



talk to students is during elections, and even then it's a very one-way conversation."

Indeed, if we changed the name and the picture, Dollansky could very well be any number of VPX candidates from the past few years.

"He's very stay the course. I'm not seeing anything novel here," notes Jones.

"Status quo isn't so bad in the [VPX portfolio]. One of the problems the SU seems to have is that every year we change the direction, the image, everything about the way we do lobbying," Kirkham counters.

In general, Dollansky's point about a rural focus is well taken, especially in the new Ed Stelmach government, but he'll also need to have an eye to upcoming elections beyond the SU.

"Now is the year for elections—municipally, federally and provincially—where all the moons are aligned," Lettner says. "[A VPX] needs to pick something, flesh it out and run with it the entire way."

And it does seem like Dollansky has this in his radar.

Meanwhile, Butz finds Dollansky's stance on tuition lacking. "There's this focus on reducing tuition, but no one really ever takes dramatic steps, like saying it should be nominal, or cut to a third, or to zero," he says, adding that the tuition ball is in our court, and so it's our turn to push the government ensure that tuition isn't an elitist privilege.

While Jones disagrees with Butz on lowering tuition versus increasing scholarships and bursaries, he does agree that what's needed is a concrete proposal: year-to-year changes in tuition policy and direction must be hugely frustrating for the government, and so the VPX will need to survey what's gone before in order to chart a course that will be progressive but not absolutely revolutionary. They can't unilaterally shove a "War on Tuition" down Steady Eddie's throat; but at the same time, they should be open to more radical forms of protest.

Dollansky certainly seems to have a strong head on his shoulders and will probably be able to present himself to government in a professional way while still representing students. Barer, though, was unimpressed by Dollansky's stance on the issue of joining a federal lobbying group like CFS or CASA, and his comment that he'll "look into it but probably do nothing." And Kirkham reminds us that there's nothing overly spectacular in his platform.

In tune with this, Lettner offers a general comment about the two unopposed candidates. "People should see campaigning as a way to come up with ideas and push them, get them out there, and set the stage for the work they're going to do as opposed to opting for the latest provincial PC election platform where it was just like, let's not do anything because they'll just forget and vote us in anyway. Don't take that style of course. Both these candidates had a bigger chance to run with it, especially because they were unopposed," he says.

Soundwave, meanwhile, isn't really funny at all, his hilariously on-point Horowitz performance notwithstanding. Though as Taylor notes, it does seem that the Yusuf family has a strange Transformers fetish. "Maybe they were suckled at the teat of Optimus Prime," he offers.

The Verdict: Unanimous
Dollansky

Vice-President Academic

"Every year it's blatantly obvious who the best candidate is for this race, and this year is probably the most obvious out of any I've seen in the past five," Kirkham says. (And we must keep in mind that for the last two years, VPA candidates have run acclaimed.)

Bobby Samuel has good ideas, has clearly talked to people about what should be in his campaign and is aware of the Academic Plan—which is still important, even if it is vague and idealistic. Meanwhile, we'd rather see a by-election than see Bryant Lukes in office. His campaign is called "abysmal and atrocious" by Kirkham, a sentiment echoed almost unanimously around the room.

Even Taylor, who usually has a soft spot for those who run for the SU from outside of its inner clique, as they are often more willing to take a stand on things that actually affect students, agrees. VPA is the one position where knowing the intricacies of the system is indispensable, as you need to know how to manipulate the University's bureaucracy to students' advantage. And there's no way Lukes would be able to handle and work with the SU Administration.

"For Bryant Lukes it would be Mount Everest,"

"The whole notion of financing student groups through business profits is utterly flawed. It doesn't recognize the basic laws of capitalism, which is that businesses turn over different profits from year to year."

Taylor says, whereas Samuel focuses on specific platform points, and comes off as very knowledgeable and prepared. He has the potential to get things done in the vein of strong VPAs like Amanda Henry and Janet Lo.

And as Butz points out, even in regards to Lukes' so-called crux issue—climate change—Samuel has brought up the Community Service Learning program (though, as Barer points out, he doesn't quite understand the program and what the VPA's relationship to it might be), which has the potential to forward environmental concerns and student empowerment at the same time.

"As much as I, as someone from APIRG, might be expected to support someone with an environmental platform, I think you really need to talk about the politics of empowerment. You can't just educate society towards a better future. It doesn't work that way," Butz says, noting that CSL seems like something that could be used to promote the environment in a much more effective way.

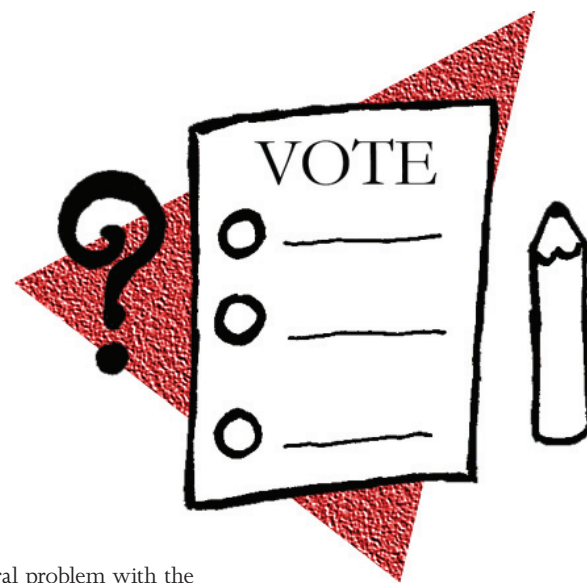
I could never justify a vote for what [Lukes is] talking about," says Lettner. "He seems certifiably nuts. If you print something like [his flyers] and say, 'Hey, I'm running for VPA,' then there's no possible way that a student should vote for you." There's no place for environmental concerns in the platform of a Vice-President (Academic).

In the end, I think our collective sentiment is summed up by the fact that, at last Thursday's SUB forum, Kirkham was convinced that Lukes was a joke candidate.

The Verdict: Unanimous
Samuel

Vice-President (Operations and Finance)

As Jones says, the problem with VPOF is that anyone who takes the position ends up hating their job and hating their life.



"In a sense, it's a structural problem with the portfolio, as people look at the job from the outside and say, 'Hey, I get to affect the operations and the finances of the Students' Union,'" Jones says, noting sarcastically that all the VPOF can really do is sign cheques.

"I'm sort of glad the job is depressing and that they'll be stopped in their tracks," Butz adds. "The faster they quit the better, because the whole notion of financing student groups through business profits is utterly flawed. It doesn't recognize the basic laws of capitalism, which is that businesses turn over different profits from year to year."

The notion that groups such as APIRG or the Gateway would be funded by things like Powerplant profits is scary indeed, considering the turn around we've seen in recent years. And yet, both candidates have a strong focus on reducing fees and making cuts, when, as Lettner points out, the U of A's student fees are some of the lowest in the country.

The fact that Gamble seems to see the job as resumé padding doesn't bode well, either. "That disqualifies him right away," Prusakowski says. "They both have no concept of what the job entails. None of the Above should take this race, hands down."

And as we peruse their Gateway interviews and handouts, it becomes clear that neither candidate is satisfactory in anyway.

Butz points to a "fetishization of profits" within the VPOF portfolio, a sense that somehow these candidates see a reduction student fees as a substitute for reducing tuition. On the contrary, we have no problem with the fee structure, as long as the services provided are worthwhile. It's difficult to justify the Powerplant's loss of over \$200 000 when nobody is using the service, but if it was a space that students enjoyed, some losses would be completely acceptable.

As it stands, nobody feels comfortable supporting either candidate over NOTA, though we're divided on who would be the lesser of two evils. Neither candidate has any real idea what the job entails. They're trapped at two poles: their ideas are completely petty or entirely nebulous—deserving of neither our attention nor our vote.

With that in mind, we've outlined what we would like to see in an acceptable VPOF candidate (as a dream candidate would, I think, be too much to ask). At base, they would need to have a long-term, concrete plan. Something that's ambitious but also realistic. Looking at the expansion of SUB, for example, something that will be a big issue in five-year's time. Or even a realistic approach to the 'Plant, that might involve shutting the place down. Surely there are some services that the SU doesn't currently provide. Or perhaps there are some that have outlived their usefulness? Maybe the VPOF could spend some time assessing and criticizing the University's own budget. Above all else, a successful VPOF candidate has to lose the attitude. Being a member of the Executive means playing as a team to serve students, not padding a resumé or arguing petty details. Regardless, at the moment we'd be voting for someone who we thought had the least probability of burning down the house—which, by all accounts, is a poor expression of democracy.

The Verdict: We're fucked
NOTA (Unanimous, but split on the lesser of two evils; however, Gamble takes the edge)