Annual Strategic Plan 2022-23

Together, forward.

Prepared by the 22-23 ESS Sr. Exec Team
The executive officers of the Engineering Students’ Society (ESS) for the 2022-2023 academic year:

**President:** Tahmid Al-Hafiz and Chanpreet Singh  
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**VP Finance:** Eric Tran and Philip Zhu  
**VP Internal:** Holly Clark and Zack Dorward  
**VP Social:** Roanne Andaya and Cameron Scott
Definitions

Academic Year - The academic year is defined by the University of Alberta Calendar
APEGA - Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of Alberta
BoD - Board of Directors
CoFA - Council of Faculty Associations
Conflict of Interest - A situation in which a person is in a position to derive personal benefit from actions or decisions made outside of the mandate of the society and in their official capacity
EDID - Equity, Diversity, Inclusivity, and Decolonization
EFC - Engineering Faculty Council
ERAG = Engineering Restructuring Advocacy Group
ESAF - Engineering Students’ Activities Fund
ESGF - Engineering Student Groups Fund
ESS - Engineering Students’ Society of the University of Alberta
ETLC - Engineering Teaching & Learning Center
FAMF - Faculty Association Membership Fee
FYEC - First Year Engineering Club
PRC - Policy Review Committee
SLC - Student Liaison Committee
UFC - Undergraduate Funding Committee
UAEC - University of Alberta Engineering Competition
Organizational Priorities

- **Curating a mission, vision, and values statement for the ESS**

  The ESS currently has an organizational mandate, but a clear mission, vision and values statement are still absent within our constitution. We look forward to creating one such that aligns immaculately with all the incredible programs and services we have to offer.

- **Creation of an annual and a 4-year strategic vision for the society**

  This preliminary draft is a significant step forward in our creation of an annual strategic plan for the 2022-23 academic year. An annual strategic plan aids the society in undertaking clear advocacy efforts, as well as maintaining maximum operational efficiency across all the departments. Another priority for this year would be introducing a 4-year vision to guide our operations with a long-term prospect in mind. As per President Bill Flanagan’s [University of Alberta for Tomorrow roadmap](#) — the university is set to grow to a size of over 50000 students by the year 2025. Our goal is to lay out a 4-year strategy that shall focus largely on how the Engineering Students’ Society shall operate and expand accordingly in order to cater the needs of about ~6000 undergraduate Engineering students by 2025. Such an initiative was undertaken by the ESS in the past in 2019 (and revisited in 2020), but unfortunately was never completed. We plan to build on the foundations laid by the old drafts and develop it with additional consultation from all stakeholders in order to curate a sustainable, comprehensive 4-year vision for our society.

- **Equity, Diversity, Inclusivity and Decolonization (EDID)**

  We are proud to acknowledge that the Faculty of Engineering is a very diverse community. The ESS undeniably plays a pivotal role in shaping engineering community culture, therefore our commitment to EDI shall always remain firm and square. We can make sure that we work collaboratively to keep UofA’s engineering community a safe space for individuals of all ethnicities, backgrounds, races and 2SLGBTQ+ communities for years to come. This is certainly the most suitable time to formalize our commitment to EDID by incorporating it into our core mission, vision, and values. We are working on drafting an inclusivity policy, while actively working on EDID with other stakeholders within our faculty. Following the creation of an EDID division and the introduction of the brand-new VP Community portfolio, ESS shall establish permanent EDID-focused event(s) and continue our collaboration with ‘The Inclusivity Project’ this year.
• In person events with improved accessibility

We are ready to make an aspirational statement to guide all ESS divisions to plan for in-person events for the post-Covid world. Students are desperate to get a sense of the vibrant engineering community at the UofA, and being able to offer them the in person experience of our ESS events play a key role in getting there. While upholding the importance of maximizing accessibility, we shall prioritize hosting hybrid events around the year.

• ESS Governance Review

Last year, we successfully completed an organizational restructuring within the society in order to better balance the portfolios and to make the ESS more accessible, all while providing improved service and advocacy delivery. Now, as a part of Phase 2, we are planning to engage extensively with our engineering leadership and greater community to collectively develop a more sustainable, robust governance model for the society. The structure of the ESS Board of Directors and its committees were adopted in 2003/2005, making them about 17-19 years old at this point. Our campus and community have evolved a lot over these years; hence our governance structure also calls to be modernized and adapt to a more equitable model.

• Strengthening outreach about our advocacy, programs, and services

At the ESS — we proudly host a variety of events, programs, and services throughout the year catering to the needs of a diverse engineering population. However, we often stand face to face with the issue of a large portion of the student body being unaware of our contributions. This year, the ESS plans to rethink and revamp its outreach mechanism and investigate creative solutions to better communicate our initiatives to our student body. This is being considered a multi-layered task, where we plan to boost our social media presence, increase engagement with first-year students, and optimize the role of faculty in promoting various ESS activities.

• Transparency and accountability in decision making

A significant portion of our engineering community feel the need for the ESS to be more transparent in its operations and decisions making as a Faculty Association. Thus, this year, we are going to lead sustainable measures to improve transparency and accountability within our organization. Some early initiatives being discussed are: (i) reworking our policies for the Office of the Elections to increase engagement from general students at the ESS Sr. Executive elections (ii) making our BoD meetings more accessible to the public (iii) releasing Exec Meeting minutes, and committee / council appointments publicly on our website to remain in consistency with SU Bylaws, and much more.
• **Reduce reliance on FAMF by increasing our sponsorship and alternative revenue streams**

As a Faculty Association, we have done a commendable job in reducing our reliance on FAMF over the past few years. Currently, only about 36% of our budget comes from FAMF [1] but we are striving to reduce this reliance further. We are committed to increasing our sponsorship earnings to bolster the funding stream so that we may transform ourselves into a fully self-sustained organization over the years. The GEER Store (located in ETLC and operated by the ESS), grants us a huge potential to generate additional revenue in a feasible manner. We are going to explore and present multiple avenues to increase revenue to the BoD in the upcoming months.

• **Supporting Engineering Project Groups**

We aim to launch a new division of Project Group Services to provide additional and centralized support to all engineering project groups. This brand-new Project Group Services division will provide direct support to engineering project groups by making resources from the Faculty and the ESS more accessible to student groups. It shall also serve as the ESS’ main point of communication with project groups and work directly with the faculty to advocate their needs whenever required.
Advocacy Priorities

- **Qualifying Year (First Year, Y1Q2 and Y2Q2)**

  The Faculty of Engineering is currently exploring new ways to allow students a direct entry into an engineering program or a different form of qualifying year. In this field, our priorities remain to actively consult with our constituents while continuing the advocacy work started by the previous ESS team under ERAG [2]. The current discipline qualifying system is known for causing futile competition that often leads to mental stress for many qualifying year students. Furthermore, students are forced to spend thousands of dollars on courses in their first year (and Y2Q2) that many disciplines never really require.

- **Indigenous and International students**

  Being important minority groups within our community, the ESS should advocate more sensitively for the needs of international and indigenous students pursuing education in Engineering. We aim to encourage, empower, and equitably integrate them into our core governance to amplify their currently underrepresented voice and contemplate their needs.

- **Discipline Transfer**

  Several students are opting to transfer disciplines in senior years only to gain a place in one of their choice. We identify this as a problem that lies within our defective discipline placement system. As their Engineering student representative organization, we must advocate for a smoother transition and clearer pathway for students who opt to switch disciplines.

- **Co-op: reviewing the rank & match system and advocating for lower fees**

  Engineering students deserve the support to be able to save money from their co-op earnings in order to pay tuition/living. However, the co-op fees that students are required to pay each semester are still considered unreasonably high by most. For example, an international student pays almost $3000 for each co-op term that they take, an amount more than or equivalent to 1 month’s earnings for them. This year, the ESS aims to advocate for lower coop fees across all programmes (for both domestic & intl. student bodies), simultaneously also pushing to review the rank and match system for coop placements.
• **Increasing course availability to students**

Multiple Engineering departments are currently undergoing a process of re-evaluating the course syllabus and requirements. This opens the right opportunity for the ESS to advocate and fulfil long term student demands for more spring/summer courses offerings, creating the pathway to earn credits through completing alternate courses, and opening up more course options for Y1Q2/Y2Q2 students.

• **Consistency in course outlines, grading rubric and setting GPA expectations for courses**

We often deal with scenarios where departments outside of the Faculty of Engineering clearly do not have any GPA expectations for certain courses. This leads up to bizarre class averages as low as 0.9, negatively affecting a great number of students. We plan to advocate for a clear GPA expectation for each course that the faculty should provide to all professors for their classes. We shall also eagerly push to ensure consistency in course outlines and grading rubrics to elevate our students’ overall academic experience in the Faculty of Engineering.

• **More accessible awards**

The ESS shall advocate to make sure that all faculty sponsored and external donor awards inclusive and open to all engineering undergraduate students. These awards empower students, recognize their contributions in making the world a better place — thus, we thoroughly believe that all students must have equal opportunities to contest and be eligible for the awards and scholarship available within the faculty.
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Portfolio Specific Priorities

President

- **Organizational and Advocacy Priorities**
  The President shall take a lead on all organizational and advocacy priorities as outlined above.

- **Accommodation for religious festivals and diverse student groups**
  As our community is diverse thus we as a society need to advocate for accommodations for students on basis of religious festivals and other important faith-related days.

- **Exploration Credits implementation**
  Exploration credits are approved by the GFC, we shall work with faculty on successful implementation in engineering, to allow our students to have the flexibility to take electives without worrying about their GPA.

- **Reviewing all policies and procedures**
  Many of our policies and procedures are outdated, thus they need to be thoroughly reviewed and with a focus on our core mission, vision and values. For efficient governance, we need to review our procedures and improve our operational efficiency where possible.

- **Review effectiveness of FYEC and ESS Committees**
  To ensure our governance practices are effective, we will be reviewing our committee's composition, mandate and role. We will also review FYEC effectiveness in advocating and representing first year students.

- **Advocate for more seats in University and Faculty decision making committees**
  To strengthen our advocacy, we need to advocate for student representation at multiple faculty and university governance committees. This shall enable ESS to more effectively advocate for the engineering students interests.
Academic and Services

- **Division of Entrepreneurship & Innovation**
  This new role shall enable the ESS to work with ICE incubator and young engineering entrepreneurs and innovators to provide the necessary support as required.

- **Co-op, quality of education and student mental health**
  These are core areas on which ESS will work with APC to advocate on.

- **Revitalizing both Public Speaking and Professional Development Divisions**
  Over the past few years, we have seen reduced student participation in both these divisions, thus we shall relook into the roles of these divisions and propose mechanisms to improve the student experience and engagement in initiatives led by these divisions.

- **Academic services and support**
  Advocating for resources to aid students in the success of their academic careers

Communications

- **Reviewing and improving the ESS website**
  a. To provide information about all ESS Services, grants and programs - This is very important for us to achieve Organizational Priority 5.
  b. To increase accessibility to EDID and mental health resources - It is important that the student community is aware of all the support that is available to them.
  c. To make the ESS website a one-stop shop for everything - More the students visit our website, the more they get to know about ESS and help us with our Organizational Priority 5.
  d. To better advertise Geer Store items - This allows the ESS to increase our revenue and achieve Organizational Priority 7.

- **Increasing and humanizing ESS's social media presence**
  - To increase engagement with students - We must take advantage of our Instagram to interact with the student body in a less formal manner, and in doing so make the ESS more approachable when students have questions about engineering, events, or other student groups.
• To provide better support to other student groups - Increasing our social media presence helps us promote student groups’ events and programs more effectively.
• Adding ESS Instagram stickers - This can be a fun way for students to interact with the ESS and the Engineering Community, and perhaps even boost morale.
• Showcasing our diverse student body by sharing their stories on social media and publications
• To help engineering students feel better represented in their fields - A big part of engineering is forming connections with fellow students, and by showcasing diversity on social media and publications we can help students feel more comfortable and connected to their peers.
• To promote multiculturalism in Engineering - It is important to inform students about the many cultures that form our student body, and by sharing not only their stories but also information about cultural events and holidays on social media and publications we can help improve the engineering community.

• Reviving the ESS Spotify Playlist
  
  Because who doesn’t like sharing music?

Community

• First-year Guide
  We need to ensure that we as a representative body are providing essential information to first-year students and thus a formal guide shall help us with it which we shall develop with collaboration on FYEC.

• EDID
  Reiterating a priority to ensure we achieve our organizational priority 8.

• Sustainability
  We shall explore more new sustainable programs such as the E-waste recycling program, and dorm donation program.

External Relations

• Advocacy and Community Building for Y2Q2 Students
  We must ensure the faculty is accountable for any policies and academic structures impacting Y2Q2 students. In addition, we aim to help Y2Q2 students build a sense of community by hosting Y2Q2 social events throughout the school year and leading or supporting an independent Y2Q2 team in GEER Week.
Institutional Outreach
We will continue ongoing efforts to maintain and improve relationships with institutions with a UAlberta Engineering Transfer Program through regular correspondence and joint hosting of student events. In addition, we will work with the faculty to reach out to high schools, present at schools, and develop resources to familiarize incoming students with the engineering student community, clubs, and academic support programs.

Bigger & Better Career Fair
With public health restrictions lifting, we will support students in an in-person Career Fair format. We will maintain current relationships with industry partners and aim to increase company attendance by fostering new partnerships. To ensure that companies for each discipline are present at the Career Fair, we will survey students for company suggestions. We will also host seminar sessions in collaboration with Engineering Career Connections to prepare students for the Career Fair.

Competitions
We will reevaluate our membership with WESST and CFES so our students can have the opportunity to participate in competitions across Canada. We will also survey students to gauge interest in developing new competitions and conferences. We will coordinate with industry professionals to judge technical competitions.

Supporting Project Groups
We will launch a new Director position to provide additional and centralized support to engineering project groups. Support to project groups may come in the form of creating a shared drive, hosting skill workshops for better financial management, revenue generation, etc. In general, we will try to improve the quantity and quality of support the ESS gives to project groups.

Finance

Fundraising and Sponsorship
To achieve our organizational priority 7, we shall work on generating more finances from alternative revenue streams.

Reviewing Auditing and Financial Management
In previous years we have faced issues with our internal auditing and financial management such as reimbursements, we will relook into our processes to ensure we are able to be more efficient.
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- **GEER Store stock/inventory**
  Our GEER Store provides us with a huge opportunity to achieve our organizational priority 7, thus we shall work with our internal portfolio, in reviewing our inventory/stock and including more products to generate more revenue and add more value to our community.

- **Ensure students/groups know about ESS funds available to them**
  Our funds are supporting students/groups only when students and groups know about them. Thus we shall work with a communication portfolio to better advertise our funds and achieve our organizational priority 5.

**Internal**

- **E-Class course for Transition and onboarding**
  We have already started work on the creation of an E-Class course for our internal transition and onboarding of volunteers. This shall ensure we are able to train our volunteers with the same resources/material and reduce our own organizational time being spent on one-on-one training.

- **Revamping the GEER Store**
  More merchandise/products such as calculators, lab equipment, lanyard, stickers, pins, e-shop, ARC cards, and more events connected to GEER store. We shall work with the finance portfolio on reinventing our GEER Store.

- **ESS space management and MecE 5th floor**
  Our ESS Spaces are core for our operations and serving students, thus we shall review our space management procedures and review the use of the MecE 5 floor in building a space that is welcoming to all engineering students by working along with the community portfolio.

- **Volunteer appreciation and internal culture**
  As an organization, we are fortunate to have very dedicated volunteers that support us in executing all our programs, services and events. Thus, we shall work toward an improved volunteer appreciation program and overall relooking into our internal culture to promote EDID.
Social

- **GEER Week 81**
  GEER Week is an integral part of engineering culture, and we will ensure that a GEER Week 81 will be held. We will work to re-introduce the event to the community to provide students with the GEER Week experience.

- **Prioritize student feedback**
  To better understand the student body and gain input, a feedback form will be created so that we will be able to understand the aspects of an event that went well, and which parts need improvement. This form will be open and ongoing to ensure students are able to provide feedback at any moment.

- **Maintaining event organization**
  With the expectation that many events will be returning to an in-person format, we will work to maintain the event organization within the ESS and improve the system as we see fit. This includes ensuring that no big events overlap; events are reasonably spaced out throughout the year and maintaining strong professional relationships with discipline clubs and the Student’s Union. This new academic year brings a lot of new opportunities for us to revive the ESS in this post covid world, and rebuild our engineering community to serve the students to our best ability.

References:

[1] E.Franz et. al, ‘ESS Budget 21/22 for BoD’ | Accessible: https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1Iml1Mztkqhtbnn-L8QYyos_4Ga24yaEAwJs60yBtUWl/edit?usp=sharing

[2] Engineering Restructuring Advocacy Group (ERAG) Survey Report | Accessible: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1S44RBQgBRv9lsm_lm4aIXn8RMNVd-M-p0ERbdDql1hU/edit?usp=sharing