding Framework that Allows UPEI to Plan Long-Term*
- A04 - Providing Credit for the Completion of the English Academic Preparation Program
- A05 - Adopting a 12-month course calendar
- C06 - Professorial Accountability and Review at UPEI
- F02 - Using Open Educational Resources in all First-Year UPEI Courses
- F03 - Tuition Regulation at UPEI
- F04 - Exempting Parental Income as an Asset for Student Loan Assessments

## **Policy Reactivations for September 2018**

- A03 - Ensuring the Availability of Gender-Neutral Washrooms
- C05 - Student Consultation on Mandatory Non-Instructional Fees

## **Policy Wins 2017-2018**

- A01 - Creating a Needs-Based Provincial Student Grant Program \*\*\*
- A03 - Establish a Multi-Year Funding Framework That Allows UPEI to Plan Long-Term
- A07 - Providing Sustainable Supports for Mental Health & Well-Being
- C03 - Freedom of Information
- C07 - Oversight and Accountability in Addressing Sexual Violence on Campus

## **Projects + Issues From Last Year**

- **Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Policy**

- Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Policy is a project created from the SVPR Task Force founded last fall (which is co-chaired by the VPAX and VP Finance Jackie Podger)
- Within first two weeks of office, I submitted approximately 12 recommendations to the policy draft at the time in May
- Final draft was sent for review from Jackie Podger in July, where I submitted approximately 15 recommendations to the policy
- The final policy will be voted on by the Board of Governors this Fall

- **Mental Health Funding**

- Last year, past VPAX Taya Nabuurs advocated for Mental Health Resources on campus
- Letter Writing Campaign- when the Advocacy Team were set up in the concourse in February to give students the opportunity to reach out to local councillors, MLAs, and MPs stressing the need + importance of mental health resources on campus, through \$25/student government funding
- Intentions of the \$25/student funding was to create peer support groups on campus
- March - Premier Wade Maclauchlan wrote to VPAX + UPEISU confirming policy ask: \$25/Student funding
- This summer Will and I had meetings with Jackie Podger (VP Finance) and Treena Smith (Director of Student Affairs) to check in with the progress of where the money was going to
- Jackie/Treena expressed that it will go to various things: start up of a pilot project of peer support groups, more fulltime staff(?) and proper technological programming to follow appointments + files of students to track progress

- **HR Atlantic External Investigation**

- As per request of the final council meeting of the 17/18 academic year, an external investigation was executed due to the complaints about past President Hammad Ahmed, brought forward by past VPSL Megan Rix
- The executive team was responsible to comprehend the investigations report and its findings

- As two individuals with no past history with Megan or Hammad, nor a conflict of interest, John and I participated as representatives of the UPEISU, while meeting with both Megan and Hammad with HRA, when explaining the report and its findings
  - John and I remain available to both individuals, for questions or concerns regarding the investigation on a going forward basis
  - The UPEISU has adopted all recommendations made by HRA, and have completed, and or working on them throughout the summer
- **Student Opinion of Teaching Surveys (past project and on-going)**
    - Student Opinion on Teaching Surveys are an Academic Policy Priority for 18/19 academic year
    - After Taya conducted a survey on SOTS in the spring, I took this information, along with the primary policy update, and created a new proposal
    - Although this proposal is done and is ready for the Teaching and Learning Committee, I still need to meet with the Faculty Development Office and Faculty Association, as they are two primary stakeholders on this committee, and I would like to discuss with them my research and proposal, and take into consideration their concerns, before ratifying at council
    - Unfortunately they were only available to meet after the first council meeting, therefore this new policy update will be brought to council on September 23rd, to make sure the just consultations are done with faculty members

## **Policy Priorities 2018/2019**

- **Affordable Housing**
  - **Developing Summer 2018**
- **Affordable Textbooks**
  - **This policy was previously written in 2015, and has been updated for the 2018 academic year**
- **Experiential Education Opportunities**
  - **This policy was previously written in 2017**
- **International Student Support**
  - **Developing Summer 2018**

## **Policy Development**

- **Affordable Housing → Creating Student Dedicated Affordable Housing**
  - Affordable Housing is not an issue the UPEISU has previously written policies on
  - I first began assessing this issue by comprehending 2015, 2016, and 2017 Canada Mortgage and Housing Commission reports on PEI, (specifying Charlottetown and Summerside). To better understand why we are in the current housing state in which we are in
  - At CASA Foundations I met the Laurent Levesque, Director of non-for-profit organization UTILE, whose purpose is to facilitate the creation of student dedicated affordable housing
  - He shared with me the mass survey that UTILE created and uses to assess housing, specifically student housing in a given area (ex: Montreal, Laval, Quebec City)
  - I reached out to Colin Aitchison from Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance (OUSA), who has also created a student housing survey with Wilfred Laurier University, and has created research papers with OUSA on this issue
  - From these 3 sources, in July 2018, I executed UPEISU's PEI tailored and own Student Housing Survey to assess what situations students were in, in regards to the 0.9% vacancy rate in Charlottetown, and how that was affecting them (available via Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and the Newsletter)
  - From these results I discovered 3 primary areas where students were being negatively impacted, 1) Financially 2) Academically 3) Mental Well Being
  - After taking these issues into consideration I looked into other organizations, SUs, and cities who have dealt with this issue before, and finalized that the UPEISU would advocate for Student Dedicated Affordable Housing, having PRC Colin Trewin put in his feedback and peer review
  - This policy will be voted on to be ratified September 9th, for the first council meeting

- **International Student Support**

- Met with DoC Sweta to discuss possible avenues to take with this policy (as it is rather vague), considering she is an international student with lived experiences I could chat with informally and brainstorm easily with
- Met with Richelle Greathouse, International Student Advisor, RISIA certified, from the International Relations Office to brainstorm
- Read through Council of Alberta University Students policy statements on this matter
- Met with Caroline and Afridi of the International Students Association to discuss thoughts on different issues that I had found in my research, and what Richelle had pointed out, to see if international students thought these different solutions were worthwhile pursuing
- Reached out to our federal lobby group Canadian Alliance of Students Associations (CASA) to brainstorm what issues they were dealing with at the federal level and possible solutions provincially
- Reached out to provincial lobby group Students Nova Scotia to Tristan Bray and Clancy McDaniels to see what issues international students were facing in N.S., to see if any were applicable to PEI
- Reached out to other Student Associations such as STU, UNB, UFV etc for ideas
- Many avenues I took in terms of research, brought up various challenges. Ex: international student issues that did not apply provincially, or to UPEI, issues that were province specific ie: healthcare, issues that the university were already addressing etc.
- I decided to take a two prong approach to this policy theme:
- 1) international tuition predictability via the *Tuition Regulation* policy that the UPEISU has, (I kept the current policy however added recent research on the international aspect and added a recommendation that states that domestic and international

tuition MUST go up/down by the same % so that there's no discrepancy between the two)

- 2) create a working group in collaboration with Caroline + the ISA, and with international students to identify UPEI specific issues for international students, that I could not identify in a short period of time
- For that reason, the revamped Tuition Regulation policy will be brought forward to the second council meeting, September 23rd in order to ensure that it is not rushed, and that my PRC Colin has enough time to peer review our research and writing

## **Projects: Finished + On-going**

- **Experiential Education Hub Videos (Finished)**
  - UPEI has a new Experiential Ed. Hub where students can go to find different experiential opportunities related to their studies, however not many students are aware of this great resource
  - As one of our Policy Priorities, I thought it would be good to play our part at the UPEISU and make information on the resource available to students
  - With our DoC Sweta, videographer Prav, and people of the ExEd office, we collaborated to create 3) informational promo videos explaining what the ExEd Hub could be for any type of student
  - 1) What is experiential learning and why is it important to an individual's educational experience
  - 2) Explanations from ENG, CASS, and ACLC profs from their experiential perspective
  - 3) Explanations from students who had participated in job ready bootcamp and skills training from the ExEd Hub
- **STRIDE @ UPEI (On-going)**
  - STRIDE is a student engagement program that started at the University of Alberta, and was a project that I had on my platform
  - I reached out to past President Marina Banister, who initially implemented this program, Reed Larson who is their current President, and Adam Brown who is their current Vice President

External to learn more about the history of the program and how it works

- They set me up with their current STRIDE Coordinator Juan Alba to discuss successes and challenges of the program
- I met with PEI Coalition for Women in Government Executive Director Dawn Wilson to brainstorm on how to execute such a program with an evidently lower budget than UofA (considering we would not have the budget to hire a coordinator, however I did not want this to be the barrier to executing such a great program that could be adapted to UPEI)
- Dawn expressed to me the best way to properly do such a program would be to do more research into different historically underrepresented groups in student government, and better understand their barriers into getting involved before trying to create a program
- This resulted in the creation of a working group that will begin this fall that will gather with different folk on campus who will speak about the barriers to women and non-binary people to getting involved in student government to better identify what sort of solutions can be provided in a UPEI STRIDE Program
- The goal will be to meet with this working group, along with UofA STRIDE to brainstorm ideas, and have a one day pilot workshop for the Spring Elections, and to have a report ready at the end for the 19/20 executive to adopt as an ongoing program throughout the year

- **Get Out the Vote (On-going)**

- Get Out the Vote campaign is a project with the purpose to encourage students to vote. With a confirmed municipal election and potential provincial election, this was another one of my platform points
- I first began research on this by speaking with past VPAX John Rix, as he has previously organized and participated in 2 GOTVs as VPAX, federal and provincial. We discussed what the campaign would look like, and different approaches
- Second I reached out to VP Education Emma Walsh at STU about her work with CASA as the Director of National Advocacy, as she is currently organizing for the 2019 Federal GOTV

- Will and I met with Elections PEI and spoke about voting on campus, where it would be, and how it would work
- Will and I met with the Guardian PEI, and discussed about a partnership with them and Eastlink TV, to host a live televised debate with the 4 mayoral candidates in MacMillan Hall, W.A. Murphy Student Centre, Wednesday October 24th.
- GOTV campaign will one of the primary projects Advocacy Team works on this year
- Voting registration will take place in September, the mayoral debate will take place 24th of October, voting on campus will take place November 1st, and the final overall voting day will be November 5th
- GOTV will take place Monday October 22nd-Monday November 5th
- Open Educational Resources - Atlantic Survey
  - In collaboration with Mount Allison Student's Union, UPEI will be participating in an Atlantic wide mass survey pertaining to textbooks
  - In this survey students will be asked questions such as; what they study, what is their current financial situation, if they buy textbooks, what they currently pay for textbooks, what way they prefer to learn ie: reading, writing, videos, hands-on
  - This will be taking place Fall 2018

## **Summer Conferences**

- CASA Foundations - Ottawa/Gatineau
  - Where delegates learned the ropes as to what CASA does and how it works
  - Membership voted on policy priorities for 18/19 year
  - Membership were elected to different committees ( I was elected to Grad Committee)
- Maritime Student Congress - Mount Allison University
  - First ever Maritime gathering of SUs
  - Skills building conference for all exec positions



- Making connections with other people in the Maritimes in the same position facing similar issues
- CFS - Ottawa/Gatineau
  - National General Meeting
  - Sat on policy committee
  - Had copious motions voted down that aligned with UPEISU advocacy (was a frustrating experience)
- CASA Policy and Strategy - University of British Columbia
  - Conference where committees came together to create their working plan
  - Grad Committee identified approx. 10 policies for update
  - G.C. identified 4 policies for development
  - G.C. identified a project in which we would like to write a white paper on grads failing to find work post grad

## Meetings

- Department of Workforce and Advanced Learning
  - Minister Sonny Gallant
  - Deputy Minister Brad Colwill
  - Anne Partridge
- Federal MP for Charlottetown
  - MP Sean Casey
  - Chelsea Rogerson
- Official Opposition
  - James Alyward - PC Leader
  - Steven Myers - MLA
- Official Third Party
  - Peter Bevan Baker - Green Leader
  - Hannah Bell - MLA
- Mayoral Candidates
  - Philip Brown
  - Kim Devine

- Cecil Villard
- Jamie Larkin
  
- Elections PEI
  - Tim Garrity
  - Stephanie Richards
  - Paul Alan
  
- The Guardian
  - Stu Neaby
  - Wayne Thibodeau
  
- Provincial Housing Action Plan
  - Wendy James Porrier
  
- Vice President Academic and Research - Dr Robert Gilmour (bi-weekly)
- President - Dr. Alaa Abd-El-Aziz
- Vice President Finance and Administration - Jackie Podger
- Registrar - Donna Sutton
- International Relations Office - International Student Advisor- Richelle Greathouse
- International Student Association
  - Caroline
  - Afridi
  
- Mawi'Omi Centre
  - Sherri Russell
  - Dawne Knockwood
  
- Grad Student Association
  - Ashley
  - Laura
  - Emerald
  
- Nelson Publishing
  - Steve Brown - CEO
  - Jessica Mosher - VP

- Doug Currie

## Misc. Events

- Lieutenant Governor Grad Celebration
- Coalition for Women in Government Strat Plan
- Cultural Diversity Training
- Communications Training
- Grad BBQ
- Sexual Violence Provincial Legislation Consultations
- Pride Parade
- Saudi Farewell
- AVC BBQ
- Grad Conference- Research on Tap with Dr. Fennech

*Any further questions on any of these points, please feel free to email me or contact me, [vpax@upeisu.ca](mailto:vpax@upeisu.ca) , 902-566-0648*

- Emma Drake