

OPEN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS ASSOCIATION

Central Executive Committee (CEC)

8 - 10 October 2021

UPDATE ON ATHABASCA RELATIONSHIP AND REVIEW OF PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT

The CEC is asked to:-

- i) **note** the update on the relationship, activities and discussion; and
- ii) **approve** the continuation of the informal partnership arrangement set out in the Memorandum of Understanding (appendix 1)

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This paper is put to the CEC by the Students Association President and the Director of Engagement.
- 1.2 The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed by all parties (OU Students Association, Athabasca University Students' Union (AUSU), and Athabasca University Graduate Students' Association (AUGSA)) in March 2021 states that the relationship agreement should be reviewed on a 6-monthly basis by each party's respective governance processes.
- 1.3 This paper provides an update on the developments in the relationship over the last 6 months and asks the CEC to approve a continuation of the agreement under the existing terms.

2. Update on Recent Developments

- 2.1 *Regular discussion:* Over the last 6 months we have had two meetings with student leaders and staff from Athabasca involving broad discussions of current organisational updates, sharing challenges and issues that distance-learning students are facing, and opportunities for partnership activities.
- 2.2 *Opportunities for partnership activities:* During our discussions, three opportunities for partnership work were identified:
 - 2.2.1 *Support with Elections Review:* The Students Association's Elections Review Working Group wanted to explore the idea of identifying an independent reviewer of our elections process. Athabasca were an obvious candidate

given their similar organisational context and challenges. Both AUSU and AUGSA were very interested in discussing this further, even if the outcome was a less formal sharing of best practice. The Vice President (Admin) and Director of Membership Services met recently with representatives from Athabasca to begin discussions.

- 2.2.2 *Involvement in Benchmarking activities:* The Strategy and Insights team are planning on adding benchmarking activity and data to existing KPI data in order to provide a richer analysis of our performance against similar organisations. Again, Athabasca is an obvious candidate and they have agreed to discuss this opportunity further with us. This work has not yet begun but is planned for the future.
- 2.2.3 *Regular topical discussion meeting for student leaders:* All parties were eager to provide opportunities for CEC members to benefit from this partnership. Therefore, the Association President has proposed the idea of a quarterly discussion meeting to bring student leaders from all parties together to talk about relevant topics and share best practice and ideas. The proposed idea is that a topic would be selected in advance (e.g. building a student community, or student volunteering) and student leaders (and staff) with an interest would be able to attend to take part in a conversation and get to meet and build relationships with their Canadian counterparts. The exact format is still in discussion, but this would be an optional meeting that CEC members could attend only when the topic is relevant to their portfolio or just of general interest. It is hoped that other opportunities for partnership working may also emerge from these interesting and informal meetings.

3. Approving the continuation of the MoU with Athabasca

- 3.1 The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed by all parties (OU Students Association, Athabasca University Students' Union (AUSU), and Athabasca University Graduate Students' Association (AUGSA)) in March 2021 states that the relationship agreement should be reviewed on a 6-monthly basis by each party's respective governance processes.
- 3.2 The MoU is a non-legally binding agreement that commits the Association to exploring opportunities to develop mutually beneficial partnership activities and share knowledge, ideas and best practice. It sets out agreed principles that will underpin the working relationship.
- 3.3 The partnership agreement and activities with Athabasca cost the Association nothing at all.

4. Recommendation and Decision

- 4.1 This paper recommends that the CEC approve the continuation of the partnership arrangement under the MoU for a further 6 months, when a further update and review will take place.

Sarah Jones, President
Dan Moloney, Director of Engagement