

HE/HIM

FOTANG FOR PRESIDENT



LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

My campaign team and I honor and acknowledge that the lands on which we live, study, learn, and campaign are on Amiskwaciy-Wâskahikan, or Beaver Hill House (what is now called Edmonton), on Treaty 6 territory. This land has been the traditional homeland for the Nehiyaw (Cree), the Niitsitapi (Blackfoot), the Métis, the Nahkawiniwak (Saulteaux), the Nakota Sioux, and the Denesuline (Dene). It is also crucial to recognize that the University and much of the city are located on the unlawfully stolen and unceded land of the Papaschase Cree people.

The University and the Students' Union have benefited directly from the exploitation of land and Indigenous peoples. I acknowledge that sharing this land means that myself and all treaty people have a moral obligation to fight ongoing injustices. We must also celebrate the revitalization and resilience of Indigenous language and culture.

I acknowledge the privileges bestowed upon me by the position I currently hold, and I recommit to ensuring that Indigenous voices, knowledge, and traditions are well represented and included in all decisions and policies.

LETTER TO STUDENTS

Dear students,

My name is Christian Fotang, and I'm running to be your next UASU president.

The first time I decided to run for the Students' Union was because a close friend of mine had to reduce their course load due to tuition increases. Back then, I couldn't have told you what the Post-Secondary Learning Act (PSLA) meant, let alone why tuition was going up. I only knew then that my friend didn't deserve reduced access to quality education due to cost. Rather than sit back and complain, I wanted to do something about it. So I ran. As naive and innocent as I was back then, students still took a chance and elected me as their Vice-President External.

If you had told me back then when I had chosen to run, that I would be directly involved in the permanent elimination of interest on federal student loans, the temporary elimination of work hours for international students, and even meet with the Prime Minister of Canada to advocate for the permanent doubling of Canada Student Grants. I would have most likely replied back ..." Say Word!"

In a Province as rich as ours, no one should have cost be a barrier to accessing their education. I was just an eager-eyed kid with a bad haircut wanting to change the system so my friend could afford his education. Two years into the role, I still hold the same belief for all students that I did for my friend.

Pursuing this vision has met its bumps and bruises. Where I hoped we could provide more need-based support for students, the University came with even more aggressive exceptional tuition increases (ETIs).

But I still believe progress is possible. As Chair of the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations (CASA), when I first got into the role, many delegates felt the vibes were off. And some didn't feel connected to the mission of the organization. I got to work to begin improving membership relationships and engagement. This year we have made strides to ensure all voices around the table are heard by providing every member an avenue for feedback, which is why CASA has been an effective advocacy body. My experience serving as Chair of CASA taught me that when trust is built, progress can still be achieved.

#FOTANG4PRESIDENT

LETTER TO STUDENTS

Many of you have shared how you don't feel heard or feel that the decisions made by your Students' Union do not reflect your priorities. Things are disconnected, and many feel left out. I recognize that the current system is not working for many, and I want to bring my attention back to our campus community and ensure that no one feels left out. That's why I am running to be your next UASU President.

University can already feel lonely, and when combined with the many pressures of being a student, you can feel like you're on your own. Affordability continues to be top of mind; Students face barriers that stretch from academics to student life and even up until the moment they graduate from University. Student groups work to revitalize campus culture, yet their efforts are met with resistance.

Addressing these issues will require effective advocacy. For that advocacy to be effective, we must build trust and accountability between the Student Union and the student body. The first step towards building that trust and bringing progress to the system is better student engagement, being more vulnerable, and being transparent with students. My skills, leadership abilities, and experience make me the right person to begin that work.

I may not be as naive and innocent as I was back then, but I am asking you to take a chance on me now as I did before.

On March 8th and 9th, vote for me, Christian Fotang, as your next UASU president.

Sincerely,
Christian

TL;DR PLATFORM



EXPERIENCE AN AFFORDABLE EDUCATION



EXPERIENCE AN ACCESSIBLE AND INCLUSIVE STUDENT LIFE

Improve The Student And Life Academic Experience

Improve The Student Group Experience

Recognize the achievements and successes of FNMI Students



EXPERIENCE ACCOUNTABILITY

Re-Connecting with Your Students Union

Improve Students' Union accountability

EXPERIENCE AN AFFORDABLE EDUCATION

Goal:

- Improve promotion of existing financial aid supports through social media, tabling and other relevant avenues.
- I will work with the Council of Alberta University Students (CAUS), Faculty Associations and other relevant stakeholders to lobby the Provincial Government to provide long term targeted and sustainable support for students in programs with mandatory unpaid placements.
- Work with the International Students' Association (ISA) and the University to re-evaluate and reform how international student tuition is assessed.
- Provide more affordable food and everyday items that students purchase at SUBmart, Daily Grind and Dewey's and secure student discounts for local business in the Greater Edmonton Region.

Why?

Rising tuition continues to be a barrier to post-secondary education. Domestic students are seeing a cumulative increase ranging from 29% to 74% in just four years. International students, whose tuition is already set at an incredibly high rate, have seen their tuition go up by 6%. To make matters worse, international students are provided limited options of financial aid and excluded from awards that can provide further support.

It. Just. Gets. Worse.

Students on unpaid placements feel these impacts as well. You are expected to work overtime, drive miles out of your city, and advised not to work part time. **What does this mean? More expenses and less money being put in your pocket.** As your VP External, I fought for the need to provide paid work integrated learning opportunities at every level of government. For example, through successful advocacy, the federal government provided an additional \$400 million into the Canada Summer Jobs (CSJ) program over two years to support student employment. I also fought for the provincial government to fund more needs-based grants, so low and middle-income students are less reliant on loans. Lastly, I successfully advocated for the temporary removal of limits on international student work hours.

Addressing the affordability crisis will require experienced leadership that has results. Throughout my time as VP External, I have built coalitions, and raised the conversation at many levels of media to ensure students' issues are not forgotten in the public consciousness. As President, I will use these skills to bring together members of the University community to secure support for students and alleviate the hardships faced by students.

EXPERIENCE ACCESSIBILITY

Eliminate barriers faced by students on our campuses

Goal:

- Working with the Registrar's office and other stakeholders to allow for students to display their preferred names, pronouns and/or gender in relevant fields of University interfaces.
- Initiate plans and secure funding to build an accessible all gender washroom in Dewey's
- Work with the newly appointed Vice-Provost Equity, Diversity and Inclusion and the Dean of Students and the Students' Accessibility working group to implement the recommendation on of the *Students Accessibility Assessment Project Report*.
- Work with the VPSL and the Dean of Students' office to improve mental health supports for students with disabilities and provide spaces dedicated to virtual therapy sessions.

Why?

Students face barriers that stretch from academics, to student life, and even up until the moment they graduate from University. For example, let's talk about our campus infrastructure and accommodations systems. **It's a mess.** As a student, you shouldn't have to leave Dewey's and head to the South Academic Building (SAB) just to access an all gender washroom. You should not have to request accommodations from every instructor for every assessment. The current President and VP Student Life (VPSL) and Academic (VPA) have advocated for the University to assess, identify, and recommend solutions to address the barriers that exist within our infrastructure and accommodations system. We must now ensure that recommendations made from reports such as the *Students Accessibility Assessment Project Report* are enacted on. Another existing area for improvements are the barriers that exist during convocation. Presently, grandaunts who identify as transgender or non-binary are not able to have their preferred name printed on the convocation booklet. The only existing solution is that those students wishing to provide their preferred name can only provided the option of removing their legal name. This means that students have to choose between their deadnames on their convocation booklet, or no name at all. This is dehumanizing and isolating especially for arguably one of the most important days of a students' academic journey.

There are still many barriers that exist in terms of supports for students experiencing mental health challenges. These include, inadequate or uninformed counseling for neurodivergent student, poor internet and/or feeling uncomfortable taking virtual therapy sessions at home. This year the President and VPSL worked to successfully secure \$1.6 million dollars towards the hiring of two new counsellors. This funding will reduce wait times, provide support and give care to the alarming demand for mental health supports. It is integral that we build on this moment by ensure that acute and non-acute supports on our campuses are inclusive for all students. Throughout my term. I have been pushing the University to create dedicated virtual therapy rooms or spaces on campus. Proposed pilot projects, such as a booth, while well-intentioned risk creating new accessibility concerns. Therefore, we must continue to seek other alternatives.

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EXPERIENCE ACCESSIBILITY

Improve the Student Group Experience

Goal:

- Assess and create an environmental scan of what other Students' Union do to simplify their granting process. And consult with student group leaders on what other types of grants they would like to see provided by the students' union.
- Work with Dean of Students and Facilities and Operations to create more a centralized avenue for booking a space on our buildings.
- Improve our volunteer registry to make it easier for students looking to get involved to easily connect to student groups recruiting for more support.

Why?

The Students' Union provides a host of services, and events to build connections and make it easier to foster community. However, we can't do this on our own. Those best positioned to provide a sense of community on campus are our student groups and clubs. If left solely to University administration, I can't imagine what campus life and culture would be like. **News flash... it would suck!**

If you've ever tried to organize an event on or off campus for your student club, then you'll know the event approval process is cumbersome and frustrating. Red tape, lack of communication and lack of a simple avenue for space booking make it hard for students groups to create the events on campus that foster community and build on campus culture. The SU is currently working with the University to develop a framework to have more control over student group approval, so that we reduce existing cumbersome barriers. Funding student groups is another crucial lever for supporting student groups. There is a huge opportunity to improve the Students' Union grant process and expand the types of grant available to support student groups. Currently, students express difficulty navigating the grants process and many view the opportunity cost of applying versus the money available to receive not worth pursuing. We must balance making the process easier to navigate and flexible with ensuring accountability for when money is provided. Lastly, an additional opportunity for growth exists in how we connect student group searching for volunteers with students searching for volunteer opportunities.

Recognize the Achievements and successes of FNMI Students

Goal:

- Work with ARRC, Indigenous students, faculties and campus community leaders to promote Indigenous students achievements and share indigenous students stories.

Why?

- First Nation, Metis and Inuit (FNMI) students have shared the positive impact that having mentors or highlighting the achievements and success of Indigenous students can have, especially when it comes to combatting stereotypes and negative portrayals of Indigenous people and young Indigenous Canadians. This is also highlighted in the Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation Committee (ARRC) report, which calls on the Students' Union to demonstrate their position of reconciliation and empowerment by sharing the positive experiences of Indigenous students with the Students' Union.

EXPERIENCE ACCOUNTABILITY

Reconnecting with Your Students' Union

Goal:

- Organize an Annual Students' Meeting of Members. Such a meeting will also allow first year students who had no involvement in this current election the opportunity to share the concerns and issues they anticipate to face as they began to understand our campus community.
- Engage with the student body on the creation and implementation of the 2024-2028 UASU Strategic plan.
- Complete the update of the UASU website.
- Keeping executives engaged to student heartbeat through regularly scheduled tabling chats between students coming through SUB and the SU executives.

Why?

I still meet many students who either tell me that they don't know what the SU is or does. From those who do, they tell me the constructive feedback for where they feel the SU can improve. These conversations underscore the need for expanded efforts to re-connect with students. Despite current efforts, there will always be room for improvement and re-strategizing around how we can better engage with students.

In my first term as VP External I recognized that there was more I could have done to better improve my engagement and communication with students. When I was re-elected, I made the effort to ensure that throughout certain milestones of my advocacy I was checking with students to know what they were experiencing and where they felt they needed support. This was facilitated through tuition teach-ins and student Financial aid teach-ins where many students expressed not even knowing what inequities existed in our financial aid system. I also met with students who reached out to me to provide their feedback on my approach to advocacy on issues directly affecting students.

You must be able to hear directly from your elected leaders and they must be ready to face and be held accountable to the promises they made. If we are going to address this disconnect then we must continue to be creative in how we try to stay tuned to the beat of student's concerns, feedback or comments. This will require a thoughtful approach that must encapsulate all spaces of the Students' Union which students feel accountability is lacking. For example, student's council, a place where many students over the years have commented does not feel like a welcoming place.

Improving awareness of the role of the Students' Union and re-connecting with the student heartbeat will always be an ongoing evolutionary process; I believe that the timing of the creation of the 2024-2028 strategic plan provides a golden opportunity to map out that journey.

EXPERIENCE ACCOUNTABILITY

Institutional Accountability

Goal:

- Create an ETI Review Task Force. The mission of this task force will be to ensure that Faculties with proposals committed and have actually spent the money on what they said they would. I recognize the first challenge will be to make sure that faculty administration are transparent about their budget and proposals with student leaders. This will not be easy, but working together with FAs and other relevant stakeholders, I believe that these will be the beginning steps for creating better transparency and accountability in our University Community.
- Create UAPPOL Consultation Policy with principles, guidelines and expectation on consultation in regards to Tuition & Fees and Program Changes.
- Work with the VP SL to ensure that the Sexual Violence Response Coordinator (SVRC) is a permanently hired position. Securing the long term existence of this position will ensure that work is benign done to address the recommendations set out by the audit.

Why?

Over the years we have seen inconsistent approaches to consultation by the University administration towards issues ranging from tuition and fees, academic program changes, and governance. In some instances, such as the student experience action plan or the University Strategic plan, we have seen improved and well executed approaches to consultation. However, in other instances, such as the exceptional tuition increase of the last term, administration attempted to push through tuition hikes without proper consultation or engagement from students.

Instead of taking the initiative to create multiple outlets for students to provide their feedback and perspectives, it was faculty association leaders taking the last-minute responsibility of organizing town halls so students could have the opportunity to share their concerns. Despite the Minister's approval, advocacy by the UASU, Faculty Associations and Department Associations, and other student organizations save students at least \$2.74 million per year.

Similarly, when past student leaders organized and staged a walk-out at GFC combined with a letter calling on the University to do better in providing support for survivors of sexual and gender based violence on our campuses; These actions resulted in the Board of Governors commissioning a Sexual Violence Management Audit Report. Now the work must be done to hold the University accountable to seeing through the recommendation so that our systems in our University can be truly survivor centered. As President, I will continue to hold administration accountable and ensure that no decisions on our campuses are made for us, without us.

THANKS FOR READING!

MARCH 8 & 9

VOTE

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