



PICK ME, PICK ME Bryant Lukes (left) and Bobby Samuel are squaring off to represent students' academic issues.

VPA candidates want to help improve the student experience

JOHN KMECH
News Staff

In this year's Students' Union election, there are two candidates running for the position of Vice President (Academic): Bryant Lukes, and Bobby Samuel, current University of Alberta Science Undergraduate Society (UASUS) President.

1 What are the most crucial issues currently affecting the quality of undergraduate education?

Bryant Lukes: Tuition costs, definitely. There's a gap between the rich and the poor in the entire country and in the city, and we need to compensate for that in education. We need to make it so that people who can't afford education can get that education, and people who can afford it are still paying.

Bobby Samuel: I think the main one that we have to look at is teaching, essentially. Right now, there aren't really any major things to improve teaching. There's an idea to house the University Student Services in the Teaching-Learning Institute. But there's no concrete idea about teaching, about improving the undergraduate experience. Going back to my platform, the one thing I want to do to improve teaching here at the U of A. [For example], I think student evaluations are a good marker for how well professors are performing and able to convey various concepts about how well they teach to us. By using those student evaluations and instituting a minimum standard [for professors to score] four out of five, we would definitely see the level of teaching improve. Instead of us just going through the motions, the usual classroom stuff, we'd be more actively engaged and having an education that inspires us.

2 How should the University balance the focus on world-class research with the demands for better teaching from a growing student population?

Lukes: I think that we need to focus on undergraduate teaching and make sure that the young people growing up can be assimilated into society well. That's my number one priority. Not so much on the research side, but there are important issues that need to be addressed on the research side, like climate change.

Samuel: That's a very tough question. At the University's heart, there are two purposes: the creation of knowledge through research and the dissemination of knowledge through teaching. For that balance to be achieved, we have to start putting the focus back on teaching and on the undergraduate experience. I think one of the ways to do that is to start with the teaching portfolio. Another way we can reinvigorate the undergraduate experience is to start giving academic credit for involvement in student groups. Already Community Service Learning gives credit for those who volunteer—I think it's like 20 hours—over a semester. I think we [should] extend that, not just from the community groups that Community Service Learning selects, but also to student groups.

3 The Faculty of Arts recently removed math and science requirements from their admission policy. What are your thoughts on this and what other current enrolment issues need to be addressed?

Lukes: I think that the math and science requirements are a good thing for high school. I certainly enjoyed taking math and science courses in Grade 12. I think it was a good thing [the requirements] were there to begin with. I definitely don't agree with that move. As well, I am recommending that we implement mandatory climate change education as part of the curriculum.

Samuel: Math and science, I think, are very core concepts in developing a well-rounded student, especially when it comes to things such as sociology, where so much of it is math derived. Removing those options, at the same time, can be beneficial in that it opens doors for students to come to university. Those students who may not be that mathematically or scientifically inclined can still come and get a degree in the Faculty of Arts. Lower science options are limiting, but I think at the same time, they will benefit from that.

I guess with regards to the admissions policy as a whole, I think we need to take a step back and look at the faculty-to-student ratio. Right now, University-wide, it's 24-to-one, and speaking from my own experience as UASUS President, it was 20-to-one in the Faculty of Science. Compare that with ten years ago when it was like 13-

to-one. I think we need to address that prior to addressing enrolment. I think we need to possibly keep enrolment steady and start increasing the amount of professors on campus. Once again, I'd have to look at the population statistics and populations demographics to come up with a concrete answer, but I think what we have to start looking at is whether we should increase enrolment or whether we should be increasing the amount of professors before we start opening the flood gates and taking in as many students as possible.

4 In November, the University unveiled their Academic Plan for the next five years. What shortcomings did you see in the plan and how will you overcome them to best benefit students?

Lukes: I haven't seen the plan.

Samuel: One of the shortcomings for the Academic Plan is, once again, going back to teaching. There really isn't a plan—not just for teaching—but an overall plan for the undergraduate experience. Like I said before, to improve the undergraduate experience, I think we need to reward involvement by giving academic credit to student groups, we need to get serious about teaching and create that teaching-intensive culture just like the research-intensive culture we have available to us. Speaking on other stuff, I think we should be utilizing our technology more. I mean, it discusses a transformative organization in "Dare to Discover" and "Dare to Deliver," but in terms of actual concrete transformative organization, it doesn't mention technology in there and how it plays a part in our education. I think we should start using technology to enhance our education, to offer recordable and downloadable lectures over the Internet.

5 In five minutes or less, write a haiku that tells the student population why you should be elected.

Lukes:
The University
Is the future of you and
Everything else.

Samuel:
Bobby Samuel
Vote VP Academic
He is very nice!

GOLDEN BEARS & PANDAS

Pandas Hockey Canada West Final vs. Manitoba Bisons

Friday & Saturday, March 2 & 3 @ 3:00pm
Sunday, March 4 @ 3:00pm *If necessary
Clare Drake Arena

Golden Bears Hockey Canada West Semi-Final vs. UBC Thunderbirds

Friday & Saturday, March 2 & 3 @ 7:30pm
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STUDENTS' COUNCIL & GFC NOMINATIONS ARE OPEN

Nomination packages are now available for Students' Council and General Faculties Council Students' Council is the highest governing body of the Students' Union, and General Faculties Council is the highest governing academic body of the University.

THE FOLLOWING POSITIONS ARE AVAILABLE:

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| Agriculture, Forestry, and Home Economics 2 SU Seats 2 GFC Seats | Native Studies 1 SU Seat 1 GFC Seat |
| Arts 8 SU Seats 8 GFC Seats | Nursing 2 SU Seats 2 GFC Seats |
| Business 3 SU Seats 3 GFC Seats | Open Studies 2 SU Seat |
| Education 4 SU Seats 4 GFC Seats | Physical Education and Recreation 1 SU Seat 1 GFC Seat |
| Engineering 5 SU Seats 4 GFC Seats | Pharmacy 1 SU Seat 1 GFC Seat |
| Law 1 SU Seat 1 GFC Seat | Faculte St. Jean 1 SU Seat 1 GFC Seat |
| Medicine and Dentistry 1 SU Seat 2 GFC Seats | Science 9 SU Seats 8 GFC Seats |

To download a Nomination Package or find out more about these positions, please visit the Elections Website or the Chief Returning Officer (Room 3 – 02K SUB)

THE NOMINATION DEADLINE IS TUESDAY, MARCH 13 @ 17:00

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