

University has much to offer

an interview with Phil Soper

by Wes Oginski

Phil Soper is the Students' Union president for the 81/82 fall term. Last spring, his entire slate took office. He is a fourth year Commerce student and should graduate sometime this term. Wes Oginski is a news editor of the Gateway.

OGINSKI: State the function of the Students' Union.

SOPER: We exist as a democratically elected organization. We are to provide a service for the students.

That can take many forms. We run retail outlets like the bars and the theatre. They are expected not only to provide a service but also to turn a profit into the services that do not make money, but only cost money, such as the ExamRegistry.

Secondly, we run services just for the student, like the Gateway.

There are 120 clubs registered in the Students' Union. They can all apply for funds, and many receive office space.

External to the Students' Union, the Student Council directed by the executive committee, myself and the four vice-presidents, try to provide some political leadership.

We want to encourage people to get involved and to think along political lines to get broader social issues that do not touch lives on campus but are important because they are citizens of the province, country, and the world. The Students' Union provides an outlet for debate or discussion along these lines.

O: What are your responsibilities?

S: I chair the executive council which gives a lot of direction to Students' Council. I chair the Nominating Committee that fills positions within the Students' Union organization, and for the General Faculties Council, and various other things. I also chair the Bylaws and Constitution Committee, which deals with our constitution and bylaws and tries to set up a quasi-legal system to make the whole thing work properly.

O: When will the new business manager be appointed?

S: On Tuesday (September 1), at the Student Council meeting. He has already been reviewed by the hiring committee, composed of myself, Brian, Elise, our external auditor Bert Krull and our advertising manager Tom Wright. We are recommending he be hired. I suspect Council will ratify his appointment. His name is George Ivanisko.

O: How accessible is the executive?

S: I think all elected officials always talk about their accessibility. The executive is extremely busy and that means Students' Union committees, Council committees, and so on. So we are often out of the office, but that does not mean we are not accessible.

We post office hours and try to keep them. If we are not there, all they have to do is leave a message with the receptionist or leave a note on our desk, and we will indeed get back to them. The doors are always open. If we are there, we will talk to any one.

O: When and how are Students' Union decisions made?

S: It depends on what kind of decision you are talking about. If you are talking about a policy decision, like the wording on literature for tuition fees, those type of decisions are always taken to Students' Council.

More often than not it originates from within the executive committee, because we are a full-time paid staff. We have the expertise. We have a paid researcher, Stuart McKay, who provides us with further expertise. We would discuss it further in the executive committee, then

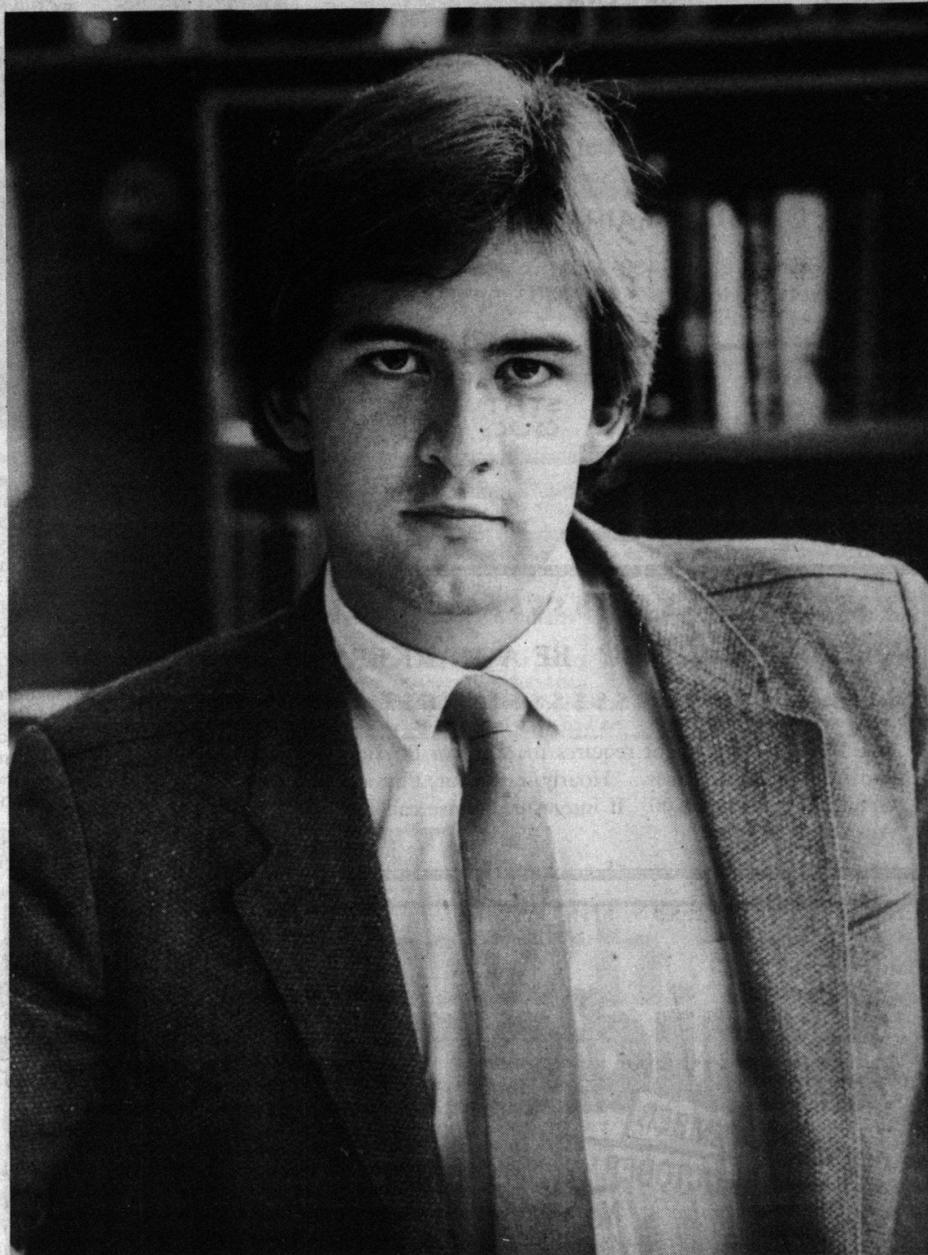


photo by Ray Giguere

SU president Phil Soper says "the door is always open" to people with questions or who wish to get involved. That's Room 259 SUB; don't all come at once.

In the coming year, the main focus of this Students' Union will be on internal financing ...

The SU business manager reports to me for matters of general administration and over the summer time, without a business manager, I assumed a lot of those functions.

It is an interesting job because it entails working both internally as well as externally. All the vice-presidents [Lisa Walter, v.p. External; Liz Lunney, v.p. Academic; Brian Bechtel, v.p. Internal; Elise Gaudet, v.p. Finance] can comment and make observations outside their portfolios, but they are all specialists.

The president oversees the operation and gets involved where his or her expertise happens to dictate. So when an issue comes up at the Board of Governors (which I also sit on), they are often political issues like tuition policy. I work closely with the vice-president External and things like ACT and the Federation of Alberta Students. I present a case to the Board of Governors for review.

form of a motion or resolution. If Students' Council accepts that, the decision then would be put to vote.

In the decision making process, there is a built in chance for the student to display his or her problems with a decision. All Student Council meetings are open to all students. We certainly encourage and hope to see students at the Student Council meetings. We meet every second Tuesday through the term at University Hall [across from SUB].

O: Are some sessions closed?

S: The only time assembly would move into closed session would be matters discussing a personal career. It is a rare occurrence. Like a business transaction that should not be public.

To give you an example, there is a motion next agenda (September 1) that basically says ratify the Selection Committee's

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