



Winter Annual General Meeting

Vice President Communications

Rebecca Nicholson

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To: Augustana Students' Council:

From: Rebecca Nicholson

Summary

This year has been interesting, challenging and educational in so many different ways, I don't even know where to begin. Mind you I think most people have felt some variation of this throughout the Covid-19 pandemic. There have been many hurdles, but I have done my best to help students, and I believe that I have and the ASA will continue to accomplish this through the ASA Food Pantry. Below is a summary of the sections in this report.

Events

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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, message the ASA Instagram account, or use the ASA Anonymous Feedback Form <https://forms.gle/Q6aLfb9NpgDDd8367>.

-Rebecca Nicholson

Events:

Winter Wellness Week

Wellness week just occurred a few days ago from Monday March 22nd to Friday March 26th. We had a few Zoom events throughout the week, and a few “asynchronous” activities.

There was a significant amount of interaction with the Cutest Pet Contest (which had about 40 submissions, but there were several repeats), and the Yoga session that Kyra hosted had 15 participants join us for the Zoom call. The Doodle Your Stress Away sessions, Family Feud and the Just Dance Party all had a decent amount of participation as well, but it was unfortunately still low. After talking to the participants and the Awareness committee, we believe that many students are just feeling overwhelmed with school work and have limited time for extracurriculars. Students are also just feeling tired of sitting in front of a screen, and they don't want to do it during the free time they do have. The Awareness Committee is discussing how to address this.

Due to the high volume of Wellness Week contest submissions and other content throughout the week, there is still a lot to post. So over the next few weeks I will be sharing the rest of the pet photos and any council submissions as well. So if you have any more tips you want to share, please feel free to submit it to me.

Cindy and I also prepared 52 “Mystery Boxes” for students and we will be delivering them on Wednesday. I am very excited for students to get these ASA goodies, and hope they help brighten students' days a little bit. The advertising was very popular, and the submission limit was reached very quickly, So I want to explore the possibility of doing this again in the future.

Campaigns

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.

Again we hosted Virtual Wellness Week, with a variety of activities to take part in. A Lot of prizes were won, and those who attended seemed to really enjoy the events. 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 had various prizes at each event during the week. ASA reps also submitted various wellness tips, many were shared, but the ones that have not been will be shared this week.

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
Community Engagement Committee
AUG 110 Committee

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 have limited my hours at my part time job significantly in order to accommodate more meeting times, so I have been able to attend more meetings than I was able to attend last semester.

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

As many people know, the ASA website is not the most functional, and I have wanted to fix it for a while. Over the last few months I have been in contact with the Information Technology and Development department for the Students Union, and their Vice President Academic David Draper. Together we have been trying to find a solution for the future of our website. Overall, we believe that the easiest and most efficient way to re do the site will be to use a design site such as Wix or Squarespace. Over the next month I will be working closely with Cindy and incoming VPC Korah to decide on a path forward, and begin that process.

ASA Food Pantry

Since the last AGM, the ASA Food Pantry has begun monthly distributions, and we have had requests each time. We currently have 12 clients, and I imagine this number could grow with students returning to Camrose in the fall. Over the next few weeks I will be working to solve a few issues I have had over the past few months. First being that many students do not have a reliable way to get to campus, and to have a pantry delivery program would be very beneficial. I will potentially be working with the alumni group ASSET to implement this. There have also been a few small issues with the registration forms, so I would like to adjust that as well. I have also noticed that there has been very little feedback

from clients of the food pantry. So I would like to create a Food Pantry Feedback form or anonymous survey at the end of April. Hopefully this can help to improve the food pantry.

Unfortunately due to my own lack of spare time, I have been unable to create policy for the ASA Food Pantry. However, over the summer as the newly elected Councilor at Large, I want to work with the ASA Executive to form this policy and prepare it to go to council for approval in the fall. While I wanted to have this done before the semester ended, I am fortunate that I was elected back onto council so I can continue to work on and refine this project as a permanent service of the ASA.

Obstacles Encountered:

Food Pantry

One of the biggest challenges that I am working on currently is trying to find a more permanent solution for storing the Food Pantry food. Since the ASA office has been empty all year, I have been primarily using the boardroom for storage and packaging. Obviously once we return to campus this will not be viable, so I will be working on this, and will provide a report on this at the end of the year.

Virtual Environments

I think one of the biggest struggles of the last year has been trying to engage with people in an online environment. Classes, and virtual learning have been challenging for some, and excellent for others. While there are some issues with it, the ASA has worked with administration all year to limit those issues. There is only so much we can do for Zoom fatigue though, and I think that is something that a lot of students are feeling right now. People are tired of sitting in front of a computer all day, and do not want to attend an online event after their classes have finished. I think some events have been a success, such as the yoga session during Wellness Week, and some of the trivia nights that the Activities Committee has planned. The last few contests and giveaways have also been very popular, and I believe that continuing this will increase online engagement. While virtual communication overall has been difficult, part of that is just due to the difficult year we have all had. Hopefully in the fall we can employ safe in person events and activities, and include some of the successful virtual events.

Organizational Goals- Completed/Ongoing:

Some of my personal goals going into the year were to attend as many meetings as I could, and I believe that I was mostly successful. Occasionally I would have to miss something for class, but if I knew I was going to be unable to attend, I would send notes to the meeting chair, and review the meeting minutes afterwards. Another goal of mine was to be constantly checking to ensure that all of the jobs that I am responsible for were completed. Some I accomplished, but there have been several issues that I have had over the last year. I struggled to keep up with social media posts especially, and I hope I can help Korah come up with a more effective plan.

An organizational goal that I had was for the entire team to communicate with each other.

I think that we have done that well, considering many of us have not met in person. I find that almost everyone contributes during council meetings, and the committee provides an excellent space for discussion. The next few weeks will be very important for collecting feedback from everyone, so I hope we can continue this trend of communication.

Future Recommendations:

In addition to the things I mentioned throughout this report, I would like to recommend to future Executive members that they do not take a fall 3-week course as it can be a busy time, and can quickly become overwhelming.

I recommend to all council members that they do not take on a project too large to handle, or if you do, to ask for help when you need it. Being overscheduled and burnt out does not help anyone, and I have had to learn that this year. While I enjoyed the work I did, I hope that future council members will be mindful of their entire course load and council responsibilities.