COUNCIL FORUM

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> "BearTracks sucks, let's face it.
>
> **BOBBY SAMUEL**
> VP Academic
> *on the merits of the University's online registration system*

Students' Council meets every second Tuesday in the Council Chambers in University Hall at 6pm. Council meetings are open to all students. The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, 12 June.

AMBASSADOR FUND AIMS TO ALLEVIATE TRAVEL TROUBLES

University of Alberta student Chris Jones made a presentation to Council on 29 May regarding the formation of the Ambassador Fund—essentially a dedicated fee unit (DFU) that would support student groups that travel outside of the University.

The aim of the fund would be to help subsidize travel expenses and to make it easier for groups such as Engineers Without Borders, U of A Model UN Club, and the Debate Society—among others—to represent the U of A across Canada in what Jones described as "a positive light."

According to Jones, the U of A currently offers very little support to offset these costs.

"You can see how the amount of money a student has to fork out in order to participate in activities that are integral to student life on campus [can] really be disabling and crippling," Jones said.

Jones noted that the U of A is lacking behind other comparable universities in supporting student groups, a fact that he couldn't readily explain but said may be a result of the severe budget cuts that took place in the mid-'90s.

Jones said he wasn't willing to ask for a specific amount of money for a DFU to support the fund, instead leaving it in the hands of Council to decide. However, he was willing to offer a suggestion.

"I think it makes some sense to be comparable to the legacy fund—that's about $2.60 per student per term."

BEARSCAT BALANCES ON BRINK

BearScat creator and U of A computing science graduate Steve Kirkham presented to Council in an effort to receive financial support from the SU for the popular online registration system.

Kirkham's presentation showed how much traffic his four-year-old scheduling and registration alternative to BearTracks receives from the student body. The site had 10 million hits this past academic year, up from 3 million in 2003/04. It also served approximately 15 000 unique users during the winter 2007 semester.

However, increased usage, a series of hardware setbacks, and BearScat's own impending upgrade have raised doubts concerning BearScat's sustainability.

Kirkham explained that without funding for the necessary upgrades, BearScat would become almost completely unusable come September—a situation he regarded as a huge disadvantage to students.

"I think it's an important service," Kirkham said. "[And] I'm pretty sure students think it's an important service, seeing as how more and more of them are continuing to use it."

He urged Council to provide the necessary funding for BearScat by 31 August, whether it be through a direct investment in the program or the establishment of a DFU.

However, Vice-President (Academic) Bobby Samuel explained that while the SU believes BearScat is a very important service for students, because undergraduate registration isn't in the purview of Students' Council, it will only advocate to the University to support the system.

Kirkham isn't overly confident this course of action will provide the necessary help.

"The Students' Union has been trying to get funding [for BearTracks] from the University for the last four years," he argued. "I don't see what's going to change over the next three months."

With the sustainability of BearScat hinging on developments made over the summer months, Kirkham said he didn't want to make any threats regarding the future of the system. However, he did reiterate that without proper funding, students would be unable to get the benefits of what he argues is a simpler, more efficient registration system come September.

"At the end of the day, it saves stress and time," Kirkham explained. "If you're a new student at this University and have to click through the horrendously designed course listings on BearTracks, write down with a pen and paper on that bloody sheet they hand out, and then having to type in those five-digit course numbers—and even trying to figure out if there's an enrollment section in a lab and what five-digit number you need to type in first—you're going through a huge amount of time and stress and worry to try and do it when BearScat lets you do it with the click of a button."

QUESTION PERIOD

Speaker Amanda Henry was asked about how councillor retreat went the weekend prior to the meeting. Henry explained that discussions regarding DFUs, political policies, the history of the SU, a crash course in Robert's Rules of Order, and the holding of a mock Council meeting all took place. Henry congratulated those councillors that attended for now officially being a "hacks."

STREETERS

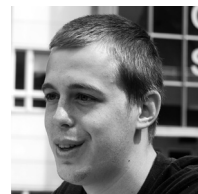CBC News has recently created a group on Facebook to compile wishes for Canada's 140 birthday.

Of the current top three wishes—"Abolish Abortion in Canada," "For a spiritual revival in our nation"and "I wish that Canada would remain pro-choice"—which would you choose?

Chris Proulx
Engineering II

Lacey Labby
Anthropology
Alumna

Paul Barrette
Grad Studies II

Haley Carlson
Chemistry
Alumna

Probably "make abortion illegal." I'm Catholic myself, and I don't believe in the thing. I don't think killing babies is very good.

Pro-choice. First things first: I don't think abortions should ever be illegal. I think that women have rights. It brings up all those questions about women being raped, [or] having to raise a child when [it doesn't] have a father—I don't think that the options should be removed.

I would choose keeping Canada pro-choice. I think it's a tricky issue; I think the choice should only be allowed under certain conditions, but [I choose that one] because I just don't like the other two as much. Making Canada more spiritual, well that's kind of a shady goal, and making [abortion] illegal, I don't like that idea.

Probably number three because the other two are a little more closed-minded. I guess a spiritual revolution isn't so horrid, but people can take their own paths if they want to be spiritual. Whereas, I think pro-choice is do what you want; it's not right; it's not wrong; it's just your choice. And the first one … that's completely not my political stance.

Compiled and photographed by Natalie Climenhaga and Ryan Heise