



STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION OF MACEWAN UNIVERSITY

Minutes for the Students' Council Meeting of the Students' Association of MacEwan University May 15, 2024 at 6:00pm in the Council Chamber

Voting Members:

Gabriel Ambutong, President
Abby Beka, Councillor
Darcy Hoogers, Vice President Academic
Delaney Huhtala, Councillor (absent)
Ian Kamenwa, Councillor (absent)
Mayank Kaushik, Councillor
Joseph A. La Torre, Vice President Governance
and Finance
Katherine MacDonald, Councillor
Aleace Moom, Vice President Student Life
Maade Okai, Councillor (absent)
Nhi Phan, Councillor
Nathan Poon, Councillor
Alric Reid, Vice President External

Inder Singh, Councillor
Alem Tesfay, Councillor
Joehn Torres, Councillor
Chioma Uzor, Councillor
Sonia Yusuf, Councillor (absent)
Loyal Zidan, Councillor

SAMU Officials and Council Support:

Timothy Jobs, Chair
Darryl Kostash, General Manager
Alan Honey, Governance Advisor
Karan Singh, Admin Support

Meeting called to order at 6:00pm.

<Intros>

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 MAY 15, 2024

UZOR/TESFAY

CARRIED

2.2 MOTION

TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF APRIL 17, 2024

TORRES/SINGH

CARRIED

3. Presentations

4. For Information

4.1. Reports

4.1.1. President

4.1.2. Vice President Academic

4.1.3. Vice President External

4.1.4. Vice President Governance & Finance

4.1.5. Vice President Student Life

4.2. Executive Committee Minutes

Minutes of April 10, 17, 24, and May 2, 2024 provided.

5. Question Period

5.1. Written Questions

Phan - For VPE: I'm impressed with your successful election to be the Chair of CAUS. Could you share the key factors that contributed to your election as Chair of CAUS? Additionally, how do you plan to leverage this role to effectively represent and advocate for the interests and benefits of students at our university?

Vpe – Thank you, and great questions! First of all, I must thank the entire Executive Committee (EC) and support staff who supported my candidacy for the position of Chair of CAUS. Their expression of support for my bid for this position was instrumental in helping me along the journey. I also want to share that the SAMU team that was present with me at CAUS Changeover was even more so a key factor in my victory. The President, Outgoing VPE, and Manager of External & Stakeholder Relations were pivotal in helping me prepare, practice, and focus on the task at hand, as well as remaining grounded in setting the intentions for the week, which was ultimately being able to represent SAMU and emerge victorious at the election.

In response to your second question, while the role of Chair doesn't have a vote in decision-making (actual voting) process at the Board, the Board does look to the Chair for direction and guidance. This means that my position as Chair does provide the opportunity to provide insights into the issues affecting students across the province, including students at our university, and provide clarity around these issues so that all issues that would serve the interest of, and benefit, MacEwan University students are considered. Additionally, since EC advocates on behalf our students as guided by our strategic plan, which is developed by listening to our student's voices, I will work with my EC team to keep up our ears to the ground so that we remain up to date on issues affecting our students. I will also work closely with the President, who now becomes SAMU's primary voting delegate at CAUS, to collaborate and support student-driven priorities that align with our vision, mission and values.

Phan - President: Congrats on your second term as President! Could you outline your specific actionable plans for this year, particularly in areas such as student services, government advocacy, and campus improvements?

Also, what insights have you gained from your first term, and how will they influence your approach and priorities in this new term?

Pres - Fantastic question. I will split up my response for ease of reading.

- Student services fall under the scope of our Vice-President Student Life (VPSL), but operational matters are under the purview of the General Manager (GM), while my priorities focus on Advocacy and Governance. I have no specific, actionable plans related to this area. However, I am prepared to pivot when deemed necessary by membership and Students' Council.

- SAMU's advocacy to government through bodies such as Edmonton Student Alliance (ESA), Council of Alberta University Students (CAUS), and Canadian Alliance of Student

Associations (CASA) has been and will be informed directly by the Student Voice. In order, the following are the top priorities for students based on the most recent SAMU survey: Academic costs, Living costs, and Mental Health. These areas of concern will be used to inform policy recommendations to government, but the specific recommendations are to be determined by membership at ESA, CAUS, and CASA in the coming months. Rest assured, the Vice-President External (VPE) and I will update Council when priorities are set at the municipal, provincial, and federal advocacy bodies. We will ensure that MacEwan students are well represented at all levels of government.

- My priorities regarding campus improvements will focus on improving student representation both in and out of SAMU. The VPSL's portfolio will likely focus heavily on campus improvement through Student Affairs, and I will assist as necessary in my role as President.

- To answer your question more directly, I will provide a bit of context. Last year, my focus was on shifting the Executive Committee's (EC) capacity to being more advocacy-oriented. In past years, EC has been known to spend its time on tasks such as directly planning or tabling. As you've seen in the most recent EC Workplan, many projects have since been flagged as "to be operationalized." The idea being that only EC has been empowered to represent the student voice at decision-making bodies. Thus, EC should focus solely on advocacy and governance and not take on tasks that can be taken on by operational staff or volunteers. As you may or may not know, SAMU has since hired additional advocacy support staff in pursuit of EC's advocacy goals. This year, my focus is on continuing the work on ensuring that EC is highly advocacy-oriented and improving representation on campus.

- In terms of insights from last year that will influence my approach this year, I have many. Far too much to include in this post so I will focus on a few main points. It is evident that students, including EC, that have representative roles in decision-making bodies, should focus solely on meaning representation and advocacy work. My focus will be on what has the highest impact on SAMU membership, which is Institutional Advocacy (Advocacy towards MacEwan) and SAMU Governance. My portfolio will focus on Tuition and Fees consultation, MacEwan's budget, and SAMU Governance Engagement. Council will receive more in-depth information once EC has finalized its Workplan. You can consider my focus being Governance and Advocacy. For further elaboration outside the scope of Council, please reach out and we can set up a meeting.

Phan - VPA: Congrats on the first term! I love your detailed reports. Your work this year involved many challenges from the continuity of the former VPA. What do you think would be the most challenging tasks for you?

Vpa - Thank you for the warm congratulations, Councillor Phan! I aim to continue with the level of detail with reports going forward. I'm a firm believer that an informed Students' Council is best equipped to provide meaningful oversight for the Executive Committee, ensuring that we maintain the trust of students.

I believe that the biggest challenge going forward as VPA stems from numerous sources of friction that postsecondary institutions are experiencing across North America. The first being the capacity to support students affected by global conflicts. I intend to work with my team, ensuring that academic support is available to all students who are experiencing strife arising from these conflicts.

The second, and no less important, is the affordability crisis which plagues students. Students must have options to reduce the toll that rising tuition, textbook prices, grocery costs, and rent places on students. Balancing the two advocacy priorities while enacting effective change will undoubtedly create a challenge for myself as I look towards the following year.

Phan - VPGF: Congrats on your second term as VPGF! Could you outline your specific actionable

plans for this year, particularly in areas such as financial health of SAMU, and campus improvements?

Also, what insights have you gained from your first term, and how will they influence your approach and priorities in this new term?

Vpgf - Very great question.

We haven't gone through our project planning yet, so I do not have detailed steps yet. To answer your first question, SAMU's financial health is always a priority. We've taken the steps last term – such as changing the allocation of our surpluses and paused the increase of the SAMU fee based on data and our capital planning in response to affordability, to name a few. Namely, some of the other changes that we made was to have the Finance Committee be more involved with reviewing our quarterly financial statements on 5% variances to fulfill the oversight function within its mandate. In collaboration with the Finance Department and the General Manager, the financial health of SAMU will be maintained. In regard to campus improvements, that is quite broad because that can relate to building improvements for more space for students, or ease of access of mental health supports for students. Although, it may not directly be in my portfolio, I support the decisions and ideas EC and SAMU has to improve campus.

Some of the insights I've gained from last term are as follows:

- Capacity is everything
- Block off time to work in my calendar ahead of time
- Asking for more help and support from GAST (Governance Advocacy Support Team)
- Operationalizing things is an option – such as GovWeek & EC for a Day
- Shifting EC to an advocacy focus and thus shifting my role as VPGF to an advocacy focus as well by being a student member of the Board of Governors (BOG) and a focus on Tuition/MNIF meetings.
- Being empowered to speak on behalf of students – this took me awhile to feel comfortable doing at first.
- Saying no to ideas and events in consideration of my capacity.
- Creating key messaging format for when I speak to MacEwan admin or whenever else I am in an advocacy capacity.

Overall, with these insights in mind, they've greatly influenced my approach to my position as VPGF and I plan on implementing them during my last term.

Phan - VPSL: Congratulations on being appointed as Vice President of Student Life! Could you share your specific actionable plans for this year in enhancing student engagement, wellness, and campus life? also, what is the key goal or impact you want to achieve to make a significant change for students this year?

Vpsl - Thank you so much Councilor Phan! I am so excited to be here and make the student experience better.

Currently, I have no specific project or actionable items as we are getting settled into the office this month and getting acquainted with MacEwan administration and other members.

I would like to highlight that the student experience is fundamental to me and I strive towards making it healthy in all aspects.

My goals this year are to address the current ongoing issue of student affordability, Diversity, Inclusion and Equality on campus and student mental health.

I am working towards these goals by planting the seeds within student affairs and getting to know different administrative staff within the area for all non-academic affairs. It is important that SAMU

continues to strengthen this relationship to work towards advocacy goals internally. Furthermore, I would like to touch base on my goal of creating a strong relationship with Kihêw Waciston. This is a relationship we want to foster to one of my goals to improve our campus inclusivity and SAMU operations.

Next month we will begin our advocacy and project planning and I will be more than happy to share with you what these projects and action items look like.

Zidan - President: we all have witnessed the peaceful protests and encampments for Palestine in UofA and UofC and the EPC raid and violence that was used against those students. My question is where does SAMU stand when it comes to student's rights to freedom of expression, speech, and assembly and peaceful rights to gather?

Pres - I appreciate your question, Councillor. SAMU's official position can be found here:

[STATEMENT ON THE VIOLENT SWEEP OF PALESTINE SOLIDARITY ENCAMPMENTS](#)

It can be found on SAMU's website: <https://samu.ca/student-resources/27900-2/>

Zidan - Based on VPA GFC meeting, VPA: can you clarify more on Bill 18?

Vpa - Excellent question regarding Bill 18, Councillor Zidan.

As detailed in my report, MacEwan University administrators (specifically, President Trimbee) are in discussion with the Province regarding the impact that Bill 18 may have on research funding for MacEwan University. Trimbee noted that the Province is looking to implement the Bill by early 2025.

Dialogue regarding research funding is a priority for postsecondary institutions. President Trimbee expressed a desire to work with the Province through stakeholder consultation this summer; however, she did not go into detail regarding what this consultation may look like or how collaboration will directly impact research funding within MacEwan University. Regardless, there will likely be more information coming regarding this issue as further stakeholder engagement is held between the University and the Province.

Zidan - VPA: Based on your meeting with MacEwan president, where does MacEwan stand when it comes to student's rights to freedom of expression, speech, and assembly and peaceful rights to gather?

Vpa - Another fruitful question of great relevance and importance, Councillor Zidan.

In transparency, I did not have the opportunity to directly question President Trimbee regarding the stance that MacEwan University is taking regarding students' rights to freedom of expression, speech, assembly, and peaceful protest. This is a matter that will remain relevant within the coming months, and I look forward to discussions which will illuminate the stances across MacEwan administration.

In the meantime, I encourage councillors, and the student body, to review [SAMU's official statement](#) regarding the events that took place over the weekend of May 11, 2024.

Zidan - VPA: What concerns does Dr. Trimbee have from the peaceful Palestinian protests?

Vpa - Thank you for this question, Councillor Zidan.

During General Faculties Council, President Trimbee did not elaborate on specific concerns regarding peaceful Palestinian protests. Rather, she described that MacEwan University has "policies and procedures ... to guide [MacEwan]," and that MacEwan has support from the Province.

Zidan - VPA: was there any advocacy for the student's right to protest and freedom of expression ?

Vpa - Thank you for this timely and relevant question, Councillor Zidan.

Regarding advocacy for students' right to assemble and protest via freedom of assembly and expression, I refer to SAMU's [Statement on the Violent Sweep of Palestine Solidarity Encampments as the Universities of Alberta and Calgary](#).

As described in the statement, we condemn, in the strongest terms, the use of excessive force to disperse peaceful protesters. SAMU stands with our students as they exercise their charter-protected rights.

I, alongside the rest of our Executive Committee, encourage students to reach out for further support. A list of supports can be found via [this link](#).

Zidan - VPA: what is MacEwan learning from other jurisdictions? What policies and procedures will they use?

Vpa - Great question, Councillor Zidan.

During General Faculties Council, President Trimbee did not go into detail regarding *what* MacEwan University is learning from other jurisdictions. However, I can report that MacEwan University is keeping an eye on the responses that other jurisdictions are employing.

Regarding the second part of your question, the exact policies were unstated during the meeting. However, relevant policies that could come into play are MacEwan University's [Free Expression on Campus Policy](#) and [Campus Security Policy](#).

Huhtala - For the VPA: allowing deans to approve curriculums that do not require changes without moving to committee does seem like a good method of streamlining. However, I am wondering if there will still be ample opportunity for curriculums to be examined for any changes that may be necessary?

Vpa - Excellent question, Councillor Huhtala.

Should there be changes necessary to curriculum, these changes will go through the [Committee on Academic Standards, Curriculum, and the Calendar](#). The streamlining of this process impacts instances where no changes are discussed; there will still be opportunities to discuss changes through this committee.

Huhtala - For the VPA on the subject of the Palestinian protests: given the recent response of the EPS at the UofA Palestinian protests, I fear that many MacEwan students may fear for their safety and rights to peaceful protest. Are there any resources that students could access to address these concerns while Dr. Trimbee is having these conversations with the Minister of Advanced Education and Minister of Public Safety?"

Vpa - Another important question, Councillor Huhtala.

SAMU has listed a range of resources for students impacted by the events over this past weekend. These include directed mental health resources—ranging from #ActionForPalestine x Ruh Care, Palestinian Mental Health Counsellors, Abrar Trauma and Mental Health Services, BIPOC Healing and Wellness Centre to SAMU's own Peer Support. A list of these resources can be found via [this link](#).

I encourage any MacEwan student affected by the recent events to utilize these resources.

5.2. Oral Questions

Topics Include: advocacy.

6. In Camera Period

6.1 Chief Returning Officer Reappointment

MOTION TO GO IN CAMERA

TORRES/ZIDAN

CARRIED

*Phan enters @ 6:05pm

MOTION TO GO OUT OF CAMERA

TORRES/ZIDAN

CARRIED

7. Motions & Business Orders of the Day

7.1. Chief Returning Officer Reappointment

*Okai enters @ 6:07pm

MOTION TO REAPPOINT JOSH STOCK AS THE CHIEF RETURNING OFFICER, FOR A TERM ENDING APRIL 30, 2025, ON THE RECOMMENDATION OF THE STUDENTS' COUNCIL OPERATIONS COMMITTEE

VPGF/TESFAY

Favour: Beka, VPA, Kaushik, VPGF, MacDonald, VPSL, Okai, Phan, Poon, Singh, Tesfay, Torres, Uzor, Zidan

CARRIED

7.2. Governance Committee

Nominees: Councillor Phan

MOTION TO APPOINT COUNCILLOR COUNCILLOR PHAN TO THE GOEVRNANCE COMMITTEE FOR A TERM ENDING OCTOBER 31, 2024

VPGF/TORRES

Favour: Beka, VPA, Kaushik, VPGF, MacDonald, VPSL, Okai, Phan, Poon, Singh, Tesfay, Torres, Uzor, Zidan

CARRIED

7.3. Students' Council Operations Committee

Nominees: Poon

MOTION TO APPOINT COUNCILLOR POON TO THE STUDENTS' COUNCIL OPERATIONS COMMITTEE FOR A TERM ENDING OCTOBER 31, 2024

VPGF/SINGH

Favour: Beka, VPA, Kaushik, VPGF, MacDonald, VPSL, Okai, Phan, Poon, Singh, Tesfay, Torres, Uzor, Zidan

*Kamenwa enters at 6:13pm

CARRIED

8. Consultation

9. Evaluation

10. Recognition

11. Adjournment

MOTION TO ADJOURN

BEKA

CARRIED

Next Meeting Date: June 19, 2024

Meeting adjourned at 6:21pm