Office of the Vice-President, External Affairs

First Ternary Report
2014-2015

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Vice-President, External Affairs
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>p.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Hiring</td>
<td>p.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Associate Vice-President External Affair's</td>
<td>p.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 SUDS Coordinator</td>
<td>p.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1 Projected Projects</td>
<td>p.4-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 GetOnBoard BC</td>
<td>p.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 Elections</td>
<td>p.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4 Alliance of BC Students</td>
<td>p.6-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5 U-Pass BC Program</td>
<td>p.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6 Student Union Development Summit</td>
<td>p.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.7 Compass Card</td>
<td>p.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Budgeting</td>
<td>p.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1 Committee Participation</td>
<td>p.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1 Miscellaneous</td>
<td>p.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Dear Colleagues,

It is with great pleasure that I provide you with an update on the VP External Portfolio since my transition into office, as of March 2014. The adjustment from the role of Associate Vice-President External to Vice-President External has been rewarding and humbling all at once, and from this transition I have gained a tremendous amount of clarity for what I hope to accomplish in the next twelve months. I hope to take this opportunity to invite you into my portfolio, and to open the conversation up for suggestions and participations from all members of council.

Looking forward to connecting with all of you during the next twelve months, if you have any questions or suggestions please contact @ vpeexternal@ams.ubc.ca.

Sincerely,

Bahareh Jokar
AMS Vice-President, External Affairs
1.1 Hiring

The hiring process for the Office of the Vice-President External Affairs (VPX) is one that takes time and thoughtful deliberation. The role and functions of the staff changes year to year by the nature of the projects that the VPX chooses to uptake; regardless of project, it is expected that all staff members have a fair understanding of the political nature of the work at hand, while upholding the values that we strive to achieve at the AMS. To date, my office has hired two individuals, and is looking to hire one more prior to the beginning of September.

1.2 Associate Vice-President External Affairs (AVPX)

The Associate Vice-President External (AVPX) plays a staple function in the VPX portfolio. This individual needs to be prepared to stand in as the VP at any moment, while remaining neutral to external pressures and politics. Moreover, this position plays a key role in keeping the office organized, while taking lead in one primary project throughout the year.

It is with great pleasure that I introduce Jude Crasta as my AVPX. Jude was among the first to be hired during the transition of the new executive, and his transition into his role has been very smooth. Jude brings with him a plethora of information on just about anything (we recognize him to be a human encyclopedia), additionally he’s very keen on assisting me with the transit file, and the work that we will be doing with GetOnBoard BC this year.

So far, Jude has assisted me in putting together a working research document for GetOnBoard, along with revamping the Student Union Development Summit website. His hard work can be appreciated at sudsummit.ca.

1.3 SUDS Coordinator

I am very pleased to inform you that this years SUDS coordinator will be no other than the fabulous Ms. Nina Scott. Nina will be joining us for the remainder of the summer term to assist in coordinating the Student Union Development Summit, while keeping me sane during the ordeal. She will play a key role in on the logistical front, while assisting myself in coordinating spectacular programming for the event.

2.1 Projected Projects

The 2014-2015 academic year is going to be a very exciting and challenging year for all of us. My projected focus is going to be primarily on the transit file, which
encompasses preparation for the transit referendum, participating in GetOnBoard BC, renegotiating the U-Pass BC program, and ensuring a smooth transition into the compass program as soon as Translink decides to go live. Beyond that, my office hopes to work along other BC student unions in the Alliance of BC Student (ABCS) to address student issues province wide, while preparing public awareness campaigns around both the municipal and federal elections.

2.2 GetOnBoard (GOB) BC

GetOnBoard the organization was founded in 2013 under the supervision of Tanner Bokor. Initially, GOB was designed to be a yearlong campaign series on transit related issues, but grew to become a registered society that stands as a coalition of stakeholders on public transit related issues across Metro Vancouver.

My participating with GOB has been directed towards revitalizing the organization, and inviting old and new stakeholders to come to the table in order to:

A) Prepare for the upcoming public transit referendum;

B) Address the issue of public transit funding in Metro Vancouver on a larger and more long-term perspective.

A sub-committee of intern working group came together in March to begin organizing and planning GOB’s Inaugural General Meeting (IGM), along with sketching out a draft of what the organizations strategic focus will be for the next twelve months. I have committed a fair amount of time meeting with the sub-committee, and will continue to do so until after the IGM, which will be held on June 5th.

Pierre Cenerelli, our University and Government Relations Advisor, has been assisting the organization with its proposed bylaw amendments. Additionally, we have been connecting with various stakeholders and partners. Our meetings have included conversations with:

CarbonTalks, which is a research group stationed out of SFU, doing the bulk of the research that GOB will be hosting its policies around.

Mayor Richard Walton of the District of North Vancouver, in discussing the position of the Mayors Council and addressing student engagement with upcoming elections and referendums.

We hosted a meeting Kwantlen Student Association, to discuss their potential involvement with GOB, and the question of engaging students in the incoming elections and referendum.

Public transit and transit infrastructure affect everyone equally, but students have a great deal at stake considering the continuously growing population of our institution, and the increased number of commuter students across the Metro Vancouver area. By participating in GOB, we are taking a firm position on how we
want the government to address the issue of public transit, while bringing forward the student voice to the table on a variety of different platforms.

2.3 Elections

In the next twelve months, my office will be preparing “Get Out the Vote” campaigns for the municipal election, federal election, and the transit referendum. The municipal elections will be held in November 2014, and my office is planning on creating an organized and cohesive system by which students can register to vote. The registration process is one that most people are completely unaware of, and it stands as a major barrier towards participation in the electoral process. My goal is to work with Elections BC, in making the registration process more accessible, and we hope to do this by setting up registration booths in the SUB during various intervals to enhance student/public opportunity to engage.

The municipal elections will play as a preamble to the transit referendum. The once registered to vote in a municipal election you become eligible to vote in the referendum as well, our hope is to get a large pool of people pre-registered for the referendum through the municipal elections.

An update on the federal elections will be provided at a later date, since we will not be addressing that until the end of my term in 2015.

2.4 Alliance of BC Students (ABCS)

The Alliance of British Columbia Students (ABCS) was founded in May 2011 by four student associations including the UBC Alma Mater Society, University of Fraser Valley Students Union, University of Victoria Students’ Society, and the Capilano University Students Union under the name Where’s the Funding?! (WTF?!). Since than, it has transformed into a full fledged organization, committed to advocating on behalf of student through student elected representatives.

Literally, my very first task after coming into office was to attend a Lobby Days that was hosted by the ABCS in Victoria to discuss access and affordability of post-secondary education. It was a learning opportunity to say the least. Lesson number 1) Don’t forget your drivers license (especially if you’re driving), 2) Take ColdFX with you to all conferences 3) Always bring a sweater and an umbrella (regardless of what time of year it is) 4) Be ready to go into some really intense meetings with elected members of parliament.

The ABCS will be hosting its AGM at the end of May; I will be attending along with two other delegates from the AMS. I hope to continue working with the ABCS, along with this year’s elected officers and members schools. Additionally, I hope to connect with participating Metro-Vancouver Schools to address the question of the
upcoming transit referendum; the point being to create large-scale engagement capacities designed to engage with students.

2.5 U-Pass BC

The U-Pass BC program was first introduced at UBC in 2003, and is a pivotal service that we provide to our members. I would approximate that 20% of my time is spent addressing U-Pass costumer service related questions and concerns. Currently, the bulk of the inquiries are concerning UBC Okanagan students who are taking courses on the Vancouver campus who cannot access the U-Pass directly due to the nature of our contract with Translink. In order to ensure equal opportunity for all students studying on the UBC Vancouver campus, we are working with UBC Enrollment Services and UBC Transportation Planning to work out a permanent solution; for the time being we are addressing the issue internally while negotiations take place with Translink.

2.6 Student Union Development Summit (SUDS)

In the 90’s, the AMS hosted the annual Student Union Development Symposium, a skills-sharing conference with student union executives from across Canada. Revived in 2012, SUDS was rebranded as the Student Union Development Summit. SUDS has grown to regain a tremendous amount of recognition among Student Unions across Canada; our goal this year is to make SUDS bigger and more established than ever before. Thankfully, the conference has run at no cost to our society, and has been an excellent learning opportunity for our executives, along with all the delegates who participate.

2.7 Compass Card

The compass card is an entirely electronic fare collection and enforcement network that is to be implemented by Translink. We are in continued communication with Translink, and we are prepared to launch into the program as soon as Translink gives us the go ahead. My role will be to ensure the highest quality of costumer service for students once the program goes live, and my hope is to propose a fully functioning U-Pass Costumer Service Office that will function out of the services wing of the AMS. Greater information on the U-Pass Costumer Service Office will be provided to council at a later date.

3.1 Budgeting

Budgeting is a learning opportunity for all executives; I can definitely appreciate the due diligence of our VP Finance in assisting all departments to put together their respective budget. My budget this year is mostly focused on participation costs that
will be allocated towards GetOnBoard BC and the Alliance of BC Students. Additionally, funds to be allocated towards preparing effectively for the upcoming municipal and federal elections. Greater detail of the budget will be released as budget committee overlooks and assess each budget accordingly.

4.1 Committee Participation

I am excited to say that I will be sitting on the University & External Relations Committee (UNECORN) and the Education Committee (EDUCOM). I look forward to working with the chairs of both committees in addressing all the agenda items to come.

5.1 Miscellaneous

Meetings, more meetings, emails, coffee, more coffee, emails, phone calls (mostly U-pass inquiries), and typical administrative functions. There is quite a bit of brainstorming that takes place (hence the giant whiteboard). In all seriousness, the bulk of my day is spent coordinating with my staff and Pierre, working on long-term projects, and addressing issues that come up as they occur externally.

If you have any questions, or would like to get involved in any way, shape or form, please get in touch with me @ vpexternal@ams.ubc.ca. I look forward to getting to know you all better, and connecting with you on the various projects that we will be taking on in the next 12 months!