AMC University and External Relations Committee

Minutes of January 20th, 2016

Attendance

Present: Robin Asgari (Chair), Margareta Dovgal (Vice-Chair), Jude Crasta (VP External Affairs), Ian Sapollnik (AMS Councilor), Rodney Little Mustache (Student-At-Large), Sareena Mohammad, Jamiu Abdsalami, Mitch Mammel (Student-At-Large), Samantha So

Guests: Kathleen Simpson (Associate VP External Affairs)

Regrets: Jenna Omassi (VP Academic & University Affairs)

Recording Secretary: Margareta Dovgal (Vice-Chair, Student-at-Large)

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 5:01PM.

Amendment of agenda:

Oct. 2nd minutes approval struck out, moved by Jude, seconded by Ian, unanimous

Approval of Agenda

Moved: Margareta Seconded: Jude

That the agenda be adopted, with the amendment that the approval of the previous meeting minutes be deferred to the next meeting.

[The motion carries unanimously.]

Approval of Minutes

Moved by Ian to approve Seconded by Rodney.

[The motion carries unanimously.]

VP External Business

Update from Jude:
Travel report from VPX office, outlining trips in Nov./Dec (purpose, cost, intent)

After COP 21 in Paris, two major issues left for UNECORN; climate action engagement as a university community (meeting with various groups on- and off-campus) not in the sense of targets, but bringing together resources to operationalize these targets. Will be done with City of Vancouver; city council will approve action after COP21 on Feb. 21. Nothing immediate for community to work on, but as an action item, members of UNECORN are asked to suggest contacts for consultation process.

Bigger item: as I’ve spoken to Rodney, we’re working on a strategy for identifying and mitigating barriers to First Nations/Indigenous/Aboriginal students, on a community basis. This is the start of that discussion. What I’m doing now is taking on key issues that people recognize. I’ll be working with Rodney & Salia and we’ll be doing a town hall to get feedback from First Nations communities. I’m not setting a target to be evaluated on within my office, but would like to get the conversation started. Fed. Government’s mandate to implement all TRC recommendations means that we must discuss how to operationalize this (hopefully through UNECORN town hall). Education on indigenous issues needs to be addressed, especially in university context, whether mandatory or optional coursework. There are opponents to this idea. We don’t have a policy in mind or a directive, though we want to hear people’s opinions. I want to know what students think and get the discussion rolling.

**Margareta:** are we doing anything on the next round of Climate Action Leadership Plan engagement through the BC government?

**Jude:** We aren’t doing anything directly with the provincial government, though we will be working with the David Suzuki Foundation on their response.

**Ian:** What will happen after the town hall on education on indigenous issues? How will this be lobbied?

**Jude:** We’ll be working in consultation with other student union (incl. UVSS) to see how our recommendations align and we’ll make suggestions to the provincial government from there.

**Rodney:** When I asked you about calling a town hall – how did the provincial government get involved with this? I got in touch with students and the issues they brought up were university-specific, and they did not look at the government.

**Jude:** the conversation with the government has been happening since October and since the TRC recommendation re: education; they’ve been asking both universities and student unions about working on this issue. We aren’t limiting the town hall conversation to government.
Rodney: You’re going to be asking people two different questions. I wanted to meet with students only on this internal issue. Why didn’t we hear about this at this table sooner?

Jude: Because this was a higher-level conversation that didn’t really have a conclusion until after the holidays.

Rodney: I feel a little bit blindsided by this issue; I really wanted to just get students feedback on what’s going on here. That should have nothing to do with the government. Like for example the price of food on campus. Students are trapped here and the price of food is a serious issue; they have to rely on the food bank and that’s not enough. Why is the government getting involved with that?

Jude: Apologies, the two weren’t meant to conflict. I assumed that these were similar issues. We can do a separate town hall.

Rodney: When I looked at this committee and invited students to come and share their thoughts, asking them as the only Native person on this committee, and to build that community. I wish you had informed in October what was going on in – I’m completely blindsided.

Jude: I was not aware in October that this was anything more than rumors and only had confirmation after the holidays.

Rodney: What I’ve been doing is starting to plan it. Since I’m Indigenous, I still want to meet with them. The vision that I have is to sit and talk with them and get feedback as much as I can. Maybe get door-prizes to get them to stay. The reason I didn’t include it was because it’s much more political.

Jude: That must have been a miscommunication. The last thing I want to do is clash messages, so perhaps I can delay this consultation process while we do the community consultation.

Rodney: We don’t want to ask them to split their thinking.

Jude: How would you best see us opening the conversation on TRC?

Rodney: A mandatory class, but you’d have to go to each Faculty separately. I find it difficult to bring these issues up in class, personally, and I hesitate putting my hand up. It’s a whole different process that’s going to happen, another can of worms. Some students they look at the prices, the lack of Aboriginal students here. There are many issues that need to be talked about and that’s why I wanted to have this town hall.
Jude: Before we go ahead on the TRC process, are we saying we should focus on the issues with the community here and address faculty-specific approach to mandatory classes?

Rodney: Yeah. Another question: who’s at fault here at UBC for the TRC stuff?

Jude: You mean as a point person? It’s not just on a provincial level; the federal government has announced that they’re going to implement, but they haven’t had a chance to act yet. That’s why I want to prepare us to move before we have to scramble to react. Would you be comfortable coordinating a meeting between you, Salia, and I on these issues?

Rodney: Yeah, absolutely.

Jude: With that town hall specifically, I’d like to get you in touch with Aaron, the president. I’ll connect you and Aaron via email so you two can get the town-hall organization started.

Kathleen: If Aaron is busy, I can help organize.

Robin: Anything else?

Jude: Update re: Broadway: things are looking good. On one hand we’re doing the build Broadway campaign (for community awareness, so that people don’t forget about the Broadway line), and on the other hand, we’re lobbying to establish a tripartite funding model. We had an extremely positive conversation with Min. Fassbender; the government knows that the train needs to go out to UBC, so we’re good on that front. Federal government is still a target.

We’re looking at a minimum of 10% from Vancouver, but the number could go higher depending on discussions w/ fed. Government. Specifically, we’re looking at half at least borne by the federal government. This would need to be a project of national significance. Regardless of whether or not the TPP happens, Vancouver will still be extremely important economically as an Asia Pacific Gateway. The Broadway Line is a major project on that front, relieving congestion across the region.

The Mayor is going to Ottawa in February for a Big City Mayors’ Caucus to discuss infrastructure, especially transit. Major mayors are going to be talking about this. The reasons they’re talking about this is because the Bank of Canada has halted interest rate drop. The Broadway Line is a win/win on so many issues.

The City is going to go ahead and ask for 65% federal funding. Robin and I will be heading down to Ottawa on the City’s invitation to meet with Min. Garneau, Min. Freeland, and Tim Krupa (special advisor to PMO on Youth) to get the funding moving forward.
Robin: It looks good. The project would cost only 1% of infrastructure budget for the entire country, and we’re the 3rd biggest region.

**Equity & Accountability**

Rodney: The whole process of needing to pay for a table for people to make decisions about people who are not there. Are there any First Nations people on the BoG?

Jude: Not to my knowledge, no.

Rodney: That really needs to change. Another thing: with the sexual assaults at UBC, how can the BoG refuse to take interviews on issues like that? We need to have at least 2 Aboriginal representatives on the Board of Governors.

Ian: To comment on that, I appreciate what you’re saying, though I do recognize some difficulty with what you’re saying. The BoG is mandated by provincial law, and to get more Aboriginal students on the Board they’d need to stand for election. To mandate it, that would require a change in the University Act.

Rodney: I was reading Ujjal Dosanj’s piece on white men and discomfort talking about privilege. There are so many issues we’re discussing

Jude: In order to create action items for us, short term: we can encourage Aboriginal students to campaign for BoG as the nominations are open. Long term: as Ian mentioned in regards to the University Act, if I were to take this onto my portfolio and get moving on it immediately, the earliest we’d see results is 2017. Factors to keep in mind: the Act affects not just UBC, to amend it we’d need to get a full consultation from all affected universities/post-secondary institutions. I would suggest that we start a conversation with Jenna about moving forward on this. I’m perfectly willing to do this if I receive a mandate from the committee, but we might want to have a longer discussion that has better results. What I would suggest, if we want to have a resolution, is to motion to have a UNECORN review of the Universities Act, with Jenna present.

Kathleen: I think it’s a great idea, and I think we should move towards it. I also wanted to know if the BoG has advisory members.

Jude: Committees have members from across the community.

Kathleen: Can we work with UBC to have advisory members added?

Jude: That’s a Jenna question.
Ian: Move to x, seconded by Rodney.

Abstention: Jude, motion carries.

Sareena: What happens with executive turn over and this plan?

Kathleen: Depends on how the policy is worded, and if it’s passed

Adjourn

Moved: Rodney Seconded: Sareena

The meeting was adjourned at 6:06PM.