

## 2017 Summer Report from the President

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### Introduction

This past month has been quite eventful, let alone this past summer! With the amazing success of Frosh Week, the announcement of our partnership with the Military Family Resources Centre, the positive feedback received on our new NUSU Calendars, our improved relationships with our sponsors, and the completion of our NUSU Student Lounge, I could not be more proud of my fellow Executives. This past summer we've all participated in orientations, sat on numerous committees within NUSU and University governance, and attended our fair share of conferences. At the office, we have moved some things around and put a table in to accommodate for our recently hired Office Assistants, and Communications Assistants, and have our first iLead Business interns working in the office now and directors who need space to work as well. Lately, we have been working tirelessly to get things back together after frosh week but, it is all coming back into shape largely in part by our amazing staff. Warren has been working his magic as Lindsay of-all-trades, getting things done not only for Frosh Week, but for the Summer in the Parking Lot Concert, and putting the NUSU Student Lounge together. It has been great to have our Directors back on campus as well and taking a more active role in the operations of NUSU than they were able to from a far during the summer holidays.

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For those that don't know, as President, there are 3 main duties I have: that of the Chairperson, the Chief Executive Officer, and the Spokesperson. These are three very demanding roles that require a lot of communication, collaboration, and patience. In a role that requires the cooperation of so many members, it is important to have the support of a great team behind you.

### THE PRESIDENT AS CHAIRPERSON

As Chairperson of the NUSU Board of Directors and the Executive Committee, I am tasked with the organization and preparation of meeting agendas and materials, as well as keeping in regular contact with the members of the committees to stay updated on the affairs of NUSU so meetings can be run more effectively. Between May 1<sup>st</sup> and October 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2017, the Executive Committee formally met on 21 separate occasions, and the Board of Directors convened on 6 occasions. This is a very time consuming role, despite its simple sounding description of responsibilities. The Vice-President, Governance & Legal Affairs, with the NUSU Governance Committee, including myself, have been working on creating a complete job description for the role so that we may be able to have an external chair for our Board Meetings.

An initial description of the role was passed by the Board last month, we are still looking into what kind of qualifications we would be looking for in a new Chairperson of the Board. We are also looking into having an external Recording Secretary as well in the future. These changes will have to be made with next year's team for their term in office. This will allow the President, and the Vice-President Governance & Legal Affairs to be able to more effectively participate in meetings and focus on their other duties and obligations to the student membership.

### THE PRESIDENT AS CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

As Chief Executive Officer of the Corporation, it is my job to manage the overall operations of organization, serve as one of the two Executive signing authorities needed to bind the corporation contractually into agreements as approved by the Board of Directors, and be a point of contact for human resources needs within the office. In my capacity within this role I have participated in professional development sessions at the Canadian Federation of Students Skills Conference in May, as well as at the Canadian Organization for Campus Activities Conference in June. At these conferences I was able to network with other student unions and learn more about how they operate their organizations. I also picked up some tips and tools that I could apply in the office to create an environment more conducive to positive mental health, to support the different types of leaders in our office more effectively, and how to use our resources to better develop our programming for our student membership.

### The Administrative Side of the Role

During our first week in the office, the majority of my time was spent doing administrative tasks and addressing to the best of my ability any questions or concerns that arose naturally as us new executives moved in. I also exercised my duties as Chair and CEO on our first day in office by holding our first Executive Committee Meeting, which so happened to be the morning after we all returned from the Executive Retreat at the Mattawa Ecology Centre. I feel this went very well because we were all able to sit down and come up with our game plan for the day, which involved us arranging to our first one-on- one meetings to happen the same day. This allowed us to all be on the same page, and for myself and new execs to sit down and talk further about what they would like to accomplish this year, and based on that, come up with some deadlines for their projects that we felt were feasible and could be followed up on.

In addition, I did what some may describe as the “less sexy” duties that are fundamental to the role of President, which I did enjoy (I like organizational and administrative tasks because I’m an exciting person that way). For example, I organized everyone’s email accounts to make sure we all had the correct email addresses in our new positions, and ensured that all directors and frosh coordinators could be reached through one group email, for example all directors can be emailed at [directors@nusu.com](mailto:directors@nusu.com). Which is pretty neat.

I also sent in the necessary information to have all of the executives with legal drivers license onto the insurance for the Tahoe and by the end of the week we were able to finish the

process in obtaining official signing authority with CIBC. And finally, by the end of the first week I was able to submit a draft of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for the responsibilities and operation of the current NUSU Office, Student Food Bank and upcoming Student Lounge between NUSU and Nipissing University to our lawyers before I send it to facilities to be signed. This document will be crucial in any debates of who is responsible for supplying power, who is allowed keys to access these rooms, what will be done in case of emergency, and etc. I have since received notes on the draft MOU, which were incorporated into the document, and re-submitted to the lawyers to review before finally being sent to Nipissing Facilities to review and sign.

### **Governance Structure and Defining Roles for Better Communication**

Another part of my duties as CEO is the effective management and operations of the organization, in May and June I took a critical look at our governance structure. This was in response to the recommendation of the past Executives, and prompting by staff to better define roles within the organization. As you can imagine, efficiency is greatly compromised in a framework when each player does not know the purpose of its role. This took a fair amount of research in the library using the ancient method of looking in books, as well as online resources, referring to the contacts I made at the aforementioned conferences, and by talking to people in the office about how they see their roles fitting within the organization. The fruits of this research resulted in not-as-much a complete redefinition of job roles, but the conversations that were had did help put duties and responsibilities into perspective for individual staff members who voiced concerns. Another benefit to this endeavour was that the relationships and functionalities of each roles was able to be examined with consideration of the NUSU vision and mission statement. This made it easier to see where we need policies or committees to run the company more effectively. Some of these policies include human resources policies pertaining to employment practices, discrimination & harassment policies, and health & safety procedures. Currently, when issues arise we make reference to Nipissing policy in addition to relevant law materials, and our lawyers' guidance when we reach a point not covered by any of our existing operational policies. With regards to the demands of the Vice-President roles and my acquired familiarity with subject matter, I was asked to take the lead on drafting these policies to cover the current gaps in our governance material. The policies need to be reviewed and approved by the governance committee before coming into effect.

### **Institutional Memory, Maintaining Records and Improving Transition**

Furthermore, to maintain compliance with the Canadian Not-for-Profit Corporations Act we must keep records of all of meeting minutes, people who have held office, our staff members and all of our past and current members. It would seem some of our institutional memory was compromised several years ago with the dissolution of JSEC. Rebuilding this has become the focus of my initiative to build institutional memory within our organization. So far I have accumulated over 220 records of past meetings dating as far back as 2010 and logged their information into a database. I have also been able to find the names of the past 17 consecutive



Executive teams, as well as 4 records containing this information from between 1986 (when NUSU was first incorporated at NCSU) and 2001. Records of past staff members needs to be completed too. These records are yet to be completed, but are still in the works. I do foresee myself continuing to search for this information until the end of my term. I hope to have these records completed in time for the next President.

Having an accurate and up-to-date database of the actions taken in past meetings will be extremely beneficial for future teams when trying to find information, and has already become handy in our term even with our incomplete records. I dabbled in trying to develop an intranet for our current team earlier this summer that would allow for a more intuitive information system that would be able to track tasks and progress on projects. The initial intranet made did show promise in its ability to more effectively communicate our meeting materials and governance information with our Directors. This initiative has been postponed until a more secure interface can be found and until all of data has been recorded. An intranet will be amazing to have not only for Board meetings but for transitions, shadowing, and employee training.

### **Student Centre Project**

Another major part of my work as CEO of the corporation has been my involvement in the New Student Centre Project. This project has been going on since 2001, and is finally coming close to a resolution. Throughout the summer, myself, the VP Finance, VP Governance & Legal Affairs, and our Director of Services have been working on finishing the groundwork laid out by last year's team to finalize the dissolution of the trust fund and begin construction before year's end. As of now the trust fund has been released and we are working with Nipissing University to get our financing plan, operating agreements, and construction documents finalized so we can go to tender in November. I cannot stress enough that construction starting before year's end is not an absolute, it is tentative as we will only be able to make it if all things go smoothly within the next couple months. If there are any hiccups, we may have to have the building redesigned to fit updates in building permits requirements, and this will push the start of construction back a little bit.

### **THE PRESIDENT AS SPOKESPERSON**

Finally, in my capacity as Spokesperson of the corporation, I not only have been delivering reports on behalf of NUSU at Nipissing's Board of Governors and Academic Senate, but also speaking at University orientation events and advocating for students on all levels of government. Another aspect of my duties in this role is to build relationships, and promote the values of NUSU.

So far this year, each Executive, Staff and Director have done some amazing things in support of students. One of our first steps was to start strengthening our relationships with different departments and groups on campus and within the North Bay community. Beginning with the guidance of last year's Executive team and of our office staff, we began meeting with

many different groups in the school, some of which we had great ties with as an organization and some where the ongoing conversation had to be rekindled.

At these meetings we were hearing so much feedback on what NUSU could be doing more to support students and our university. This advice ranged from how relationship fell flat in the past and what we could do to improve them moving forward, and in almost every meeting we had we became aware of a new support of service on campus that we had not known of before! In light of these meetings, we have been working more closely with departments and faculty on campus to better reach out to our students and make them aware of all that is going on. I can say for certain, in all my years at Nipissing, the spirit of collegial governance and collaboration between departments has never been stronger. The closer we have been working together, the more we have been able to reach students and grow as a community.

Our meetings within the North Bay community have been just as fruitful. Within the first two weeks in office, we met with the Mayor to talk about opportunities for students within the City of North Bay and how we can better engage students in local events. This evolved into connections being made with the local Fire Department, who helped us during Frosh Week, as well as being able to speak with the organizer of the local job fairs who can help us bring more opportunity to our students in need of employment to pay for their tuition, textbooks, groceries, etc. This is just one example, we also had Executives attend the Capitol Centre Town Hall this summer for the first time; we have been working more with the Gathering Place and Centre for Community Living; and with the Police Department in promoting the Good Neighbor Program, and there is still more to come.

### **Advocating for Better Transportation for Students in Ontario**

This past May, I serendipitously ran into local City Council member, Mac Bain, on campus while he was helping set-up for the FONOM (Federation Of Northern Ontario Municipalities) Conference that was happening here at Nipissing University, May 10<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup>. During this interaction he recalled his intention to invite the presidents of the Nipissing and Canadore student unions to the talk Premier Kathleen was having on May 11<sup>th</sup>, and the Ministers Forum on May 12<sup>th</sup>, which was a pretty exciting opportunity. During the events in which I was invited to attend, I was surrounded by fellow officials elected to represent large groups of individuals in a defined region of Northern Ontario; the only difference being all of their spaces were cities towns. I was proudly the only student representative in attendance (from my knowledge), representing all students of Nipissing University!

Unfortunately, this meant that I was unable to participate in the question periods which followed the opening dialogues at each session because I was not a Mayor or member of a municipality council. However, I was able to catch one of the ministers after the minister forum. During the forum the three ministers present, Minister of Municipal Affairs: Bill Mauro, Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry: Kathryn McGarry, and Minister of Energy: Glenn

Thibeault, all advocated for the municipalities to support their local colleges and universities, as well as immigration, to help with population decline slowly rising in the North. After the session finished, I was able to catch one of the ministers as they were walking off stage to offer a student perspective of how provincial government could help the municipalities support their local post-secondary institutions: by making travel to North Bay (and the North in general) more accessible for people living in Southeastern, Ontario, in the Ottawa-Ottawa Valley region. Dissatisfied with the response I was given, or lack thereof, I have written a letter to send to our Minister of Transportation, Steven Del Duca, who would be the most appropriate MPP to bring approach about this issue.

The letter reiterates the points raised by the ministers at the FONOM conference about needing to support local universities and colleges to counteract population declines and explain the barriers students face in coming to school in Northern Ontario from south-eastern Ontario. Further it will proposes two solutions that we see: expanding the regions of operation for Ontario Northland and Greyhound buses so that they are able to service both regions of Ontario without conflict, and by increasing the budget for these bus companies to allow for more routes to be in service and ticket costs to lower.

I was also able to talk to a provincial advocate of travel within Ontario by being able to access the booths open for the FONOM conference in the Canadore Gym once I got my name tag. The group is called NOERN (Northern and Eastern Ontario Rail Network, and they would love the opportunity to come and talk to the Board about helping improve transportation options for students. They are advocates of increasing the provincial budget for rail travel, and raised some very provocative points regarding the how the budget for transportation is allocated in Ontario. The one that struck me the most was that for every taxpayer in Ontario, \$155 is put towards the go-network in Toronto and only \$0.86 is given to travel in Northern Ontario.

### **Student Representatives on Faculty Councils**

As part of my role as Spokesperson, I am a big advocate for student leadership on campus and as such I do my best to not only promote leadership on campus but feel student leaders should be supported. There are so many student leaders on campus, each of which deserves recognition. One of these leaders that go unnoticed are our student representatives on each department's Faculty Council. At the same time, however, there are faculty's that have difficulties finding student representatives to sit on their Faculty Council. Absence of a student rep means, 1) the student voice is not heard in decisions made by each department, 2) the council can have difficulties reaching quorum to even be able to make these decisions or elect representation for Academic Senate; the latter being a common grievance shared during my two and a half years on sitting on Senate. Therefore, having student representation for faculty councils is paramount to the operations and success of our programs offered at Nipissing University.

NUSU being advocates for student advocacy, I wanted to ensure that all student voices are heard and all departments are able to make the decisions they need to to provide quality education at Nipissing University. This would require knowing who are the current student representatives, how they were gained their seats on the councils, and which councils don't yet have/have difficulties finding a student representative. As per some great advice received at our meeting with NUFA, I reached out to Murat Tuncali, the Dean of Arts & Science, to meet with each faculty Director to get information regarding this. At the meeting I was told that there is no set process for how each department chooses their rep; it is rather informal, at times faculty approach an involved and enthusiastic student to sit on their council. At other times, the student rep position(s) are filled by executive members of the faculty specific club or society, i.e. Psychology Society and the Geography Club. I will be further discussing ways to improve the method of finding student representatives on faculty councils with the Dean and within NUSU so that we are able to ensure student voices are heard and that those voices get the recognition they deserve as leaders within our Lakers community.

### **Developing Internship and Placement Opportunities at NUSU**

My supports for student leaders includes my fellow executives when they feel overwhelmed in their roles or are in need of assistance, and I do my best to help wherever I am needed to. For example, sometimes as a prominent figure in Academic Senate within the University for the past 3 years, and currently as NUSU president, people feel comfortable approaching me with ideas and proposals they have to develop new opportunities for students in collaboration with the student union, as previously mentioned. One of these people was Dr. Mary Pat Sullivan, the new Director of the School of Human and Social Development - Social Work, who approached me about participating in the Bachelor of Social Work Orientation day, which evolved into a conversation with Amy Spencer, who is the Field Program Coordinator for the BSW program. Amy is interested in being able to provide Bachelor Social Work students in their Professional Years (3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> year) the option to have their placements at NUSU. This would be a furthering of the opportunity already provided to business students to intern at our office for course credits on the program developed by our VP GLA earlier this summer. They expressed the desire to further develop our internship opportunities to students in other programs so I saw this as a perfectly timed meeting! As of this moment nothing is final and it just a rudimentary idea that needs to be ironed out, but I am looking forward to seeing more students be able to benefit from NUSU academically as we continue down this path.

### **Orientation Days**

Then obviously, one of my duties as Spokesperson, as previously stated, has been addressing students and their supporters at Orientation days. These include, New Student Orientation (NSO), Mature and Transfer Student Orientation (MTSO) and Accessibility Transition Program (ATP), run through Student Learning and Transitions (SLT). All of these events went really well this year and I must congratulate everyone within SLT and SDS for their

hard work on organizing these events, a lot of which was done by outstanding student leaders. They are exemplars of student leadership doing great things at Nipissing and in the North Bay Community. The first year students were lucky to have them as their welcoming committee to our Nipissing.

### *New Student Orientation*

This year, NSO ran from July 10th-14th and we saw a lot of new students come to the school excited to become Lakers and participate in our Frosh Week. NUSU had a table set up at the information fair to speak to students and supporters, as well as having our tables set up upstairs to sell our Frosh kits and NUSU merchandise. In addition to selling our NUSU scarves mittens, pens, lanyards, face paint and pens, we had a NSO Special that sold very well. It was \$25 and included either a scarf or a pair of mittens, in addition to a lanyard, pen and face paint. I recommend we promote this special again for next year as it was well received! Our NUSU representation in sessions was also very well received. Shane and J'aime sat in on the Lakers-to-Lakers panels, and I delivered a welcoming address to supporters and students to our little slice of northern paradise.

### *Mature and Transfer Student Orientation*

MTSO happened on August 28th and 31st here at Nipissing University. The event was organized through Student Development Services to introduce mature, transfer and bridging students to our campus. These students tend to have different needs, experiences, and concerns than students entering university straight from high school so I was happy to be able to participate and learn more about what we can do to expand our services to meet the needs of these students. I gave a welcome address in the mornings, and participated on the Lakers-to-Lakers panel in the afternoons. NUSU also had a booth at the information fair held, which was attended by Cooper, Bryanne, Warren, Shane to talk to students more about our health plan, frosh week, how to get involved on campus, and any other questions or concerns that were had by students and their supporters. I think the event went very well. The group size was smaller than during New Student Orientation (NSO) and I think that worked in our favour to provide a unique and more personalized experience for the new students. From this experience, I think there is opportunity for us to look more into what supports and programming we can provide for these mature, transfer, and bridging students. I would love to sit down with any Directors, Executives, and Students to explore what needs we are not meeting that we could be addressing. It would be great to learn more about mature, transfer and bridging student experiences as Nipissing students and how they interact with the services on campus.

### *Accessibility Transition Program*

The Accessibility Transition Program (ATP) was a four day orientation event organized through Student Accessibility Services that ran from August 23<sup>rd</sup> to August 26<sup>th</sup>. The purpose of ATP is to introduce new Nipissing students with disabilities to the services and resources

available to them on campus and in the City of North Bay, as part of their transition from high school to university.

This year, the program had close to twenty students register and take part in the program. NUSU was able to provide each one of them with lanyards for their ATP orientation kits and they were also one of the first students to receive our new NUSU Calendar from our Communications Department.

I was also asked to speak to the students to welcome them to Nipissing and NUSU on August 23<sup>rd</sup> in the Governors House Residence's Assembly Room. It was really nice to see some of the students I had met earlier this summer at New Student Orientation and speak to them all in a more casual setting. That being said, I still did my overview of the three things that NUSU can do for you (Voice - student government and advocacy; Support - health plan, student food bank, personal budgeting templates, etc.; Social - clubs, events, and volunteering). I also emphasised the amazing supports we have for students at Nipissing by relating to my personal experiences struggling with my own disabilities and health last year. The students were surprised to hear I had a disability but I was told that they were happy to see someone with a disability doing so well at Nipissing because it meant that they had the potential to succeed here as well. I advised them to reach out to SAS whenever they need to and to not be afraid to ask for help. There are so many people on campus willing to help that they should never feel alone or hopeless. They are all worthy of success, and Nipissing University will always be here to help them achieve it.

All-in-all, the event was a success! I know each and every student who participated in the Accessibility Transition Program gained some invaluable resources from their participation that will aid them immensely throughout their time with us here at Nipissing. I have a good feeling that this bunch will do some amazing things here.

### *NUSU Frosh Week 2017!*

We are also very happy with the success of this year's Frosh Week organized by our VP Services, J'aime Brunet, with the aid of our extremely hard-working Director of Services, Warren Lindsay, and her team of coordinators: Courtney Ivany, Emily McCarthy, Jessica Nolevski, Rebecca Dubeau, and Thomas Dawson. They put together a great week for the incoming first-year students. Frosh kits actually sold out this year!

I am proud of each and every one of leaders who participated in making this year's frosh week great. Without them, we would not have reached the amount of publicity we have in the local media. The video of our leaders serenading Doris and Ron at the waterfront on Beach Day has had over \$6.6 thousand views from around the world having only been posted for two weeks. It goes without say that this is in no way without regard to our Director of Communications. This year's frosh week is not one the first year students will forget anytime soon and neither will North Bay!