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To whom it may concern,

Hi, Faculty of Arts students! My name is Sebastian, and I am an immigrant, community organizer and 4th-year undergraduate in the Urban Studies Department. Throughout my tenure as a university student, I have been fortunate enough to take part in student leadership roles such as FASA’s Street Team Director and Urban Studies Representative, as well as an executive position with UrbanCSA. These roles not only allowed me to develop and hone my organizational skills and leadership toolset but also gifted me with the wonderful opportunity to meet and engage with my community of peers at UCalgary. However, these engagement opportunities also caused me great concern as they highlighted the increasing difficulties and unmet needs that our student body has encountered in the last three years. I have also come to realize that despite our differences, students throughout our faculty are equally affected by a large variety of issues that must be addressed.

Students are being placed at a crossroads by the relentless pressure of increasingly expensive tuition and other student life difficulties, like unaffordable rent, increased grocery expenses and diminished employment opportunities ([Alberta Budget Fails To Support Student Employment And Increasing Costs](https://www.su.ucalgary.ca/2022/alberta-budget-fails-to-support-student-employment-and-increasing-costs/))

To add further difficulty, the political assault on higher education has fundamentally come to threaten the capacity for students to self-actualize and advance their lives and careers, evidenced by the annual increases in the number of youth leaving Alberta to pursue higher education and employment ([Why Youth Say They're Leaving Alberta](https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/calgary/youth-migration-calgary-vancouver-toronto-1.6391712)). This is completely unacceptable since the availability of student and instructor resources - and the quality of our education as a whole - has been deeply affected due to the multibillion-dollar budget cuts to the post-secondary education system ([SU Statement on PSE Budget Cuts](https://www.su.ucalgary.ca/2021/alberta-budget-continues-to-squeeze-students/))

Unsurprisingly, members of our faculty’s student body have noticed these and more issues affecting them and their peers and have, as a result, chosen to tackle these themselves individually. It’s of utmost importance that FASA provides institutional resources to grassroots initiatives that our peers have started, such as the arts Food Co-op, the Alberta Coalition for Affordable Tuition (ACAT), and interest clubs like Students for Direct Action (SDA) and ACT.YYC, department clubs, and more.

Since the faculty of arts student association has resources and an institutional position primed for the mobilization of students to affect change, we must stand at the forefront of these issues, which universally affect our whole student body. The upcoming provincial election has created an opportunity for students to exercise their collective power as the future of this province. Therefore, this calls for a more proactive student presence in the political arena for organizations like FASA.

My platform can be summarized under the following three policy areas:

1. Student empowerment
   * Create and support Arts student campaigns like:
     1. Organizing against budget cuts
     2. Continue FASA’s activity as a member of the Alberta Coalition for Affordable Tuition (ACAT), which organizes local student organizations against post-secondary budget cuts and tuition hikes.
     3. Empower Arts Faculty students to engage in advocacy on their behalves, with FASA support
     4. Liaison with the Students Union to help facilitate a “Get out and Vote” campaign for the upcoming provincial election
2. Increase FASA’s scope and relevance
   * Create and continue strengthening partnerships with academic/non-academic organizations to advance the interests of arts students
     1. Other faculty student associations within UCalgary and across the province
     2. Labour unions like AUPE local 52, CUPE, etc., and professional associations such as TUCFA.
     3. Community grassroots associations like Good Neighbour, Inclusive Canada, etc.
     4. Foster the human capital of the organization and its members to better facilitate the accrual of grants and sponsorship
3. Improve the quality of communication and engagement amongst department and non-department student clubs within the faculty of arts.
   * Increased institutional support for student-led initiatives not part of the Students’ Union like the Liam’s Project, Black People United or Pangea.
4. Increase the quality and quantity of intra and cross-faculty outreach opportunities between FASA, Faculty of Arts students/clubs and the student body.
5. Creation of forums for students at large to better voice concerns and recommendations to improve their student experience.
6. Organizing of grassroots community-oriented workshops to provide students with the opportunity to learn and share tool sets for taking part in social action, with a particular focus on students who have demonstrated a leadership role in the community.

In light of these circumstances, the Faculty of Art’s Students Association VP External position needs to be filled by an individual that is steadfast, unyielding in their values, and reasonably uncompromising in their resolve. I believe that I am that individual. For more information, please visit @seb4fasa\_vpexternal on Instagram!