



STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION OF MACEWAN UNIVERSITY

Minutes for the Students' Council Meeting of the Students' Association of MacEwan University December 20, 2023 at 6:00pm via Zoom

Voting Members:

Gabriel Ambutong, President
Jakob Cardinal, Vice President External
Delaney Huhtala, Councillor
Cierra Jacobs, Vice President Student Life
Ian Kamenwa, Councillor
Mayank Kaushik, Councillor
Joseph A. La Torre, Vice President Governance
and Finance
Maade Okai, Councillor
Nhi Phan, Councillor
Nathan Poon, Councillor
Inder Singh, Councillor
Alem Tesfay, Councillor
Joehn Torres, Councillor
Chioma Uzor, Councillor

Stephan Vasquez, Vice President Academic
Sonia Yusuf, Councillor
Layal Zidan, Councillor
Abby Beka, Councillor
Katherine MacDonald, Councillor

SAMU Officials and Council Support:
Timothy Jobs, Chair
Darryl Kostash, General Manager
Alan Honey, Governance Advisor
Afroz Adam, Admin Support

Meeting called to order at 6:02pm.

1. Treaty 6 Land Recognition

We would like to acknowledge that this meeting of the Students' Association of MacEwan University is taking place on the traditional territories of the people of the Treaty 6 region in Central Alberta.

The Students' Association of MacEwan University is situated in the centre of what we call the city of Edmonton, which is called Amiskwaciy Waskahikan or Beaver Hill House in Nehiyawewin (Cree). This is the traditional home of the Nehiyaw (Cree) and Michif (Métis), and meeting place for many Indigenous peoples including the Nakawe (Saulteaux), Siksika (Blackfoot), Nakota Sioux (Stoney) and other nations.

2. Approvals

2.1 MOTION

TO APPROVE THE AGENDA FOR DECEMBER 20, 2023

TORRES/OKAI

CARRIED

2.2 MOTION

TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF NOVEMBER 15, 2023

ZIDAN/TORRES

CARRIED

3. Presentations

3.1. Canadian Alliance of Student Associations

4. For Information

4.1. Reports

4.1.1. President

Will share interview I did with Taproot publishing.

4.1.2. Vice President Academic

Written report will be submitted soon.

4.1.3. Vice President External

4.1.4. Vice President Governance & Finance

4.1.5. Vice President Student Life

Mental Health Week Planning Committee; Student Mental Health Consultation Sub-Committee.

4.1.6. Students' Council Operations Committee Work Plan

4.1.7. Audit Committee Work Plan

4.1.8. Executive Committee Work Plan

4.1.9. Governance Committee Work Plan

4.1.10. Finance Committee Work Plan

4.1.11. Strategy and Engagement Committee Work Plan

4.2. Executive Committee Minutes

Minutes of November 8, 15, 29, and December 6, 2023 provided.

5. Question Period

5.1. Written Questions

Zidan - President: CAUS: Does the stepping down impact your work when it comes to the ability to represent students voice?

PRES - No, CAUS's ability to represent the student voice will not be diminished. The Vice-Chair's position has already been filled. Athabasca University's Students' Union's President was recently elected as Vice-Chair.

Zidan – President: SAMU and MacEwan: Executives Meeting: What outcomes can we expect from this meeting? To what extent do macewan take steps towards these students concerns

PRES - The nature of these meetings makes it difficult to determine what we can expect from administration. Although we do our best to represent students, nothing is ever guaranteed. However, all conversations SAMU has with MacEwan's administration serve as advocacy avenues, providing more opportunities for the Student Voice to be heard.

- To provide context, prior meetings have led to administration being made aware of student concerns around affordability. As a result of SAMU's affordability advocacy, some actions taken by MacEwan after our meetings has included the following:
 1. Ponoka Campus nursing students being provided access to free, clean drinking water.
 2. Tuition for international students being set at 2% (matching the provincial maximum of 2% for domestic students), despite administration being able to charge up to 10%.
 3. Waiving of the Mandatory Non-Instructional Sports and Wellness Fee for the upcoming Winter Term. In the announcement administration sent an email to all students, it was stated that, "We are taking this action for the upcoming term in response to students' concerns about affordability." This decision results in a reduction of \$1.2 million in student fees, a clear indication of our success in our advocacy.
 4. Increased Scholarships, Awards, and Bursaries (SABs) by \$1 million.
 5. Freezing rates as MacEwan Residence.
- In terms of our previous meeting, we were able to gain information on SABs, which we intend to use to inform our advocacy. Whether it be removing barriers, extra requirements, or advocating for increased funding. We also intend to follow-up with administration on some priorities such as mental health (which the VPSL will be taking the lead on) and budget allocation discussions (which the VPGF will be taking the lead on).

- The extent to which MacEwan takes action varies, but ongoing advocacy by SAMU provides much needed context and pressures to ensure that administration listens to the Student Voice.

Zidan - Executives:

Can I have more clarification on MacEwan Committees – Teaching Awards Sub-Committee and the appointment of VPA to it

Exec(?) –

Huhtala - I notice that some committees have no training periods. Are there any planned initiatives to implement training for these committees?

VPGF - Currently, we have a focus on budget training for the Finance Committee because they will be shown budget presentations from all the SAMU departments to then recommend the next fiscal year's budget to Council. Training for other committees is something we will look into, as it is important to give Councillors as much support and training as they need in other committees.

Huhtala - For Pres: I'm sorry to hear of the 2% tuition increase. Do we know what this is in response to (inflation, cut funding, etc.)? If so, can we use this information to create a plan for avoiding tuition increases in the future?

PRES – Post-Secondary Institutions, including MacEwan, rely on 3 main sources of funding (grants, domestic student tuition, and international student tuition). Government grants account for 45%, while domestic and international tuition accounts for 43%, the rest is covered by ancillary service revenue and investments. To answer your question about funding cuts, institutions like MacEwan risk reductions in grant funding from the government when they do not opt for the 2% is the domestic tuition cap set by the provincial government. In terms of international student tuition fees (which is not regulated by the provincial government), MacEwan decided that this 2% increase was reasonable, in order to fund operating expenses for next year. SAMU disagrees with this increase because MacEwan has consistently had surpluses in recent years, making it difficult to justify the need for an increase in international student tuition. It is unclear if it is going to be feasible to avoid tuition increases, but we are taking steps to improve our institutional advocacy planning, capacity, and efficacy.

Tesfay – Pres: First, I applaud you for voting against the motion that would cause tuition increases for both domestic and international students. Second, item 2.4 of your report mentioned a discussion focused on student life. The topic of support for students impacted by global conflicts was brought up in that discussion. What was the result of that conversation, and in what ways will MacEwan and SAMU support those students?

PRES – MacEwan has not indicated any specific targeted supports, and I cannot speak on behalf of MacEwan. But SAMU intends to further look into internal, institutional, and community-based supports. So far, have been increasing marketing of supports, but we feel that there is still further work to be done. SC will be updated as necessary.

Phan - VPE: When's the busiest time of the year for VPE and why?

VPE –

Phan – Vpe: The joint advocacy from Quebec: What's the chance of the government re-proposing the increase again in the future? What can SRC do about this potential?

APSN: What are some of the highlights of the conversations with presidents from across provinces?

VPE –

Phan – Vpe: How can the waiver on the 20-hour limit for int' students be a win if they double the financial proof to apply for a study permit from 10k to more than 20k?

VPE –

Phan - Pres: Macewan Board of Gov Meeting: Thank you for the informative report. What is the correlation between the increase in tuition and in SABs

PRES - The correlation between tuition increases and SABs is an operational matter and does not concern SC at this time. When looking at SABs SAMU's advocacy primarily looks at student need vs SABs supplied.

Phan - Can you provide the statistics on tuition increase for domestic and international students in the past 4 years?

PRES - No, a breakdown of this information is currently not relevant to SC. However, the statics and other data regarding tuition increases have been used to inform SAMU's advocacy. At a high-level, we've seen tuition increase by more than 30% over the last 4 years.

Phan – Pres: SAMU+Mac Exec meeting: What was the discussion on the feasibility of transferring some of MacEwan's surplus funds into SABs?

PRES - In the interest of improving MacEwan's awareness of student concerns, they want to hear more from SAMU. It was noted that there has already been an increase in Scholarships, Awards, and Bursaries (SABs) by \$1 million, but the feasibility of transferring some of MacEwan's current surplus funds into SABs is unclear. However, SAMU intends to continue to advocate towards administration when it comes to mid-year injection of surpluses.

Phan – Pres: Did Macewan mention whether their decision (regards the above issues) is impacted by the new development of the Business building?

PRES - They mentioned that accumulated surpluses will be directed to capital investments such as the School of Business building. But they did not mention whether their decision is directly impacted by the development of the School of Business building.

Phan - VPGF: What are some of the highlights of the committees that you chair (Governance + Finance), for example: how's the work different/similar to the prior year or new focuses for the upcoming 2024 year?

VPGF - For the committees I chair, we have only met so far to discuss the TOR, work plan and planned training for one of the committees. The work of the committee will be similar to years past – such as the Finance Committee recommending the next fiscal year's budget to Council, SCOC reviewing Remuneration of Elected Representatives, and the Governance Committee reviewing policies that ensure its relevance.

Phan - VPSL: Thanks for adding the cushion to the main stairs area! How will this affect SAMU's budget?

VPSL – This would be considered an operational question in nature. However, you can rest assured that the cost is within the budget and will not have any negative effects.

Phan – Vpsl: Congrats on the win at the water situation on the Ponika campus! What were the solutions or steps that MacEwan took to rectify the situation? Why haven't they done it earlier? Will this free access to clean water be permanent?

VPSL – Thank you! I do not have the answer on what they did on their side, other than they were able to connect the proper people to care for the cost. I cannot speak to why it was not done earlier – likely because of budget changes and a possible miscommunication on their end. We hope this will be a permanent change, I can't see why they would change it in the future, but we are taking the necessary steps to ensure that future executives are checking in with the Ponoka students and know what needs to be monitored.

Phan - for anyone: How long will the expense of \$28,000 for The Griff intend to last (1 year or more, one-time expense or renewable)?

VPGF - Your question is operational in nature; however, from my understanding of your question and the way you phrased it, it is a one-time expense.

5.2. Oral Questions

Topics include: events in the library; MacEwan tuition hike advocacy; Brain Freeze event; tuition increase;

6. In Camera Period

6.1 Honourary Membership

Motion to go in camera

HUHTALA/ZIDAN

CARRIED

MOTION TO GO OUT OF CAMERA

VPSL/VPE

CARRIED

7. Motions & Business Orders of the Day

7.1. Honourary Membership

MOTION TO GRANT HONOURARY MEMBERSHIP TO JOY SHAW

VPGF/TESFAY

Favour: Pres, Vpe, Huhtala, Vpsl, Kaushik, Kamenwa, Vpe, Okai, Phan, Poon, Singh, Tesfay, Torres, Uzor, Vpa, Zidan, Yusuf, Beka, MacDonald

Carried

8. Consultation

9. Evaluation

10. Recognition

11. Adjournment

MOTION TO ADJOURN

ZIDAN

CARRIED

Next Meeting Date: January 17, 2023

Meeting adjourned at 7:15pm.