AMS Annual General Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, October 21, 2015
Michael Kingsmill Forum

Call to order
The meeting was called to order by President Aaron Bailey at 12:30 pm with approximately 40 students in attendance. Quorum was not present except for the purposes set out in Bylaw 3 (approving financial statements, appointing auditors, receiving reports).

AMS Presidential Report – Aaron Bailey [SCD164-16]
Aaron Bailey read out the report from the President, listing the major events and issues of his term so far:

- The Nest opening (after a rocky year of delays).
- Gupta and Montalbano.
- Athletics.
- Open Education Resources.
- Clubs Resource Centre.
- Digitizing the financial system.
- Balloting station on campus, with 68.5% turnout; new Liberal government.
- Governance review.
- Seeking sustainable home for Block Party and getting Thunderbird Stadium for a one-year pilot.

General Manager’s Report – Ross Horton [SCD165-16]
- Very difficult year last year. Construction obstructed entry to the Old SUB, and there were delays in the opening of the Nest.
- The good news is that we’re in now. It’s much better.

Questions
- Daniel Lam asked if there were reports on youth voter turnout yet.
- Jude Crasta (VP External): A full report is coming soon. At this polling station, there were 15,600 ballots cast; there were 5,000 cast in the pilot project before election day. On election day there were constant lines.

1. MOVED ___, SECONDED ___:

   “That the Alma Mater Society Membership accept the President’s and the General Manager’s Annual Reports as presented.”

   ... Carried

2. MOVED ALEXANDRA LEE MANN, SECONDED ALAN EHRENHOLZ: [SCD166-16] [SCD167-16]
“Be it resolved that the Alma Mater Society Membership accept the Auditor's Report on the Financial Statements as of October 14, 2015 for the fiscal year ending April 30, 2015, as presented.”

“Be it further resolved that the Society approve the Financial Statements as of April 30, 2015.”

… Carried unanimously

3. MOVED DANIEL LAM, SECONDED JUSTIN HABASHI:

"That the D&H Group be retained as the Auditors for the Alma Mater Society of the University of British Columbia Vancouver for the ensuing fiscal year.”

… Carried

Discussion: International Tuition Increases

- Aaron Bailey (AMS President):
  - Last year’s AGM passed motions about tuition increases. We want to talk about the motions passed last time and to see what action we might do now.
  - The three relevant motions from last year said:
    - Oppose the international tuition increase.
    - Support mobilization to oppose the increase.
    - The AMS should organize protests until the Board of Governors votes down the increase.
- Viet Vu (Economics rep on Council) asked about the AMS affordability and accessibility policy.
- Jenna Omassi (AMS VP Academic): Council passed two policies, one related to the University and one externally focused. Both policies addressed more than tuition, talking about housing, open educational resources, etc. So we have policies for working towards students being able to afford and have access to higher education
- Student at large: Have any student groups contacted the AMS about mobilizing against the most recent hikes?
- Jenna Omassi: All the undergraduate societies are working to inform students and meeting with the Administration. There is a group of students, involving the Social Justice Centre and others, looking to support further action. We are meeting them tomorrow to discuss plans for action.
- Arno Rosenfeld (the Ubyssey): Does no one on Council have any ideas about what action to take?
- Alan Ehrenholz (EUS President): For the EUS, I can say that we are consulting our own students. I could guess what they would want, but would rather let the consultation process go forward first.
- Viet Vu: VSEUS is talking to Economics students. This meeting today is a chance for members at large to speak.
- Ava Nasiri (AMS VP Administration): This isn’t the only opportunity for students at large to give input. At any time you can come to the AMS offices.
- Dan Kehila (GSS rep on Council):
  - If we want to have any social activism, how much time do we have?
If we want students to have informed opinions, wouldn’t it be a good idea to provide information to them about increases in tuition, housing, transit, etc. alongside information on salaries?

- **Jenna Omassi:**
  - The Board of Governors is voting on December 3. Formal consultation ends November 16.
  - Definitely the AMS can work to create information. Online now the AMS has links to the University’s proposals and information on meetings, think tanks, townhalls.
  - If looking at other costs would be a help, we can do that.

- **Dan Kehila:** I’m still learning how to get informed and speak to people in power. But the first thing is to be taught why this is important. If you show that everything is increasing except salaries, that can help students understand and lead to increased student involvement.

- **Student at large:** Does the AMS have access to the alumni? We could tell the alumni we’re not happy.

- **Aaron Bailey:** We don’t have an established database of alumni. UBC is very protective of its alumni database. The AMS does have a network of people connected to it. We might need a petition. We could reach out that way.

- **Arno Rosenfeld:** There’s a sense that students are apathetic. You can solve that through broader awareness: put up posters in the Nest, in the washrooms. You can make students aware of what’s happening.

- **Jenna Omassi:** Yes, that’s something we’re working on. We’re getting posters and rave cards to get students informed. We’re reaching out to the International Students Association to reach international students. We’re also creating smaller groups. We’re trying to diversify the way students can get involved. The tuition increase announcement was very last minute from UBC; we’ve had to catch up; but we do have a month.

- **A student at large asked about using chalk on sidewalks.**

- **Jenna Omassi:** You’re not allowed to chalk on University property.

- **Student at large:** What would happen if someone did something like that?

- **Aaron Bailey:** We don’t condone any disallowed activity.

- **Ava Nasiri:** We don’t condone chalk on sidewalks, but we do have a chalk wall: a more approved format for chalk.

- **Student at large:** The University is asking for the removal of the domestic tuition cap. The University may be thinking that raising international fees will lower the barrier to raising domestic tuition fees. This could be something to get domestic students engaged.

- **Jude Crasta (AMS VP External):** We’ve had conversations with the Minister of Advanced Education and been assured that the 2% cap on domestic tuition will be staying even though there has been advocacy from UBC to remove it. But I do agree that this is a good point of discussion.

- **Jenna Omassi:**
  - In conversations with the University, an even larger issue has emerged: that they don’t have a definition of diversity, so it’s not clear what they want on this campus.
  - As to involving domestic students, this is a conversation about international students. We want to work with international students and make sure to give them a voice.
• Aiyana Anderson-MacIsaac (Arts rep on Council): I’m looking forward to the next Council meeting. I expect a bigger discussion there after the Constituencies do their consultation.

• Penny Zhang (AMS Ombudsperson): How often do you meet with the Board of Governors?

• Jenna Omassi: The Board meets five times a year. We don’t usually meet with them outside then, but we do work with the student reps on the Board.

• Alan Ehrenholz: The undergraduate society presidents are working together with the AMS to engage with students. Feel free to reach out to us.

• Student at large: In what way is the EUS reaching out to students?

• Alan Ehrenholz: Through open consultation sessions and our own think tank sessions. Next week we have three sessions on what Applied Science students are thinking about this.

• Student at large: How effective was last year’s quorate AGM?

• Aaron Bailey:
  o To be honest, I don’t think the AMS did the things called for in the motions last year.
  o We have a much shorter timespan now; there’s not much time to organize. We do have the opportunity to build momentum. We can ask the students what you want us to do: What does protest mean? A march? Leverage? Other things?
  o Last year the AMS did not do its job. Things dropped off.

• Ava Nasiri:
  o I was on last year’s Executive and would disagree. The AGM created a moment. We didn’t need resolutions, but having 500 students in a room allowed them to feel they were part of something: they were being heard.
  o We would have been taking action anyway. We did our best; we really tried.
  o I wouldn’t write off the value of a quorate AGM.

• Student at large: What is the AMS’s position on last year’s resolutions? Last year there was the historic moment; this year the AGM was just announced at the last minute.

• Jenna Omassi: Last year’s resolutions still hold. We’re still going forward. Last year there was more time between the University’s tuition announcement and the AGM. This time we only heard about the increase last week.

• Aaron Bailey: The AMS established an affordability policy opposing international increases beyond the 2% cap. We are more than willing to support groups mobilizing in protest. In terms of organizing protests ourselves, we wanted to ask what that protest should look like. We can bring suggestions to Council.

• Dan Kehila: Protest is not an easy thing, and how to get turnout and direct it towards a goal is not an easy thing. The only way to learn is by trying something. You could try a fun, casual thing, with a low barrier to participation. Do a few simple things.

• Student at large: How is the AMS’s motivation different this year? Last year you said it dropped off.

• Aaron Bailey:
  o This year we’re only five days out from the announcement.
  o Last year a group of students came together; it was grassroots, not AMS. Over weeks it grew. It held a teach-in. There were marches. The AGM was successful because of that grassroots organizing.
This year we’re willing to work with any group that’s mobilizing.
It’s going to be hard after last year since the efforts then produced zero positive results. But we want to get people out to show that people do care.

- Student at large: Last year showed student interest, and it did have an effect: the University announced the increase later this time to make it harder for protests to mobilize.
- Ava Nasiri: I disagree with the suggestion that there was a dropoff last year. There was a genuine attempt to meet what was resolved on last year. But we didn’t go beyond the protesting students last year; we didn’t engage other students. This year through Jenna’s think tanks we’re trying to do that. We’re compiling data so we can speak in multiple languages, not just the language of protest.
- Student at large: Something else that could be done would be to reach out to students elsewhere, like Quebec. There was a huge wave of student involvement there in 2012, though the situation was different there.
- Ian Sapollnik (Arts rep on Council): What is our Plan B? The University is not consulting on whether there should be an increase but on where the money should go. If the increase does go through, how do we make sure the money goes where we want it?
- Jenna Omassi:
  - I was in Montreal during the protests. Things were very different there. But you’re right: there are things we can learn from that.
  - I vehemently disagree with the University Provost’s view that this consultation is just about where the money should go. UBC Policy 71 says the consultation is on whether fees should go up too.
  - We’ve asked for a rationale for the increases. Rest assured that we will say that the increase is wrong.
  - We’re trying to answer the University the way they speak. We are going to speak the University’s language. When they present research, we respond with research and counter-proposals.
  - It will be a two-sided approach: mobilization of students but also thinking critically.
- Dan Kehila: It’s naive to expect results from a protest. We should have a much more humble goal. It’s a learning process. We need courage and generosity.
- A student at large asked what the AMS Executive’s relationship is with groups that represent international students.
- Jenna Omassi: We’re working very closely with the International Students Association and with various regional and cultural groups on campus. Also with the Residence Halls. If there are other groups you know of, let us know.
- A student at large asked about connections with Vantage College.
- Jenna Omassi: We work through the EUS, SUS, and the AUS. Vantage College students have representatives on those Constituency councils. We have a meeting set with them. Their tuition is proposed to increase too.
- Student at large: Is the AMS reaching out to student societies at other universities? Inter-University communication could be helpful, as in the I Am A Student Movement last year. There are similar issues across the country.
- Jenna Omassi: We have been working with other student societies across the country. Most Universities don’t consult their students about tuition increases. Here there’s a formal UBC policy requiring consultation. So the situations are not
entirely similar. Mostly we hear from other student societies asking us what we’re doing.

4. MOVED ADRIAN TALINGDAN, SECONDED AKIL:

“That the meeting be adjourned.”

… Carried

The meeting adjourned at 1:36 pm.