

Students returning to the world of academia can find themselves quickly overwhelmed by their hectic new schedules. There are buildings to find, classes to attend, and fees to recover from. With all of the bustle and excitement on campus, it can be easy to forget that there are people behind the scenes as well—governing bodies that set those fees, decided what classes to offer, and allocate those funds to construct and maintain all the buildings, to name but a few examples.

While the power structures within the University of Alberta can be quite complex, most of the decisions that affect you as a student will, at some point, fall under the jurisdiction of one of the following legislative bodies. And while pages and pages could be dedicated to an in-depth look at any of them, here's a quick pre-season guide to our local power-mongers.



## Students' Union

Established in 1909, the Students' Union has been set up to represent undergrads, who make up the vast majority of the student body at the University of Alberta. The SU acts as an advocacy group and owns a number of businesses on campus that enjoy vastly varying degrees of success.

The Students' Union Council is made up of 50 members, 42 of which are elected by each of the undergraduate faculties. Instead of voting on all of the Council candidates, the few thousand students that can be bothered do so only vote for those that are running in their respective faculty; the number of councillors elected in each faculty is determined by the number of students in that field of study. Arts and Science, the most populous faculties on campus, have the most seats. However, no matter how small and utterly insignificant they may be, every faculty is afforded at least one representative on Council. Council meets every second Tuesday throughout the year.

The eight executive members of Students' Council are not elected by their faculties, but are members of the body *ex-officio*, meaning they are automatically made members by virtue of their position.

**President—Michael Janz:** Basically the captain of team SU, the President is responsible for setting the direction of the organization and guiding the body. The President represents the organization and its students, while meeting with University officials, the government, and other organizations. Occasionally, he wears a suit.

**Vice-President (External)—Steven Dollansky:** The VPX deals with governments and other organizations outside the University of Alberta. Be prepared to hear him utter the word "tuition" at least twelve times per day for the next eight months.

**VP (Operations and Finance)—Eamonn Gamble:** The VPOF is the one with the keys to the figurative vault. In charge of preparing the budget for the next season, he has a major part in developing the plan for the SU's local moneypit, the Powerplant.

**VP Academic—Bobby Samuel:** The VPA is charged with representing the scholarly interests of students. Advocating for increasing quality of education and addressing student concerns about their learning both fall under this portfolio. An ideal VPA will also have a strong grip, all the better to strangle popular and effective class-registration software to death with.

**VP Student Life—Chris Le:** SU events such as the Week of Welcome and Anti-Freeze are administered to by the VPSL. The other 28 weeks of the year are devoted to fashioning student-funded paperclips into various animal shapes.

Councillors and the Executive are elected in March elections, and hold the position for the term of one year.

Aside from these 48 members, the SU has two non-voting members. **The Speaker (Amanda Henry)** is voted on by the Council members, and holds dominion over the Council meetings,

making sure that things proceed in a semi-orderly manner and that none of the councillors try to stab each other while arguing over pizza toppings. The **SU's general manager (Bill Smith)** doesn't serve a term, but is a permanent employee of the organization. The GM is tasked with both the day-to-day affairs of the SU, as well as long-term planning.

## Graduate Students' Association

The Graduate Students' Association fulfills the same purpose for graduate students that the SU does for undergrads, except in a less prominent, more competent manner. The GSA Council is made up by one member elected from every graduate department and the five elected executive members: this brings the total GSA Council members up to 15. The GSA meets less frequently than does the SU, with one gathering scheduled every month of the year, and also has an annual general meeting in the spring.

**President—Julianna (Julie) Charchun**

**Vice President (Operations and Services)—Reza Azimi**

**Vice President (Academic)—Tooraj Freeman**

**Vice President (Communication)—Matthew Robertson**

**Vice President (Labour Relations)—Melissa Gajewski**

## General Faculties Council

The General Faculties Council is the main legislative body for the University of Alberta; it deals with all manners of student and academic matters. Everything from student space to exam deferral policies fall under the control of the GFC. 152 members sit on the GFC: 55 students and 97 others made up of administration officials, faculty members, and non-academic staff.

A number of the positions on the GFC are *ex officio*; the President of the University, the Registrar and the deans of the faculties are all members. So are the SU and GSA presidents. The other members of the GFC are elected by their peers: faculty members are elected by full-time academic staff while the student representatives are elected by students.

## Board of Governors

The Board of Governors holds sway over the financial matters of the University of Alberta. They make decisions on property and assets owned by the institution, and have control over things such as rent for U of A residences and parking rates. The BOG is also the body that sets the fees that students pay on courses and specializes in the ancient art of squeezing blood from a stone.

The Board of Governors is a smaller governance body, with 20 members from different areas of university life. The President and the Chancellor of the University both have a spot on the board. U of A alumni, non-academic staff, and members of the University's Senate are all also present. The GSA appoints one member to the board (generally the president of the organization), and the SU has two members: the President and the BOG Rep.

The BOG holds monthly meetings at 8am, a time designed to discourage as much student attendance as possible. On the other hand, free muffins! (Or, at the very least, muffins that you've paid for indirectly).

## The Chief Returning Officer: Referee, Cheerleader, Soccer Mom

The CRO post is a paid position that is charged with administering to the elections and by-elections for the GFC and SU. This year's CRO is **Craig Turner**.

The CRO receives all of the nomination packages from potential candidates and campaigns and makes sure that everyone running is told about the rules of the election. He's also charged with making sure that the rules are followed: if any complaints are received about a candidate or campaign, the CRO looks at the facts and issues a ruling on the matter. If someone has been found to have broken a bylaw, it's the CRO who sets the penalty. The penalty for failing to abide by the election rules can run anywhere from a simple warning to immediate disqualification.

Although not common, any ruling by the CRO can be appealed to the SU's ominously named Discipline, Interpretation and Enforcement (DIE) board. The proceedings of the DIE board are generally open to the student body to observe. The DIE board can decide to uphold the CRO's previous decision, overrule it, or make a change to the punishment. In keeping with its moniker, the DIE can, and will, hand out a penalty of painful death.

## What to watch out for

**The Powerplant Restaurant and Bar:** For those that have followed student politics at all for the past few years, it's common knowledge that this notorious watering hole continues to be a thorn in the SU's side. The bar has been operating in the red for years, and various business plans have tried to pull the campus landmark's finances back into the positive. While much ink and discussion has already been dedicated to the fate of the Plant already, it will almost certainly continue to be one of the major issues facing the Students' Union this year.

**Housing and Rent:** Rent prices in the province, and Edmonton especially, have recently made headlines as many call for rent controls to keep costs from getting out of hand. Rising costs and low vacancy rates in the city have blitzed students looking for a place to live while studying. Last year saw a 10-per-cent rate increase for students living on campus. Student housing looks to continue being a topic of discussion for the student government. The GSA has recently launched a campaign for more affordable student housing, and is circulating a petition demanding stronger rent controls from the provincial government.

**Councillor remuneration:** Before last year, SU councillors were volunteers; the ranks were filled by those with a pure interest in student governance and a love of endless oration. In the Spring of '06, however, Council stumbled over the fact that they could vote to pay themselves for their time.

The remuneration program was put in place to encourage better attendance during meetings and remove financial obstacles for students interested in running for a position. Remuneration has already come up during the summer sessions of SU Council with strong voices both in support and opposition, and there is no reason to believe that we've seen the last of the issue for the year.

the **SU**



Compiled by the Gateway's resident SU hack, **SCOTT LILWALL**

and why it matters to you