Office of the Vice-President, External Affairs
First Ternary Report of the Vice-President, External Affairs 
2015/16

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2 INTRODUCTION

My Fellow Councilors, Executives, and Student Members,

It is my pleasure to provide you with a report from the Office of Vice-President, External Affairs from May 2015 to present day. These first few months of assuming the role of the Vice-President, External Affairs have been trying upon the capacities of my office and myself, as a person. Being entrusted with the external interests of 51,000 students attending this campus is a particularity that I have not taken lightly. With the various projects that have been initiated by my office, we have been working diligently to realize the goals that would improve the lives of our student members.

While I have the opportunity, I would like to extend my gratitude to all individuals who have assisted my office in working towards the completion of its projects. These past few months would have not been productive without the tireless work of my team.

With the aforementioned, I appreciate your interest in the work of my portfolio and welcome your suggestions and participation. Should you wish to contact myself or a member of my office, please do not hesitate to contact me at vpexternal@ams.ubc.ca or 604.822.2050. If you wish to speak to me in person, I can reached at my office (Rm. 3524) at the AMS Student Nest.

Sincerely,

Jude Crasta
Vice-President, External Affairs
3 Hiring

Resultant from the experience that I acquired while serving as the Associate Vice-President, External Affairs, I initiated the hiring process for the VP External Office before the assumption of my role. This action would afford the office the staff resources it would need during the initial setup process. This would also buy necessary time from the orientation process that would be then used towards the initiation of the projects that needed to be accomplished within the short term period of this executive. As many who are familiar with the VP External Office know, the staff in the office tailor their duties and efforts to the direction that the VP External of the day sets out. The selection process of the different members of the VP External staff focused on leadership, initiative, team values, familiarity with projects, and creativity. These qualities were deemed necessary to create a cohesive and productive team for the 2015/16 year.

3.1 Associate Vice-President, External Affairs

The Associate Vice-President, External Affairs (AVPX) is the confidante, the representative, and the aide of the VP External on all matters of the external portfolio. One can hardly imagine an item in the external portfolio that the AVPX is not privy to, and does not advise and consult with the VP External on. Because of this unique relationship, the individual assuming such a burden is expected to bear the qualities of leadership, drive, organization, and commitment to the office and its projects. In many respects, one may consider the position akin to the Chief of Staff of a political representative.

After much deliberation, it is with pleasure that I announce my selection of Ms. Kathleen Simpson as the Associate Vice-President, External Affairs. Her assumption of this role comes with much joy and enthusiasm for the work to be done in the coming months. She brings with her a wide variety of experience, and is well-versed with the working of the different levels of government with respect to student issues. Her knowledge is accompanied by her confidence to represent the VP External Office and the AMS in keeping with policy and strategies employed by this Society.

I am pleased to entrust her with designing the communications and outreach strategy of the AMS with respect to the 2015 Federal Elections, one of the most exciting in our lifetime. Further, she has been assisting the Student Union Development Summit (SUDS) Coordinator with the necessary arrangements to make it a successful conference.

3.2 SUDS Coordinator

At this time, I am pleased to inform you that Mr. Louis To has been serving the AMS as the Coordinator of the 2015 Student Union Development Summit. I am particularly excited about the background in event planning and management that Louis brings to the role, and have been generally impressed at the creativity he displays for the future of the conference. I am confident that he will be able to make SUDS 2015 another amazing conference that brings the AMS closer to its counterparts across Canada.
4  Projects for 2015/16

There hardly is a year in the VP External office that does not see a lot of interesting work. This 2015/16 year will prove to be no different. The focus of the office will be equally divided between transit, voter engagement, housing, and general government relations and outreach. In the short future, the agenda will primarily revolve around the voter engagement strategy for the 2015 Federal Elections. Below, we have an outline of the different projects that will be worked on throughout the year.

4.1  Student Union Development Summit (SUDS) 2015

SUDS saw its birth in the 1990s following a need identified by the AMS for greater cooperation, skill sharing, and communication between student associations outside formal affiliations and coalitions. SUDS 2014 began to take the conference off the ground and bring it true notoriety and establishment as a venue for different student associations to meet and collaborate on issues that affect student across the country regardless of the size of their associations. The conference runs at no cost to the Society due to the sponsorship and membership revenues. It is an excellent learning and networking opportunity for our executives, councilors, and student staff members. SUDS 2015 promises to continue in that trend of improvement and exposure for the Society.

4.2  Transition to the Compass Card from Paper Medium U-Passes

Compass is a durable, reloadable electronic fare cards that have/will replace(d) TransLink's current paper passes and tickets. Initial Launch Compass Cards are being provided to UBC students free of charge as part of the introduction of this new fare system. This has no effect on the U-Pass BC program other than integrating it into a new digital medium. The Wave 3 launch of the Compass Cards took place in May 2015 right after I took office and have been fairly smooth ever since. As of July 1st, all post-secondary institutions and the West Coast Express have migrated over to the Compass Card system. Specially designed vending machines located in the Old SUB, UBC Bookstore, and Robson Square. My office is currently working with the AMS Communications department and UBC Student Communications to produce proper and effective messaging surrounding the Compass Card and its distribution in Winter 2015. We will targeting different channels of communications and orientation events for students to assist students in using the new Compass Card as their proof of payment.

4.3  U-Pass BC Contract Negotiations

The U-Pass has long been one of the most popular programs at UBC, and those signs remain true today. In the last referendum held by the AMS in 2013, 96% students who voted approved the current U-Pass BC fee. Currently, this fee sits at $38 per month. I have been working with UBC Campus + Community Planning, the Vice-President, Finance, and with the UBC Students' Union Okanagan in resolving the case of UBC Okanagan students who are visiting the UBC Vancouver campus when it comes to access of the U-Pass BC program. There has been a push from this office,
in coordination with other student associations to encourage the provincial government to continue funding the U-Pass BC program at sustained levels. I am pleased to report that our efforts have been successful in that regard and that the Treasury Board has approved the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure’s extension of support of the U-Pass BC program for another two years. Therefore, there shall be no major increase of the program fee over inflationary costs. The program will continue at $38/month for the rest of the year till the end of April 2016. After that, the price of the U-Pass will be at $39.50/month with $41/month being the fee the year after. This has to be approved by referendum and a presentation to Council will be duly made for the necessary preparations.

4.4 THE 2015 FEDERAL ELECTIONS VOTER ENGAGEMENT CAMPAIGN

The VPX office has been working with the AMS Design Office in producing a branding package that will be used on all AMS Federal Elections campaign materials. I am proud to report that we have completed the initial brand and have moved into the final stages of materials design. There will be a presentation made to Council about the Federal Election campaign in August. The campaign will target different events and voter groups, and will feature a lot of fun and engaging activities. I am also pleased to report that the VPX office has secured a Federal Elections polling station to be situated on our premises. This came after much negotiation and coordination with Elections Canada and is sure to drive up our voter engagement factor.

4.5 ALLIANCE OF BC STUDENTS (ABCS)

The Alliance of British Columbia Students (ABCS) was founded in May 2011 by the AMS, UFVSUS, UVSS, and CSU under the campaign “Where’s the Funding?!?” to advocate for changes to different modalities in BC’s post-secondary education system. Today, it is a full-fledged organization made up of nine student associations across British Columbia including the AMS, KSA, CSU, UFVSUS, UBCSUO, BCITSA, RRUSA, LSU, and GSS.

I currently serve as an executive of the ABCS in the capacity of the Director of Campaigns, and will be focused on organizing campaigns like the Victoria Lobby Days, and other smaller campaigns to be run over the year. So far, I have already met with a wide variety of schools and entities that work with the ABCS and will continue to do the same with Members of the Legislature. We have hosted one ABCS Board of Directors meeting at the AMS Student Nest. The position of the AMS Representative to the ABCS is currently being filled by Robin Asgari with Ian Sapolnik serving as the designated alternate.

4.6 GET ON BOARD BC

At this time, I report to Council that I have not budgeted any more funds to be spent on Get On Board BC as I do not believe in the organization’s viability for the AMS’s long and short-term needs. All of the connections, collaboration, and networking performed within these circles can, and have been carried outside of them. I cannot vouch for the efficacy of the organization over the past year. I do not make this report to discredit the efforts that have been performed by last year’s
VPX office, because there were monumental efforts carried out to set this organization at its own momentum. However, these efforts appear (at least to this VPX office) to have been in vain. This being said, I do hope that the AMS VPX office can keep working with its external partners on all transit and transportation efforts, like we have done in the past.

5  BUDGETING

The 2015 Budget process has definitely been a very enlightening one. It affords you the opportunity to take a look at the direction and outcomes of the previous year, from a financial perspective, and then use that to amend your own strategy this year. I would like to note my appreciation of Mateusz Miadlikowski who has provided a large amount of assistance with the budget process. This year's budget will be centered around outreach campaigns surrounding the different projects we will be engaged in this year, and on the conference and business meeting aspect with different levels of government. I will be attending various networking conferences and meetings like the Union of BC Municipalities Convention in September. This spending is made in effort to increase the visibility and the effect of the VPX office. Greater details of the budget have been made to budget committee.

6  COMMITTEE PARTICIPATION

For the 2015/16 year, I am pleased to report that I will be sitting on the University & External Relations Committee (UNECON) and on the Legislative Procedures Committee (LPC). We have already begun some great work in these committees and I look forward to what the year has to bring ahead.

7  MISCELLANEOUS

There are a lot of fun and interesting projects that are run out of the VPX office. It is a trying position that requires a lot of work but ultimately rewarding when one gets to see the effect of all contributed efforts first hand. With staff members and volunteers, there is quite a bit of administration and coordination to handle, but everything is made easier with the support I receive from my AVP. Another great asset to the VPX team is Pierre Cenerelli (UNIGRA) who has been of tremendous help during my own term as AVP and currently. Without his diligent efforts, the VPX portfolio would not be what it is today. There are a lot of issues and policies that will be brought to Council over the year, and Pierre will have had a hand in them in some form or another.