

Quality of instruction the focus for VP (Academic)

The two-candidate race for this vice-president position sees Bryant Lukes make a second run for the job against opponent John Braga

THE PORTFOLIO FOR THE VP (ACADEMIC) includes all aspects of student life that deal with academic endeavours. This includes advocating for the cost of instructional materials, as well as the quality of teaching at the institution.

Compiled by Sunny Chan

1 What is the biggest specific goal you hope to achieve as VPA, and how do you plan on accomplishing it?

John Braga: Currently, the University of Alberta Students' Union and Bookstore are nation leaders with regards to academic materials, making them high quality and cost-effective for students, so my biggest goal is to continue that national leadership this summer at the Canadian Roundtable on Academic Materials and ensure that we take a stance that will make academic materials even more affordable for the undergraduate population.

Bryant Lukes: I want to make the campus greener, and I want to do this in two ways. First is by investigating what Vice-President Dollansky has been doing this past year on Students' Council. Regarding the energy usage in the University itself, I want to make an effort to bring solar power to the University, and I also want to look at programs like the new agriculture faculty name change in terms of getting people into environmental programs at the University and promoting that faculty.

2 Rising textbook costs are a rising student concern—what are your plans for student advocacy in that area?

Braga: Firstly, to continue the co-operation we have with the U of A Bookstore, to pressure the publishers to make textbooks more affordable

for students. There's a lot of specific information that will come up in transition into the position: issues such as bundling costs and seeking to have the University of Alberta administration provide more support to professors who want to create coursepacks—coursepacks are a cheaper alternative to textbooks—and ensuring that they have the tools at their disposal to make better use of these.

Lukes: I understand there's been a couple of government initiatives and proposals from opposition parties to subsidize textbooks. I would certainly lobby the government to reduce textbook costs and subsidize students for those expenses. In terms of the University doing something, I don't know if there's much that we can do in terms of putting tuition money towards that, but I definitely think lobbying the government is worthwhile.

3 How will you stay connected to constantly changing student interests?

Braga: My first platform goal is to strengthen faculty associations. They have constant contact with their student body and with their faculties themselves. I want to ensure that there's open lines of communications, there's an open understanding of the goals of the faculty associations and of the VP (Academic) of the Students' Union, and being able to reach the students by proxy via faculty associations.

Lukes: I plan on opening up all the electronic resources that are available, things like Facebook and Myspace and those types of things. I want to see students at Students' Council meetings. I want to encourage students to come and make presentations at Students' Council meetings. It's too much of an inside clique in the University, and I want to open it up to the students more.



LAUREN STIEGLITZ

BOOK IT TO THE BALLOTS Bryant Lukes (left) and John Braga both want to be Vice-President (Academic).

4 What are your thoughts on the University's 2007–2011 academic plan, "Dare to Deliver"?

Braga: Firstly, the goals of University of Alberta are laudable and something worthy of working towards. However, the lack of a metric to determine how or when we've achieved these various goals and how far along we are in the progress is a problem. During the year, I will be working to pressure the administration to give us a concrete metric, whereby we can determine how far along in the academic plan we are and we can identify ways in which the administration and the Students' Union need to co-operate to achieve these laudable goals.

Lukes: I appreciate the President's positive attitude and optimism about the University. As with the previous year's plan, I think there may be too

much emphasis on bringing in more funds and bringing in new things, and maybe not enough about what we're doing with what we currently have at this university.

5 How will you survive the zombie apocalypse?

Braga: Since my first year living in Lister, there has been a battle plan to use couches as barricades and to basically shut down the building and ensure the survival of Lister in the case of zombie apocalypse. So I'd enact Plan A, which has already been under development for years.

Lukes: Primarily through making sure that my self-defence skills are up to snuff and making sure that I have my passport ready if I need to leave the country or go to Switzerland or something.

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