your voice on campus

Students' Association of Olds College

2023-2024 Annual Report

Prepared by SAOC President Celia Sutton
February 28, 2024

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Message from the President

The SAOC acknowledges that our offices are located on the traditional territories of the Niitsitapi (Blackfoot) and the people of the Treaty 7 region in Southern Alberta, which includes the Siksika, the Piikani, the Kainai, the Tsuut'ina, and the Stoney Nakoda First Nations. The area is also home to Métis Nation of Alberta, Region III. The SAOC further acknowledges our members who live and study on Treaty 6 Territory, a traditional meeting place and home of many Indigenous Peoples, including Cree, Saulteaux, Blackfoot, Métis, Dene and Nakota Sioux. We respect the diverse histories, languages, and cultures of First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities who continue to enrich this land on which we live together.

Being a member of the Students' Association of Olds College means a lot of things in 2024. An SAOC member has supportive health & wellness services and holistic support for their physical and mental well-being. An SAOC member is represented by a dedicated, passionate group of elected peers who advocate for our best interests and the betterment of our student experience. An SAOC member has agency over their academic experience and is empowered with supportive academic resources. We have workshops to learn beyond the classroom. We have volunteerism and leadership opportunities to develop ourselves personally and professionally. We have parties and clubs to build memories with our friends and peers and expand our community as Olds College students. It's an incredible time to be here.

Sharpening our focus on member experience was a big shift from last year's mindset at the SAOC. Though member satisfaction is always front of mind, we had a lot of internal work to do last year to get our systems in better shape to provide good value to our members. This year, we were able to realign our focus toward advocacy, community, and empowerment: the three pillars of our new strategic plan. Adopted in August, our strategic plan solidifies our mission to empower students by creating a safe environment filled with allies and supporting our members through their journeys with community-based services. This three-year plan, developed collaboratively by elected SAOC leaders and core staff, provides us with clear, actionable objectives to build a better member experience.

This was also our first year welcoming members in Edmonton on the Concordia University campus. Finding opportunities to tailor our services for their needs has been a learning experience, and a worthwhile pursuit. When redeveloping the SAOC Pantry program in November, we were able to make accommodations to better serve members on the Olds campus while retaining equitable access to this service for off-campus members. We organized and promoted online events, such as our first-ever Winter Term Orientation and a webinar on Knowing Your Rights, so that members could attend from wherever they were. It has been a profound opportunity to examine the accessibility and attainability of our services for all members and we continue to seek out new ways to improve.

your voice on campus

One of our biggest projects this year has been expanding our food & beverage services, our student spaces on campus, and our event capacity by opening our new coffee shop, Cafe Bloom in the Land Sciences Building. We saw the need for food services at the north end of campus and we heard your calls for more inclusive and diverse leisure spaces on campus. We are so excited to have another avenue to offer you affordable, ethically sourced, delicious food & beverage products, and to have another space to host workshops, club events, and ownership linkage activities. The SAOC has been stagnant in on-campus expansion since 2007, but as our membership continues to grow, we're poised to grow with you.

Olds College students are some of the most passionate, hardworking, resilient individuals in Alberta's post-secondary landscape. It has been an honour to lead this incredible constituency through the 2023-2024 academic year towards our vision of safe spaces, supported students, and a strong community.

Sincerely,

Celia Sutton

SAOC President

Executive Council

President

Positional Report

Since last year's governance and organizational overhaul, the biggest contributions that I have made as the 2023-2024 President have been centered around making our organization more student-led and student-focused, sharpening our focus on member experience, and building our reputation with external stakeholders. As my final year as President comes to a close, I reflect back on all of my days with the SAOC and the milestones along my two terms in office.

The pursuit of streamlining processes this year has had a positive impact on the ability for students to lead the SAOC in a number of ways. Having now worked with three Board of Directors groups from 2022-2024, I recognized that one of the most consistent problem areas was role clarity. Student leaders were frustrated that they didn't have enough jurisdiction over the organization they were elected to lead but simultaneously overwhelmed by their roles. Between 21-22 and 22-23, I implemented new working committees to provide student leaders with measurable authority. Student leaders in 22-23 reported an improved sense of leadership over the organization, but that internal communication still wasn't quite there. Our leaders were also still getting burnt out part way through their terms. Ahead of the 23-24 board election, I made considerable adjustments to our governance processes once again. In my capacity as Chair, I was able to take us from twenty board meetings per year in 22-23 to twelve board meetings per year in 23-24. Recent feedback identifies a positive working relationship between governance and operations as well as improved board effectiveness and interconnectedness. Student leaders report that their opinions are heard and respected at the board table, and that collaboration is strong. Our student leaders are now more adequately compensated for their time, have more agency at the board table, and are truly steering this ship.

Within days of the start of the fall term, we were faced with a number of surprises that required quick action. In particular, our international student population dramatically expanded, exceeding projections, and we recognized the need for more tailored support and services for this particular demographic. I developed a new portfolio ahead of the October Board of Directors elections for a Director of International Students, so that we could have an elected student representative who was dedicated to the experience of those members.

Advocacy has been a major focus for me this year. In summer 2023, I asked the Board of Directors to support my interest in running for re-election to the board of the Alberta Students' Executive Council (ASEC), with the intent to pursue a leadership role. In July 2023, I was elected to the role of Chair at ASEC, positioning me and, as a result, the students of Olds College as a leader in provincial advocacy and the post-secondary student movement. Over the past year, I

attended countless meetings and events with elected officials to advocate for priorities in the post-secondary space and make our voices heard. These priorities included revisions to the framework around mandatory non-instructional fees, trauma-informed support for victims of sexual and gender-based violence on campus, preventative and remedial education around consent and sexual and gender-based violence, stabilized funding toward mental health programs, a permanent removal of the work hours cap for international students, and better support for the unique needs of our international students.

Much of this work in provincial advocacy was supported by fellow student leaders across the province to reinforce our message and show solidarity, but whenever I stepped into a room, I was speaking with the voice of Olds College students. Because of this, our provincial, municipal, and institutional leaders now know more about who we are and what's important to us. In my last days as President, I will forge new links in this web to connect my successor to those who have the power to create change, so that there will be continuity in service for the students who elect us to lead them.

Work Plan

Objective	Measurable(s)	Timeline	Risks
Facilitate a series of workshops for member education beyond the Olds College curriculum.	-Three workshops held in the 23-24 academic year -Number of unique topics taught -Number of people in attendance	March 31, 2024	-Lack of support from industry professionals to teach on certain subjects -Lack of student engagement/low attendance
Advocate for improved social capacity at the College and Town levels.	-Number of asks developed -Number of meetings held with decision makers -Number of asks adopted	March 31, 2024	-Pushback from town & college about recommendations -Inability to meet with decision-makers -New developments in the student socio-economic landscape that alter desired outcomes
Develop reporting/monitoring systems for the SAOC Board of Directors around external affairs.	-Reporting requirements outlined for the board chair role -Reports/presentations delivered to the board on external affairs & environmental monitoring	March 31, 2024	-Lack of desire from board to assign additional duties to a particular role on an ongoing basis

Investigate the quality of food on campus and advocate that Olds College students should be provided with nutritious, accessible, affordable, quality food on campus.	-Report developed on the food service offerings on campus -Advocacy strategy developed	March 31, 2024	-Pushback from external stakeholders in investigatory process -Resistance to change from college leadership

This work plan was approved by the Board of Directors and implemented into the President's portfolio on August 11, 2023.

Goal 1: Student Workshops. The President hosted three workshops as outlined in her work plan in the 2023-2024 academic year. The first was an educational session on the student health & dental plan, presented in conjunction with Gallivan at a Coffee & Conversation event on October 19. It was an opportunity for students to learn more about the various services offered by Gallivan, explore the value in having health & dental benefits, and take a Q&A session. The next workshop on November 16 was another Coffee & Conversation event on the topic of budgeting & financial education. Students gained knowledge about finding their money mindset, building a budget that fits with their personal and family priorities and needs, responsible credit use, and entered to win a gift card. The final workshop was held in the winter term on January 30, and was delivered in a webinar format to accommodate off-campus students. The topic of this workshop was "Knowing Your Rights," and was especially geared towards students who are new to Alberta or to Canada, or students who are new to living alone or to being in the workforce. This work plan goal was therefore very successfully accomplished.

Goal 2: Social Capacity. While the Olds College campus has a lot of physical room to grow, the small community of Olds may not. The President performed substantial research in the first few months of this work plan goal to determine the most significant gaps in social capacity as the student population expands. By September, the President had determined three major priorities: attainable & affordable housing, transportation, and availability of health services. In June 2023, the President and Executive Director attended an Olds town council meeting where the Miller Meadows area structure plan amendment was being approved, to voice the SAOC's support for additional high-density housing in the town. In October 2023, the President took the transportation issue to an external committee of the college where more stakeholders could be engaged in the work to address this issue, in order to expand on the support, resources and transition capacity of the transportation component of this work plan goal. In February 2024, the President met with our local MLA, Nathan Cooper to discuss the social capacity of the town and the integration of Olds College students with the community of Olds. In particular, Mr. Cooper was responsive to the idea that access to physicians and other health services could be broadened, not only on campus for students and members of the Olds College circle, but to create a synergetic relationship between the community and the campus where it relates to health services. Quantifying the success of an advocacy goal is challenging, as the outcomes are not within the advocate's control. However, the President feels that the effort that was made with respect to this work plan goal was meaningful to the students of Olds College, and has

opened more opportunities to analyze the capacity of the campus & town community from a more holistic point of view as Olds College continues to grow.

Goal 3: External Relations. A significant barrier in the SAOC's ability to govern our organization and identify priorities in the post-secondary landscape is often in our capacity to understand and respond to developments in our current environment. As students, we are often dismissed as being naive or inexperienced, but we take our mandate to represent the best interests of our members seriously. It is important that the SAOC remains informed of what's going on around campus, in the town, with the provincial government, and that such information is used in support of effective advocacy. To this end, the President built a framework to track publicly available information on the current affairs of key external stakeholders and synthesize it into approachable, two- to three-item monthly reports for the board of directors. These key stakeholders include Olds College, the Academic Council, ASEC, fellow students' associations at other post-secondary institutions, and the provincial and municipal governments. This information will empower student leaders, strengthening our advocacy with current, relevant, and factual context.

Goal 4: Food on Campus. Being provided with nutritious, accessible, affordable, quality food on campus is one of the most basic, essential components of the student experience. We've heard, time and time again, that the dining hall experience on the Olds College campus does not reflect that principle. Students should not be subjected to additional personal strains such as not having access to nutritious food options, or worrying about whether or not the food served to them on campus will cause them to have an allergic reaction or foodborne illness. There should be no guessing about whether or not there is legitimate value in the important services that we pay for. When the President took on this advocacy goal, it was with the understanding that this priority would not be carried through the finish line this year, but might reach the halfway point at best. It will be a long process of continued advocacy to institutional leadership so that we can, at the very least, rule out ignorance as the impetus for the status of food services on campus. Again, quantifying the success of an intangible advocacy goal is no easy task, but when a heftier workload fell onto the President's lap throughout November to January, the board of directors were made aware that the President would not be able to pour as much energy into this goal as the SAOC originally hoped. However, throughout the year the President distributed surveys, gathered an immense amount of feedback from students and faculty, toured the dining hall to learn about the service provider's side of things, and had numerous conversations with institutional leadership about the student experience with respect to food on campus. This advocacy goal can and should be a major priority next year when the service provider's contract comes due for renewal, and hopefully the groundwork that has been laid can support the important work to come.

Vice-President, Academics

Positional Report

As my tenure as Vice President of Academics comes to a close, I wanted to take a moment to reflect on the achievements and progress I've made over the past year, and some of the learnings of my time in this position.

Central to my role was representing the academic interests of our student body. I engaged with students on a personal level, listening to their concerns, and providing guidance and support where needed. Whether it was assisting with academic appeals or advocating for changes to enhance the academic experience in the classrooms, I remained committed to ensuring that every student's voice was heard and valued. Meeting with numerous students facing academic challenges was a humbling experience. I had the privilege of guiding them along their self-advocacy journey, empowering them to address their concerns effectively and navigate the academic system with confidence.

Within the organization, I sat on two committees: the Bylaw & Policy Review Committee and the Executive Director Review Committee. These were a great opportunity to further the organization and shape it for future years. Within these committees, we developed a strong foundation for the future that allows for growth and continuity within the SAOC and our membership. I also helped organize and execute our academic advocacy event, Midterm Madness, which hopefully carries on with success into the future as a complement to Long Nights Against Procrastination, which the College hosts.

Serving as the voting delegate for Olds College at the Alberta Students' Executive Council (ASEC) provided me with invaluable insights and experiences. Participating in the Goals Conference during the summer allowed me to collaborate with other student leaders from across the province to formulate strategic goals for students across Alberta and gain valuable knowledge to bring back to our members at the College. It has been inspiring to witness the progress of our student leadership collective and to contribute to its growth and development.

I was elected as the Vice-Chair of the Academic Council in September 2023, and it has provided me with an eye-opening experience, allowing both myself and fellow students to gain insights into the academic processes within our institution. Being welcomed at the table to understand and contribute to discussions regarding academic matters has been a rewarding and educational experience for all involved.

A significant portion of my time commitment this year has been dedicated to engaging with the Board of Governors, the highest strategic governance board at the College. From full-day meetings to monthly committee gatherings, I have had the opportunity to delve into the

intricacies of governance and understand how student voices are represented in major decision-making processes. Sitting alongside qualified individuals, I have felt grateful in ensuring that the student perspective is heard and valued in every discussion.

Work Plan

Objective	Measurable(s)	Timeline	Risks
Understanding the Academic Process Graphic	-Meet with key stakeholders to develop steps -Review wording and steps with stakeholders -develop graphic -second review between key staff and stakeholders -embed graphic on website with hyperlinks	March 31, 2024	-Differences of opinions throughout schools may lead to step breakdowns and communication errors -Updated Olds College websites may lead to dead links and network blocks if students are not signed in -Host platforms may cost money to run > budget to be approved by board - Online professional learnings may be outside links which may deny copyright accesses or go against Olds College policies
AI Information Night	-Discussions with TLCI about idea and openness to co-host event -Research guest speakers, subject matter and best time to schedule event -Book room, time, catering via crossing,	March 31, 2024	-Unable to find suitable time frame or location to book - Lack of resources or guest speakers - Lack of buy in from faculty -To different styles of information (student vs. teacher) leading to overworking goal and giving up
Smart Farm Integration	-Reach out to SF Integration Coordinator to understand ongoing integrations -Meet with smart farm operations to determine workload -Meet with SFII, (associate) deans to determine course load and integration strategies -Present details to VP Research, President of College for	March 31, 2024	-Unwillingness from smart farm for engagement with academics -Not enough funding/support to provide integration methods -Unwillingness from college/academics for integration

	education and action plans for a better academic experience for students		

This work plan was approved by the Board of Directors and implemented into the Vice President of Academics' portfolio on August 11, 2023.

Goal 1: Understanding the Academic Process Graphic

Graphics have been made and distributed around campus, with support from Associate Deans, TLCI, and Office of the Registrar. This goal is complete.

Goal 2: AI Information Night

Lack of buy-in/information from stakeholders has altered the AI information night into a coffee and conversation and emphasis on schools to talk to their students about their standards. The AI Information Night objective is incomplete.

Goal 3: Smart Farm Integration

Smart Farm Integration Initiative did not meet this academic year, and lack of buy-in from stakeholders has turned this goal incomplete.

Insights & Recommendations

Carrying on into the future, I would love to see a continued development of Midterm Madness and study tricks for our members halfway through their semester. I think it's an important time to help understand and drive home keys to being successful with academia; time management, positive study habits, and taking care of yourself.

Continuing to amplify the hands-on classroom experience is something that students choose Olds College for. I would hope that the bridge continues to grow between academia and our smart farm, that gives students the opportunity to become proficient in their program of choice- and become more desirable to potential employers after we've become alumni.

Vice-President, Communications

Positional Report

In my position as the Vice President of Communications for the SAOC I had the opportunity and responsibility to develop communications and use a variety of strategies to engage students. Effective communication would enhance the student experience by making students aware of the opportunities available for them, promote a sense of community, and foster engagement among students. Through my experience in this role I have learned about effective communication, event planning, and I have got to meet many students. I ran for this role because I wanted to make a positive impact on our college community.

One of my contributions is managing the social media platforms for the SAOC and for The Crossing to ensure that they were up-to-date with the latest information and events taking place within the college. For each of these I have developed a timeline in which to release events in a timely manner to create the greatest awareness. I've also tried to create a multitude of engaging and informative materials to capture students' attention as well as provide them with the most relevant information on events. I ensured that there were consistent regular posts on all accounts to be an accountable source of information.

Another significant contribution I made was the consistent release of bi-weekly newsletters with updates on anything student life related, with relevant information on upcoming events, and opportunities for involvement. This helped to ensure that students were always up-to-date with the latest news and developments on campus. This newsletter served as a valuable tool for students who may not have regularly accessed social media channels, as well as providing an opportunity to showcase various clubs, teams and student-led initiatives, thus contributing to the development of strong and positive relationships between students. This newsletter also provided information to our new members located on the Edmonton campus, however I hope in the future we are able to tailor a newsletter just for them.

Additionally, I worked closely with various Olds College departments to develop collaborative campaigns and events. Through collaboration we participated in or hosted The Rocky Horror Picture Show, the SAOC Food Pantry Charity Hockey Event, Open House Events, Intercultural Communications Workshop, and Midterm Madness, and so much more. These events help to build community on campus, connecting one another through shared fun and informative experiences. I hosted events based on ideas that would bring students together, out of student need, and based on feedback.

As part of the SAOC I participated on the Board of Directors and attended monthly meetings where we discussed important topics including tuition and fee consultations. I participate in EC meetings as Vice Chair, and I sat on several other committees including Courage to Act

Committee, Student Life Engagement Committee, and as Chair of the Impact and Environment Committee. As part of the Impact and Environment Committee we write a PEST analysis and are currently working together to develop that report for the 2023-2024 academic year.

In conclusion, as the Vice President of Communications, I focused on building a stronger community at Olds College by contributing to the student experience through effective communication strategies. Through initiatives like social media, newsletters and collaborative campaigns, I helped to promote a positive campus culture that prioritized student engagement, well-being, and a shared sense of belonging. Together with the efforts of other SAOC members, SAOC & OC committees, we created an environment that helped to support students throughout the year, and enabled them to thrive both academically and socially.

Work Plan

Objective	Measurable(s)	Timeline	Risks
Design an Ownership Linkage Development Plan to strengthen communication between members and the SAOC and standardize the role for future VP Comms	-Consult three references -Consult SAOC team to review and edit	March 31, 2024	-Continued Revisions
Increase student engagement on social media by 5% to increase awareness of SAOC services amongst student body	-How much did each following grow	March 31, 2024	-Trends shift to other platforms -No student response
Plan two events throughout the school year, one event in collaboration with another association on campus to boost spirit of the student body	-How many events were held -How many members attended	First event by December 31, 2024 Second event by March 31, 2024	-Pandemic occurs -Safety concerns
BONUS Investigate member desire for a fall reading break to promote measures to improve student health and wellness	-How many meetings were held -Present to the Board and have the Board generate a Policy Statement	March 31, 2024	-Persons in charge of this area are unwilling or unable -Number of required school days cannot be reached otherwise -Other worse consequences of adjusting the calendar

This work plan was approved by the Board of Directors and implemented into the Vice President of Communications' portfolio on August 11, 2023.

Goal 1: The VP of Communications developed an Ownership Linkage Development Plan. This plan defines what ownership linkage is and how the next VP of Communications can fulfill the requirements of their role. Using multiple references this plan was written and includes strategies to communicate effectively with students, different methods of communication, timeline for effective communication, and methods of engagement within the different modes of outreach. It was important to develop a plan to create consistency with new elected members filling the role as well as to identify the most effective means of communication for reporting important topics for members.

Goal 2: It is important to be able to inform students of important events going on around campus and of different opportunities available to them. The VP of Communications had the goal of increasing engagement by 5% on social media platforms but quickly exceeded this and has overall increased SAOC Instagram engagement by 12.8%. On The Crossing Instagram the VP of Communications has grown the account 118%. Facebook accounts do not seem to have the same growth but trends are shifting towards the use of other social media platforms and away from Facebook. Overall, this increase in engagement helps us to reach more students with important information!

Goal 3: As part of the portfolio of the VP Communications is the opportunity to host some events. The goal was to host two events, and collaborate with another student group to host one. The VP of Communications exceeded this work goal by hosting Harry Potter Trivia in collaboration with Residence Services, a Winter Clothing Drive, the JAWS Movie Pool Party and Survivor's Party, Shrek Trivia, and is currently in the midst of planning a final event prior to the end of their term! In addition to these events the VP of Communications collaborated with the other executive council members and hosted The Rocky Horror Picture Show viewing and the Midterm Madness Campaign. Through these events the VP of Communications has created the promotional material, coordinated volunteers, developed menus, gathered prizes and materials, and emceed the events.These events were chosen to appeal to the varied interests of our members, to boost morale and community on campus, and to create a safe space for all students to attend and take advantage of different opportunities.

Goal 4: This was a 'Bonus' goal. The VP of Communications wanted to see if there was interest from the student body in having a fall reading break. Fall breaks are held at many other colleges and universities and studies have shown that they can have improved mental health for students. A fall break gives students an opportunity to rest, visit with family, catch up, or whatever they may need to do to recover before entering into the (usually) more challenging next half of the semester. However, after distributing a survey to students and staff on campus, a majority of students see the need for a fall break. From students, there were 281 responses with 83% wanting a break, 11.4% saying maybe, and 5% saying they do not wish for a break. From staff there were 76 responses with 46.1% saying there should be a break, 34.2% saying maybe, and 19.7% saying no due to challenges with scheduling.

Insights & Recommendations

This role provides a remarkable opportunity to have a positive influence on the student body. I encourage the next VP Communications to choose goals that are meaningful to them in combination of what you believe our members will benefit from. When choosing your goals also think of your capabilities during the school year, you don't have to do everything, just do your best!

your voice on campus

Students' Association of Olds College

2023-2024 Annual Report

February 28, 2024