



PRESS RELEASE

**UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' COUNCIL
10 March 2019**

USC Annual General Meeting II Recap

The incoming and outgoing members of the University Students' Council (USC) met on Sunday, March 10, 2019 for the final meeting of the 2018-19 academic year and Part II of the USC's Annual General Meeting. Councillors faced a packed meeting, receiving a number of presentations and 13 motions over the course of the day.

Outgoing President Mitch Pratt and incoming President Bardia Jalayer each welcomed council and provided remarks on their roles and the state of the USC. Pratt reflected on his five years at Western and extensive involvement with the USC, including highlights from the past year such as Purple Fest, motions to address anti-Semitism on campus and to support residence staff members, "My fondest memories were a direct result of the impact the USC has on student lives on this campus. Always make the extra effort to reach one more student and never assume you know best - hubris poses a danger to any student leader." Pratt stressed that in the challenging time we currently face, every student leader associated with the USC must help communicate the value of our organization to students-at-large.

Incoming President Jalayer thanked the outgoing executive and council for their hard work over the past twelve months and remarked on the important year ahead for the organization. Jalayer also announced that Declan Hodgins and Nico Waltenbury were selected as Secretary-Treasurer and Communications Officer, respectively, and will join the incoming executive team. To conclude his speech, Jalayer directly addressed the unprecedented challenges facing the USC:

"Let me be clear: your incoming executive and council will work tirelessly to elevate the student voice and perspective, while enhancing the educational experience and quality of life for all undergraduates at Western. Together, we will overcome the challenges we face and ensure, as we always have and always will, that our students have the power to change the world."

Council received presentations from the chairs of council's standing committees, who each reflected on the important work of their committees throughout the year. Councillor Taja spoke to the work of the Advocacy Standing Committee, highlighting the Motion to Address Anti-Semitism on campus as an example of the USC being responsive to marginalized students. He also discussed the committee's role in setting the municipal advocacy agenda and participating in Local Advocacy Week last month.

Student Experience Committee Chair Councillor Denezis spoke about his committee's highlights of the year, such as creating a disbursement process for the Faculty Soph Fee subsidy, ratifying

the Inclusively and Accessibility Checklist, reviewing three USC services, and beginning work on improving accommodations for dietary restrictions at campus eatery. “This year the Student Experience Standing Committee struck a balance between short-term tangible changes and long-term visioning and priorities,” said Denezis, “I’m proud of our efforts and confident that next year’s committee will build on our work and continue to ensure Western students receive an unparalleled student experience, despite the challenges our organization will face.”

Lastly, Councillor Rocchese (on behalf of Chair Councillor Ma) told council about the work of the Governance and Finance Standing Committee. Rocchese reflected on the two most significant initiatives of the committee during the year – the health and dental plan referendum and the executive restructuring motion. The committee provided significant input into these initiatives and others, adding a layer of critical review and accountability to governance and finance issues at the USC.

The outgoing USC executive gave a comprehensive presentation to council regarding the proposed executive restructuring. President Pratt explained that the restructuring is a return to the previous election system where the President is elected at-large and the Vice President is elected by Council. “The overall goal of this initiative is to increase voter engagement and increase the number and diversity of candidates running in elections,” said Pratt, “we believe that the new system will improve our organization in a time when students are demanding relevance and accountability of their representatives.” Motion 3, A Motion to Restructure the Executive, passed with 98% support from outgoing councillors. The USC will release a separate press release on this initiative in the coming days.

The outgoing council also passed their final action motions. Motion 1, a Motion to Approve Policy on International Students at Western, was approved unanimously and saw changes to the USC’s Standing Policy on International Students at Western University. This paper was updated after consultations with international students last fall, and addresses cultural and social transitions, academic transition, financial barriers, and outreach.

Motion 2, to Approve Policy on Formal Consultation Process Mandatory Guidelines was also approved unanimously by council. This standing policy strengthens our organization’s values and expectations regarding engaging and consulting with marginalized communities in a meaningful way. The new paper sets guidelines for anyone conducting research or advocating for marginalized communities on behalf of the University Students’ Council.

The Motion to amend the Clubs Governance Committee Terms of Reference (Motion 4) was explained by Student Programs Officer Gabriele, and later passed unanimously by council. The motion helps modernize the CGC and responds to feedback from members of the USC’s club system. Specifically, the seven voting undergraduate students-at-large on the committee will now be elected annually by council, increasing the transparency and accountability of the positions.

Motion 5, a Motion to Approve Updated Policy Manual, was also passed unanimously by council. This motion completes administrative changes to the USC’s policy manual.

Three candidates campaigned for the SPO position this year. Over the past two weeks, candidates have been meeting with both outgoing and incoming councillors to share their platforms and discuss key issues that fall within the portfolio. Councillors had over an hour to hear from the candidates for a final time, then participate in a Question & Answer period. Cecilia Liu was ultimately chosen by council for the role, completing the 2019-20 executive team.

“Putting your name forward for a position like the Student Programs Officer and running a public election campaign takes a lot of courage and conviction,” said outgoing SPO Carina Gabriele, “all three candidates showed their passion and dedication to the USC and we are lucky to have such engaged student leaders on our campus.” Incoming President Jalayer extended his appreciation to all candidates and congratulated Liu on her election.

Finally, the incoming council approved Motions 9 thru 13, including the appointment of the 2019-20 USC auditors, ratification of the incoming Board of Directors, standing committee chair elections, ratification of the 2019-20 standing committees, and ratification of the 2019-20 speaker of council.

The outgoing USC Executive wishes to thank outgoing councillors for their commitment to our organization and their passion and dedication over the course of the year. The incoming council's first regular meeting is scheduled for 7:00pm on Wednesday, April 3, 2019 in the UCC Community Room.

The incoming executive will officially begin their roles on May 1, 2019.

The University Students' Council (USC) is a student-led organization that exists to advocate for and represent the over 30,000 undergraduate students at Western University. Our mission is to enhance the education experience and quality of life for all undergraduates at Western University and our vision is that students have the power to change the world.

**To enhance the educational experience and quality of life for all undergraduates at
Western University**

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