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Prez hopefuls aim for holistic approach to student politics

THE PRESIDENT OF THE STUDENTS' Union is responsible for representing students within the University as well as the community at large. They guide the overall policy and operational direction of the SU during their term in office.

Compiled by Cody Civiero

1 As SU president, how would you help students to combat rising tuition fees?

Dustin Miller: For five years, I've been attending the University. Our Students' Union has been operating as a student government, both within the executive and within the minds of the students. The Student's Union is an organization that requires the full interaction of three parts: a voice, a body, and a head. Our Students' Union has been ensured a voice by the hard work of the Students' Union of previous generations. Not only is the Students' Union a legally required organization on campus, [but] venues such as our seats on the Board of Governors and the open paths of communication we enjoy with all levels of government today ensure that our voice is heard.

However, the demands of that voice don't need to be listened to if that voice isn't supported by a united student body, and that is the largest problem our campus faces today. When our executives represent an absent body, their demands are reduced to appeals, and the government and the Board of Governors don't need to implement any of these ideas because the demands remain empty.

The third and most important aspect is the head: the Students' Union Executive. This is an area where our Students' Union could really use some strengthening. The Students' Union Executive is responsible for ensuring that the voice of the students is heard, responsible for uniting the student body and leading them to success

on those issues. As Students' Union president, I will be the leader with the vision to unite the voice and body of our Students' Union to effectively reform tuition policy in Alberta.

Janelle Morin: Affordability is a major issue for students, not just with tuition, but also with rising rent costs for students and with academic resource costs. We need to employ strategic advocacy to ensure that we are using our partnerships to effectively lobby the government and the University. We need to ensure that we are lobbying at all levels—with the provincial government but also at the federal and municipal levels. We also need to ensure that we aren't compromising our quality of education through this affordability.

Bobby Samuel: To combat tuition increases is to address the affordability of the postsecondary education. Tuition is the largest single cost that undergraduates will encounter during their postsecondary education, and it makes sense, in order to address affordability, to reduce tuition. I feel that education is a public good worthy of investment from the government of Alberta, and it stimulates the economy and creates a stronger Alberta. However, we also have to realize that, as it stands right now, we've seen tuition increases occur for the last 17 years, and one of the things that I really want to do is allocate a certain percentage of that tuition increase to needs-based bursaries. I think if we were to restore funding to these bursaries—which have been under-funded in recent years—that it would increase the affordability of education and therefore minimize the impact that a tuition increase would have.

Sheldon Tibbo: Tuition actually hasn't gone up. If you look at your Beartracks and look at your tax receipts, from

2004 to now it's gone up \$10. So, I'm not sure where we are getting the impression that tuition is rising from, but it is still important to advocate for lower tuition. At the same time, we have to understand why it is being raised, which is a more important question to ask.

2 Besides tuition, what is the most important issue currently affecting students, and how would you address it?

Miller: The most important issue that the campus faces is community. We see examples of that in the Powerplant and the recent developments with the Lister Hall Students' Association. As a result of the absence of community on campus, many students are disinterested in some of the services we are providing.

The Powerplant is a great example of this: as the quality of the service and the quality of the food degraded over the course of the Powerplant's lifetime, students became incredibly disinterested in using that facility, and with an absence of community on campus, there's no motivation for students to be actively engaging with the facilities of the Students' Union.

I bring up the recent developments with LHSA because I think that Lister is a good example of community for the campus. They have a lot of incredibly interactive programs that the students there are interested in and participate in, and, as such, when they need to rally around a cause, they have proven themselves to be equal to the task. When Residence Services decided to take their voting procedures away from them, they stood up against that decision. We need to find a way to expand on the community of Lister Hall so that the rest of the campus has that kind of unity, and as a result, we're going to see services like the Powerplant be more successful in the future.

"We need to employ strategic advocacy to ensure that we are using our partnerships to effectively lobby the government and the University."

JANELLE MORIN

"I'd say that the primary issue for students now is the Students' Union itself and how we don't actually portray our ideas or what we do."

SHELDON TIBBO

