



**Fall Annual General Meeting 2020**

**Vice President Communications**

**Rebecca Nicholson**

**November 24th, 2020**

**To: Augustana Students' Council:**

**From: Rebecca Nicholson**

### **Summary**

From the campaigning period in March 2020 to where I am now, has been an interesting trip, to say the least. I have pushed myself to create, provide and ultimately do as much as I can for students during Covid-19, as well as in future years. It has been a challenging 8 months, and I'm sure this year will present other challenges for me still, but I am excited to see the results of the efforts. I am particularly excited for the ASA Food Pantry that will be a lasting ASA Service. Below is a summary of the sections in this report.

Events

Campaigns

Committee Membership

Meeting Attendance

Rationale for Decision Making

Obstacles Encountered

Future Recommendations

Thank you so much for taking the time to read this report, and I look forward to any questions, comments, concerns, or any other feedback you may have. I encourage you to email me at [asavpcom@ualberta.ca](mailto:asavpcom@ualberta.ca), message the ASA Instagram account, or use the ASA Anonymous Feedback Form <https://forms.gle/Q6aLfB9NpgDDd8367>.

Rebecca Nicholson

### **Events:**

#### **Sexual Violence Awareness Week**

Sexual Violence Awareness Week was organized and took place from October 13th to 16th which involved many activities and events that took place virtually. The Sexual Violence Awareness Committee was the primary organizer with the help of clubs, and various community resources that contributed to the success of the week-long awareness campaign. As I suggested last year, we did host the campaign 2 weeks earlier, however, there were still issues of limited participation, likely due to the

pandemic and its effects.

### **Fall Wellness Week**

Wellness week is currently taking place, it began on Monday, November 23rd and will run until Friday. There are a few new events and activities going on in an attempt to adapt to a virtual environment. Most of our timed sessions have the base theme of just taking a short break to do something you enjoy for the sake of your mental health. Thus far participation has been low, however, most personal responses that I have received have all echoed the similar sentiment of having far too much homework to catch up on, and too heavy of a workload to justify attending events. ASA representatives have also been sharing their favourite de-stressing activities on our ASA social media as a way to encourage students to take a moment for themselves and find a new way to relax.

### **Campaigns:**

#### **ASA Elections**

During this election period, I started several different promotional strategies to encourage students to run, and vote. We, unfortunately, had very little engagement with the virtual outreach methods, and this likely affected the number of candidates who ran. These were similar strategies to how we advertised last March during election season, but they do not seem to be effective. The ASC will need to discuss how to increase engagement prior to the next election.

#### **Sexual Violence Awareness Campaigns**

This is a year long initiative that started with Sexual Violence Awareness Week in mid October, which will be followed by a series of smaller events throughout the year that will include training sessions, speakers and other smaller events focused on Sexual Violence Awareness. This year due to Covid-19 and an increased need for a virtual presence, the Sexual Violence Awareness Committee has created and is maintaining a Facebook Page.

#### **Wellness Week**

Each Wellness Week, the ASA promotes various different health and wellness strategies to help students get that extra little bit of “wellness” during the particularly difficult parts of the academic year. This semester is different due to Covid-19 restrictions, so we are currently in the process of hosting Virtual Wellness Week. We have adapted old events and created a variety of new activities to do in a virtual setting. Also, using the pre-existing Wellness Week budget we have been doing a “door prize” draw for ‘e-cards at every event during the week. ASA reps have also been curating health and wellness tips and strategies, which have been, and will be posted all week, and will continue to be shared after Wellness Weekends.

### **Committee Membership:**

Augustana Student Council - Voting Member  
Executive Committee - Voting Member  
Awareness Committee - Chair  
Sexual Violence Awareness Committee - Chair  
Council of Faculty Associations - Voting Member

Academic Appeals Committee - Voting Member  
Building and Sustainability Committee - Voting Member  
Library Advisory Committee - Advisory  
Writing Centre Advisory Committee - Advisory  
Augustana Sexual Violence Prevention Working Group - Advisory  
Student Experience Advisory Committee - Advisory

**Meeting Attendance:**

I have attended the majority of the meetings for the committees listed above. Some of the institutional committees have not had meetings since my appointment to the position, and have inquired into when they will. I, unfortunately, have not been able to attend S.E.A.C. since the beginning of the fall semester as the meeting time always seems to conflict with my work schedule. In the event, I have not been able to attend a meeting I have reviewed notes of those who attended.

**Rationale for Decision Making Process:**

As an executive member I have the duty to represent the interests of every Augustana Student. Every decision that I make in my role as VP Communications is always done in the best interests of the students, based on my knowledge, as well as consultations with ASA reps, and various interactions with students. I also consider decisions that will impact Augustana as a whole, and how students can benefit from those decisions made in the committee's that are external to the ASA. When we are exploring new initiatives, the first thing that comes to mind is whether it would be an impactful experience for the students.

**Ongoing Projects:**

**ASA Website**

Last year I made various changes to the ASA website, including adding tabs for each executive report, as well as a section for council meeting agendas and minutes to be posted under. Students now have access to all of our reports, and minutes so they know exactly what is going on. However, I believe that our website is ineffective and it has various bugs, so I am looking into solutions for this. I have been in contact with the Information Technology and Development department for the Students Union, and have been trying to work with them to do an update for the entire website. Unfortunately, communication has been slow, and little progress has been made as of yet.

**“Meet the ASA” Campaign**

This year I am continuing the “Meet the ASA” campaign as a fun, personal way to meet our student representatives. We have had a lot of student engagement, and it helps to establish the ASA, who we are, and what we do, from the beginning of the year. Slowly as new representatives are appointed to council I have been releasing more posts. These posts

and the other more personal posts continue to see the highest engagement on our social media.

### **ASA Food Pantry**

Over the last year, it has become increasingly apparent to me that students are feeling the pressure of food insecurity. We as the Students Association wanted to address this issue and saw the best option to be to create a student food bank. The goal of this service is to supplement a student's grocery needs, not to take over it entirely. We want to help alleviate their financial pressure, and let them spend that money on other pressing matters such as tuition, rent, emergencies, etc. This will be a long standing service of the ASA, and a new policy is being written to ensure its continuation and longevity.

Since June of 2020, I have been working with members of the ASA, groups and offices at Augustana, the UofA Campus Food Bank, and local businesses to bring this idea for a Student Food Pantry to life. It has been a long process and will continue to be a hard road ahead during the initial year of operation. We are currently in the final stages before we can open applications for the hampers, hopefully, we will be able to start in December. If you want more information please feel free to contact me, I have included my contact information above.

### **Obstacles Encountered:**

*What is the biggest challenge you have faced so far? Explain why*

One of my Future Recommendations from last year was to organize and create proper Vice President Communications Transition Documents to ensure that whoever is elected into this position next can enter smoothly. I have begun creating better records and structure documents for several different aspects of my portfolio. It has been a much longer process than I was hoping because I need to create new outlines for events and jobs as there has been limited digital documentation for current practices. I have also been trying to converge various digital files all onto the VPC google drive for easy access, as well as going through binders of physical Transition Docs and organizing everything to the best of my ability.

Of course, the transition to a completely virtual setting has been an obstacle, both from an academic and ASA perspective. I have spoken to many students who have mentioned increased workloads this semester, and who are worried about just trying to pass the class. The ASA has been advocating this to the Vice Dean Academic Karsten Mundel who has been communicating this to professors. The more people that can express their opinions on virtual learning directly to him, the more change we can cause. I encourage everyone to go to the Virtual "Spill the Tea on Virtual Learning" forum on Friday at 12:15 pm, and invite your friends!

### **Future Recommendations:**

I have a lot of ongoing projects currently so I do not have any specific Future Recommendations at this time. I will provide this in my Winter AGM Report and Final Report.