

Letter to Students

Dear Students,

My name is Emily Kimani, and I am excited to be running to be your next University of Alberta Students' Union (UASU) Vice President Operations and Finance. I am currently a fourth-year science student here at the U of A studying Immunology and Infection. I have to say that when I started my degree, I was not aware of how complex and intricate the immune system is; it truly is fascinating!

Over the past few years that I have been on campus, I have gotten involved in the campus community by volunteering for various events held by the UASU such as Week of Welcome, New Student Orientation, and Antifreeze. I also held a position as a General Events Crew member at the UASU, where I got to help facilitate events put on by UASU Events. Outside volunteering for UASU events, I have been a part of the University of Alberta Ambassadors' Program, which aims to show current and prospective students the UAlberta community.

This year, I served as a Science Councilor for the UASU Students' Council and the General Faculties Council, the highest academic decision making body at the UofA. I served in these positions because opportunities for undergraduate students need to be simple and accessible, I wanted to see better mental health and wellness initiatives for students, and I wanted the voices of students to be heard. While serving on Students' Council, I had the opportunity to sit on the Sustainability and Capital Fund Committee where we adjudicated projects in relation to sustainability and decided which projects would receive funding. Being on this committee has taught me the importance of sustainability on our campuses.

Taking part in student governance and volunteering around campus has taught me a lot. I've learned the value of good communication and relationships, I've learned that students need to be represented in terms of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusivity, I've learned that to be successful in academics means prioritizing mental health and wellness, and I've also learned the importance of the student perspective. That is why I believe that student governance is so important. It ensures that the student perspective and the student voice isn't overlooked or forgotten. That is why I will advocate for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusivity and ensure that the Students' Union represents its membership. I will advocate for mental health and wellness initiatives across campuses to ensure that students feel supported, especially now with online classes and the challenges associated with being a student right now. I will work to build and foster relationships across campuses because students should not feel neglected or ignored. Above all, I will work hard to ensure that the student perspective is not overlooked.

I hope to have your support and vote for me, March 3rd and 4th, to be your next VP Operations and Finance.

Sincerely,

Emily

Role of VP Operations and Finance

You might be asking, what does a VP Operations and Finance do exactly?

The Vice-President Operations & Finance oversees the UASU's \$11 million annual budget and is responsible for the management, enhancement, and operations at the SU's many businesses, including Dewey's, Room at the Top, the Daily Grind, SUBprint and more. This position also oversees the operation of the Students' Union Building and sits on a variety of committees and boards. The VP Operations and Finance also advocates on issues regarding student fees and student services.

Treaty Acknowledgement

With gratitude and respect, I wish to acknowledge that I am campaigning from Treaty 6 territory, the ancestral space of the Papaschase Cree, and the traditional territory of Blackfoot, Cree, Dene, Nakoda Sioux, Saulteaux, and Metis Nation Peoples. I am grateful to the Indigenous Peoples who have paved the way and welcomed me into their beautiful lands. I hope that throughout my term I will do my part in the reconciliation and decolonization on our campus.

Platform Summary

Optimizing Businesses and Services

Revenue from the Students' Union fund student services. My goal is for our businesses to optimize their revenue so that more profits go into funding student services. Optimizing revenue is especially important during the next few years because our businesses were hit hard by COVID-19. I want us to recover from that hit and come back strong. If businesses win, students win.

- SUTV and Student handbooks
- Myer Horowitz Theatre Renovation

Dedicated Fee Units

Services should be given the opportunity to demonstrate their value to students and illustrate the ways in which they take responsibility for student fees so that students know what services are available to them and understand the fees they pay.

Working Towards a Sustainable Students' Union

- Encourage sustainable practices by food vendors in SUB.
- Bulk Foods in SUB Mart
- Environmental improvements made by the Theatre renovation.

Health and Wellness

Our health and wellness can significantly impact our academic success. It is important that the health and wellness of students are prioritized, especially now with online classes, so that students are empowered and given the tools to thrive and reach their academic goals.

- EmpowerMe
- Use of Perks to Promote Mental health
- Period Poverty

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusivity at the Students' Union

It is crucial that the Students' Union represents the diversity in its membership so that the Students' Union can be a diverse and inclusive community; where students feel heard and represented.

- ARRC Recommendations
- Getting a Space for International Students (International Students Hub)
- Myer Horowitz Theatre Renovation
- Promoting diversity in SU events and services
- Recognizing Black History Month at the Students' Union

Communication and Relationship Building in our Campus Community

This past year we have all learnt the value of community and relationships. It is crucial that we foster relationships across our campuses so that students, across our campuses, do not feel neglected by Students' Union.

- Making sure that services are available across U of A campuses
- Make sure that our services are available in multiple languages.

The Platform

Optimizing Businesses and Services

Why?

Revenue from the Students' Union fund student services. My goal is for our businesses to optimize their revenue so that more profits go into funding student services. Optimizing revenue is especially important during the next few years because our businesses were hit hard by COVID-19; I want us to recover from that hit and come back strong. If businesses win, students win.

Many businesses, including those at the Students' Union, could not operate at their full potential due to the COVID-19 outbreak and the following restrictions. Thus, it is essential to optimize revenue in the upcoming year. We must look at different avenues of revenue generation to maximize our profits. Why is revenue generation important? So that students do not lose services provided by the Students Union and so that students can get the most of their fees.

SUTV and Student handbooks

Expanding our SUTV and Student handbooks to optimize profits is a creative way to generate non-student fee revenue.

SUTV is a business run and operated by the Students' Union to provide university and external businesses advertising. Student handbooks have also been a medium used to advertise businesses on and off-campus. Both services have generated a significant source of revenue for the Students' Union. There is an opportunity to expand our advertising services by patterning with other universities across Canada to reach a broader range of businesses. As our Students' Union services recover from the hit of COVID-19, it is essential to think of creative avenues for revenue generation so that more profits can go back to student services!

Myer Horowitz Theatre Renovation

Last year, students voted to approve the Sustainability and Capital Fund which aims to fund projects that increase and promote sustainability across campus. The first project funded by the Sustainability and Capital Fund is the Myer Horowitz Theatre renovation that was approved and passed by the Students' Council this year.

Renovating the Theatre means an opportunity to generate more non-student revenue by renting out the renovated space to students and external events, as well as giving us the opportunity to expand our catering services.

Economic Sustainability

Economic sustainability refers to implementing long-term initiatives that will promote economic growth. In addition to expanding SUTV and student handbooks, the theatre renovation will be a source of economic growth; which means more profits going into funding student services. The renovation of the theatre will create an updated and enjoyable space that we can rent out to external events such as dance recitals and weddings, which before COVID-19, generated a lot of revenue. Students and student groups can also use the renovated theatre. I have been in conversation with staff at the Students' Union to ensure that the renovation will be a space that students can use and enjoy.

Dedicated Fee Units

Why?

Services should be given the opportunity to demonstrate their value to students and illustrate the ways in which they take responsibility for student fees so that students know what services are available to them and understand the fees they pay.

In addition to the membership fees that students pay towards the Students' Union, which help fund exceptional student services like the Peer Support Center, students also pay Dedicated Fee Units (DFUs) that go towards various third-party organizations. Currently, there are eight organizations that receive funding as DFUs. These third-party organizations have a lot to do. Not only do they have an entire service to run and ensure that they provide a quality service, but they are also responsible for staff, some of them being student staff, and various other things. If elected, I will support DFUs in promoting their value to students and demonstrating how they are responsible for student fees in an active way. Students can recognize the value they are getting in our services and give feedback regularly. Therefore, students can be informed and know the benefits that they can and understand the fees they pay for because student fees represent the services students receive. Creating dialog between students and DFUs ensures that students know what they are paying for is giving them value and that their money is being used responsibly in a more consistent manner.

Working Towards a Sustainable Students' Union

Why?

When people think about sustainability, they usually think about environmental sustainability, such as waste reduction and conservation of energy, both crucial issues. Along with environmental sustainability, there is economic sustainability, which looks at ways to make revenue, and social sustainability, aiming to increase wellness. I care about all three aspects of sustainability and will promote all three in SUB and at the Students' Union.

Encourage Sustainable Practices by Food Vendors in SUB.

The Daily Grind is the local coffee spot at the Students' Union. Most of its operation is sustainable. The Daily Grind uses ethically sourced coffee, and their cups are compostable, including the plastic lid. But one thing that remains is the plastic wrap around their food items. You might be thinking, why should I care if one croissant is wrapped in plastic? Plastic wrap contributes to plastic pollution because it is hard to recycle and is made of potentially harmful materials¹. If elected, I will work to find a more sustainable form of packaging for the daily grind. Additionally, I will work towards ensuring the use of sustainable materials such as paper straws and paper packaging by food vendors in SUB.

Bulk Foods in SUB Mart

Provide a way to promote waste reduction amongst students in SUB and provide students eco-friendly food options.

The idea is to offer healthy, convenient food without producing much waste. This initiative is a simple yet effective way to promote and implement waste reduction at the Students' Union. If elected, I will push for a

¹ Thompson, R. C., Moore, C. J., vom Saal, F. S., & Swan, S. H. (2009). Plastics, the environment and human health: current consensus and future trends. Philosophical transactions of the Royal Society of London. Series B, Biological sciences, 364(1526), 2153–2166.

bulk foods initiative in SUBmart to offer a healthier, eco-friendly food option. To ensure that this initiative is as waste-free as possible, students can bring their jars, reusable bags, and containers. To ensure that all students have access to this initiative, a jar drive will be run to bring in their empty jars where they will be sanitized and placed in SUBmart for students to use for their bulk foods. We all have empty pasta jars lying around, and now they can be put to good use!

Environmental improvements made by the Theatre renovation.

The Theatre renovation presents the opportunity to promote environmental sustainability in SUB and the Students' Union and aid in our goal to reach carbon neutrality.

Renovating the theater means putting photovoltaics on the roof, switching over to LED lights, improving the control systems, updating the heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) system, and updating the washrooms; improvements that will lead to increased energy and water efficiency in SUB. Overall the theatre renovation will increase environmental sustainability in SUB and aid in our goal to reach carbon neutrality. If elected, I will oversee this project and ensure that these changes are made and implemented in the Theatre.

Health and Wellness

Why?

As students, we all have various academic goals we strive to achieve. In the process of achieving those goals, sometimes we may neglect our mental, physical, emotional, spiritual and social wellness. Our health and wellness can significantly impact our academic success². It is important that the health and wellness of students are prioritized, especially now with online classes, so that students are empowered and given the tools to thrive and reach their academic goals.

EmpowerMe

EmpowerMe is a mental health and wellness service that provides support to students across campuses. I want to ensure that EmpowerMe is renewed and continues to be available to students because it is an affordable resource that can be very beneficial to students.

Covered by the SU Health and Dental Plan, EmpowerMe is an affordable and highly accessible mental health and wellness service that supports students by providing on-campus and Student Care mental health and wellness resources. EmpowerMe connects students with qualified counsellors, consultants, and life coaches to give support to students that may be dealing with anything from stress and anxiety to providing career counselling. EmpowerMe is available to students through their Health Plan and is accessible anytime on any day in-person, through an online meeting, or phone calls. EmpowerMe is multilingual and offered in 22 countries provided outside of Canada, which means that both international students and students who speak various languages have full access to this program if in need of support. The EmpowerMe program must be renewed each year to remain covered by the SU Health and Dental Plan. If elected, I will ensure the renewal of EmpowerMe through the SU Health and Dental Plan to provide accessible mental health and wellness services for students. Further, I will ensure that EmpowerMe is promoted and advertised so that students are aware of the resources available to them.

Use of UASU Perks to Promote Mental health

Students do not always realize what mental health services are available to them. Using UASU Perks is a creative way to promote mental health using a popular platform to get the message out to students.

² Baldwin, D. R., Towler, K., Oliver, M. D., & Datta, S. (2017). An examination of college student wellness: A research and liberal arts perspective. *Health Psychology Open*.

Being a student myself, I understand that students have hectic schedules. There are exams to write, assignments to hand-in, labs to finish, and deadlines to meet. During the business of it all, and as a consequence, we leave our mental health off to the sidelines. We live in an environment that tells us that we should always be “on your grind,” but being on your grind shouldn’t mean that your mental health is ignored. As VP Operations and Finance, I will be a strong advocate for improved mental health and wellness initiatives which are more readily available to students by using existing platforms such as UASU perks. Further, I will ensure that the Peer Support Centre is advertised to students using Perks.

Period Poverty

Advocating for this initiative is taking a step towards equity on campus. Finding a consistent source of external funding means that dispensers can be put up across campus without any additional cost to students.

The University used to have free menstrual products on campus, but unfortunately could not sustain it and got rid of them. Period Poverty is an important initiative because, along with promoting Equity, diversity, and inclusivity on our campus, it gives students a financial break. If elected, I will work towards securing a consistent funding source to put up dispensers containing free menstrual products in SUB. Once successful, I will push to expand this initiative across campus by advocating for more dispensers in various buildings, including those on Augustana and Campus St. Jean.

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusivity at the Students’ Union

Why?

It is crucial that the Students’ Union represents the diversity in its membership so that the Students’ Union can be a diverse and inclusive community; where students feel heard and represented.

ARRC Recommendations

It is important that the space we occupy here on Treaty Six territory is included in striving toward reconciliation with the Indigenous peoples of this land, and the students that represent them on campus.

- A. As stated in the Aboriginal Relations & Reconciliation Committee Recommendations, I will work with the Aboriginal Students’ Council to ensure that an Aboriginal Awareness Week is put into place. This is an initiative that I am excited to advocate for.
- B. Ensure that the SCF Green Fund projects approved by the Sustainability and Capital Fund committee reflect values of Indigenous culture and ensure that any project that aims to explicitly appropriate Indigenous culture does not receive funding. Further, I will ensure that the Green Fund is advertised to Indigenous students.

Getting a Space for International Students (International Students Hub)

The International Students Hub will be more than just an office space; it’s a place where students can gather and be near to each other to foster relationships and unity.

I will work with the International Students’ Association (ISA) members to ensure that the ISA gets a permanent space in SUB. This space will not be used for the ISA council but all international students. International students across campuses will have access to this space.

Recognizing Black History Month at the Students' Union

This year, the university officially recognized Black History Month (BHM). The recognition of BHM from the university is a step towards creating and paving the way for black students and faculty to make strides, which is very important to me being a black student. Unfortunately, BHM is not officially recognized by the Students' Union. Therefore, If elected, I will push for the recognition and celebration of BHM at the Students' Union by highlighting the stories and works of past and present students and faculty during the month of February. Further, I will work alongside the Black Students' Association to ensure success of this initiative.

Promoting diversity in UASU Events and Services

I will work with SUB services to ensure that volunteers and staff at UASU events reflect the Students' Union's membership and community. Once this proved to be successful, I will work alongside the general manager to ensure that staff will also reflect diversity.

Myer Horowitz Theatre Renovation

The Theatre renovation presents the opportunity to promote social sustainability in SUB and the Students' Union.

Social Sustainability

Renovating the theatre means a diverse and inclusive space on campus by integrating gender-neutral wash-rooms, accessibility improvements, and better and more varied programming. A second elevator will also be built with the renovation, we all know that our current elevator is in desperate need of some TLC. The Theatre is one of the non-academic spaces that are still available on campus. Students need a space to escape and de-stress after a busy day full of classes and assignments. We can improve SUB's social sustainability from the new lounge space built in the theatre's lower level to increase student events.

Communication and Relationship Building in our Campus Community

Why?

This past year we have all learnt the value of community and relationships. It is crucial that we foster relationships across our campuses so that students do not feel neglected by the Students' Union.

Making Sure that Services are Available Across U of A Campuses

I want to build and foster relationships between student leaders representing Campus Saint Jean and Augustana campuses so that students across campuses are best represented and supported.

I will make sure that CSJ and Augustana feel supported by the Students' Union by meeting with them once a month.

I will work alongside the North campus to ensure that services are not centralized to the north campus alone, but are available to all campuses. If a service cannot be available in-person, I will ensure that they are available online or in various ways.

Making Sure that Our Services are Available in Multiple Languages

Students should not have any barriers to accessing our services and receiving quality service.

I will work with the Students' Union services, such as the Peer Support Center and Info link, to work towards having services available in multiple languages. Students should feel comfortable communicating with our team and volunteers.

Most of our website is only available in English, which can be a barrier for students whose first language is not English. If elected, I will ensure that most of our Students' Union website, especially our services, are translated into French.