INTRODUCTION

It is hard to believe that 3 months have already gone by in this role. The last few months have been very exciting and have proven to be a great learning experience. I have been fortunate to have a great team of executives to work with that are both supportive and an invaluable resource. In addition to this, I have a dedicated team of staff members who have been working very hard on many of their own projects. I walked into this portfolio at a very interesting time with the conclusion of two years of work that was done by my predecessors Matt Parson, Ben Cappellacci and the current Associate VP Academic, Sean Cregten, on Gage South. This opened up many opportunities for this office to work on a wider range of projects and issues and I am fortunate to have a strong team to work with to complete them. We have been able to identify a few key areas of focus for the coming year which are outlined in the goals and projects section of this report and have already taken great strides in working on these projects. These include continuing work on the exam database, developing a proposal for the early release of exam dates, implementing a pilot project for midterm evaluations of teaching and a variety of projects relating to student mental health and wellness.

This report outlines the work that I have done thus far in my term as VP Academic and provides an overview of the goals for the Office of the VP Academic and University Affairs for the coming year. The portfolio is far reaching however for the purpose of this report; I have focused on the items that I have directly been working on. For more detailed updates on the work of staff members in my portfolio, please contact me directly.

TRANSITION

While transitioning into my new role, I was also working on transitioning out of my roles as President of the Science Undergraduate Society and Internship and Externship Coordinator for the AMS Services. Much of my time in the first few weeks of my term in office was also spent training and supporting the individuals that took on my past roles for the interim.

This portfolio is quite large and deals with many different areas of academics and campus life. With such a broad spectrum of areas and projects, it was a little difficult to catch up on projects that had been going on for many years. The first month in the role was a lot of reading and meetings with different committee chairs and University Administration, Staff and Faculty to get a feel for some of the projects and committees I would be working with. My past experience working on different campus initiatives enabled me to adjust well into the role and with the help of many of my continuing staff members; I was able to ease into the position relatively problem free. It has also been a great help to have Matt continuing on with the AMS as President as well as Sean Cregten who has been the AVP Academic for the last two years. In addition to Matt and Sean, Pierre Cenerelli, our Government Relations Advisor has been an invaluable resource during my transition period.

HIRING AND ORGANIZATION

A significant amount of time in late April was spent developing a revised organizational structure for the office. This led to some changes in the staffing of the office with the creation of two new positions. The position of Equity Commissioner was split into two roles, the Equity Commissioner which now reports to both
the VP Academic and VP Administration now deals with internal AMS Equity Issues and is intended to act as a resource and support for clubs and staff members. The second role split from this is the International and Intercultural Commissioner who will continue the other half of the traditional Equity Commissioner portfolio which involves liaising, representing and advocating for underrepresented groups on campus as well as working on issues of intercultural understanding. Much of the work that we plan to do in this office over the coming year is more academic focused than has been seen in the past few years. In order to reinvigorate the academic side of the portfolio, we have developed the position of Academic Affairs Commissioner who will work on research and policy relating to the academic projects outlined further in this report. We have also increased the hours of Campus Development Commissioner from 5 hours to 10 hours/week to reflect the amount of work required in this position.

Student Mental Health and Wellness is a key priority of this office for the year. As such, I applied for and was awarded a grant from the AMS Grad Class Council to fund a position of a Mental Health and Wellness Commissioner for the Office. This position has not yet been filled as we are working on identifying whether this funding can be better spent on funding specific initiatives or campaigns relating to the area or whether we will put the funding towards a staff member to do research and engage in outreach and lobbying efforts. I am currently engaging in discussion with UBC staff members and the Mental Health Network to explore some avenues the AMS may have to utilize this funding. More updates will be provided on allocation in the next report.

We have 3 continuing staff members in this office which has made the transition very smooth and staff members are continuing to work on their individual portfolio specific questions as well as collaborative projects across the office.

**COMMITTEE UPDATES AND WORK**

**AMS COMMITTEES**

The VP Academic serves as the Chair of Budget Committee and sits on select standing committees of AMS Council. This year, I have chosen to sit on Education Committee, University and External Relations Committee and Student Life and Communications Committee. Over the past few months budget committee worked with the VP Finance to review the preliminary budget that was presented and approved by AMS Council. SLCC and Education Committee did not meet regularly over the course of exam period however I foresee significant collaboration between the VP Academic Office and this committee over the course of the summer with the variety of academic projects we will be working on. The Education Committee Chair, Justin Yang, has been a great resource in some of the work that our office has been doing thus far surrounding the Exam Database, relations with student senate caucus and Access Copyright. My involvement with UNERCORN has been limited to attending committee meetings as there has been no significant project work in the portfolio that has required extensive involvement with the committee. The committee as a whole has been hard at work on some key issues including the Upass, the BC Society’s Act and UBC’s use of Parking Revenue.
UNIVERSITY COMMITTEES

The VP Academic is the official AMS and student rep on many university Committees that range on the spectrum of new building projects to academic initiatives. This has been a great learning experience for me and it is always great to see how keen staff and faculty members of these committees are to hear student feedback, input and suggestions. Many great ideas for new projects have stemmed from discussion both inside and outside of these formal committees and I am looking forward to continuing to represent students on these various committees.

Many of these committees meet a few times a year and others meet on a more regular basis. Below is a quick overview of each of the committees. I am always happy to elaborate on the work of each of these committees upon request. Some committees are in camera meaning that the information shared and discussions which take place in the committee are not open for sharing outside of the membership. These committees have been noted below.

STUDENT EVALUATION OF TEACHING IMPLEMENTATION COMMITTEE (in camera)
In accordance with the UBC Senate Policy on Student Evaluations of Teaching, this committee provides advice on the tasks and responsibilities related to the implementation of the Senate Policy on Student Evaluation of Teaching. It also works to identify issues and challenges with the current process while determining mechanisms to address these issues. While much of this committee is in-camera, this is where the idea of implementing midterm evaluations across faculties was sparked. More information on this can be found later in the report.

LEARNING MANAGEMENT SYSTEM
This committee works on the implementation of the new Learning Management System, Connect, which is replacing the current Vista system. I have had the opportunity to be involved in a high level with the branding side of the project. Forthcoming discussions for the committee include setting the scope of the Community side of Connect as well as working on a communication plan.

ASIST STEERING COMMITTEE
This committee (Academic Success in Student Transition) works on the new Broad Based Admissions process that was implemented this year at UBC. This committee has been a great example of how forward thinking the University is becoming in regard to admissions and easing the transition for students entering UBC. There are many great discussions taking place in the committee about integrating other first year applications into this system to make the admissions process smoother for students.

PONDEROSA COMMONS WORKING COMMITTEE
This committee works on issues relating to the design and development of the new mixed use Ponderosa Commons. Currently the committee is working on Phase 1 design work.

AQUATIC CENTRE ADVISORY COMMITTEE
This committee deals with management and issues that relate to the running of the Aquatic Centre. The AMS has 4 student representatives on this committee. This committee will also be the main advisory committee with the designing of the new Aquatic Centre. There will be opportunities for the
general membership to attend parts of these meetings to share input and suggestions for the designing of the new centre.

INFORMAL LEARNING SPACES
The Informal Learning Spaces committee adjudicates applicants for funding for Informal Learning Spaces on campus and also has discussions surrounding general issues relating to these spaces on campus. Applications are open to all students groups and spaces to apply for funding. More information can be found on the website.

AD HOC STRIKE PREPAREDNESS COMMITTEE (in camera)
In accordance with UBC Senate Policy, an Ad Hoc Strike Preparedness Committee was struck in April by the Provosts Office. I was invited to sit on this committee as an AMS Representative in light of potential job action by the Teaching Assistants (TA) Union. This committee was not involved with negotiations or collective bargaining, rather its mandate is to work on ensuring clear communication to students in the event of job action as well as ensuring that there is as little disruption as possible to students on campus.

UTOWN @ UBC
The UTown@UBC Committee brings together stakeholders from all areas of the University, both academic and nonacademic, to discuss issues that relate to the campus as a community and town. In the last meeting, there was a presentation made on the Transportation Status Report for the 2011 year and an overview of plans for the Gage South neighborhood.

PROPERTY AND PLANNING ADVISORY COMMITTEE
This committee deals with any new academic infrastructure and planning projects. Over the past few meetings there was approval of new Bookstore Expansion Project and the new Aquatic Centre.

SCHOLARLY COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE
The terms of reference of this committee can be found here. In the last meeting there were discussions surrounding the areas of Open Access, Access Copyright as well as ownership rights for graduate students work, and the use of new media in assessing promotions and tenure (such as blogs) for non-peer reviewed journal work.

UNA
As the VP Academic of the AMS I serve as an appointed Board Member on the University Neighborhood Association Board of Directors. In the role I have the privilege of working alongside elected residential Directors and University appointed Directors on issues that affect residents living in the University neighborhoods (Wesbrook Place, Hampton Place etc). This has been a great learning experience as the UNA has a mandate similar to that of a Municipal Council. As such the range of topics that we have discussed has been very broad from by-laws to governance. Serving on this Board also gives the AMS an opportunity to share student insights on these topics and become more familiar with the perspective of university residents. I have found that there is a lot of common ground in terms of vision for the campus as well as areas of concern. It is great to see that the AMS has developed a positive relationship with the UNA over the past few years and I am looking forward to continuing to serve on the Board during my term. The UNA is currently
working on reviewing the Neighbors’ Agreement with UBC which outlines relationship between UBC and the UNA and the jurisdictions of governance. The UNA has also passed by-laws relating to Parking in the neighborhood areas as well as started design work on a new community centre in Wesbrook Place.

GOALS AND PROJECTS

Below is the list of the Performance Accountability Restriction (PAR) goals that I have set out for my term as VP Academic. At the time of submission of this report, these goals were submitted to the AMS Oversight Committee and were not yet approved by council therefore these goals may be subject to change. Please contact me directly for the final version.

PAR Goals: Vice President, Academic and University Affairs

(1) Develop a proposal for implementing pilot project of Midterm Evaluations of Teaching in Faculties which currently do not have a formal structure for this mechanism of teaching evaluations.

(2) Submit a revised proposal to UBC Senate (Teaching and Learning Committee) for a Central UBC Wide Exam Database. Commission a technical feasibility study for integration of such a database into Connect, the new UBC Learning Management System, with the assistance of the Centre for Teaching and Learning Technology and UBC IT.

(3) Develop a proposal for submission to UBC Enrollment Services outlining the necessity and feasibility for Early Release of Final Examination Dates.

(4) Work with the UBC Mental Health Network to implement a restructuring of the organization and development of a strategic framework and mandate.

(5) Present a revised proposal for a course syllabus insert containing information on Mental and Health and Wellness resources for students to Faculty stakeholders and Senate Academic Policy Committee.

(6) Administer a UBC wide Academic Survey addressing areas of concern to the AMS and students. Present the results of this survey to key stakeholder groups and incorporate results into lobbying efforts undertaken by the Office of the Vice President, Academic and University Affairs.

BACKGROUND ON GOALS AND PROGRESS TO DATE

MIDTERM EVALUATION OF TEACHING

Over the past few years the Commerce Undergraduate Society has successfully administered Midterm Evaluations of Teaching (MEoT) in all courses. These evaluations take place in the middle of the term and provide students the opportunity to provide feedback to course instructors at this time. The evaluations are administered by the CUS and the results are only shared with professors. MEoT provides students and instructors the opportunity to benefit from the results of student feedback in a manner that directly impacts
students enrolled in the course. MEoT allow professors to revise teaching methods to fit the needs of the
students or to explain to students the reasoning behind their use of certain teaching methods. They also
allow instructors to learn from their evaluations and improve their methods in a non-disciplinary manner in
that MEoT results are not sent to the Faculty Deans Office, rather they are only available to the professor to
see. MEoT allow students to express their feedback and suggestions to the instructor during the course
session to better facilitate their own success in the course.

We are currently in the process of having discussion with Faculty undergraduate societies and developing a
proposal for implementing a pilot project of MEoT in faculties that currently do not have formal mechanisms
in place for these evaluations. In the scope of this project, we are also hoping to create a document that
outlines best practices for professors in terms of communicating feedback from the MEoT and starting a
dialogue with students around the feedback received. We are also planning to run a full feedback process
following the implementation of the project to provide recommendations to Senate and Faculties around
midterm evaluations of teaching.

EXAM DATABASE
The creation of a central UBC Wide Exam Database has been a project that the VP Academic Office and
Student Senators have been working closely on over the past few years. Our Office met with outgoing
Senators who were members of the Teaching and Learning Committee to discuss the shortfalls of the
proposal that was submitted last year to the committee. We are in the process of developing a revised
proposal that addresses the concerns of the committee and the different faculties. We are also working with
CTLT to explore the potential of integrating the exam database with the new Learning Management System.
We are hopeful that we will be able to make strong progress on this goal with the research and time being
put into developing a revised proposal as well as the strong interest shown by Student Senators.

EARLY RELEASE OF EXAM DATES
This was a topic of consideration that was brought forward by many other candidates as a concern during the
executive elections. Our office will be working on researching and developing a proposal for an earlier release
of final examination dates. Currently, final examination dates at UBC are released following the Add/Drop
Date and “W” Standing deadlines. The structure currently in place results in students receiving examination
dates late in the term which has broad implications on student’s ability to plan for final examinations as well
as planning flights and travel arrangements. This is increasingly becoming an issue for international students
at UBC. Data collected through the VP Academic and University Affairs Office recent Academic Survey shows
outstanding support from students in all faculties and year levels for an earlier release of examination dates.

MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS
Student Mental Health and Wellness is a key issue on this campus that has received attention by University
Administration, Services and the AMS in a more reactive manner versus a more proactive approach that
takes a look at systemic issues that underlie the reality of the situation at UBC. Recently there has been a
shift in thinking across campus leadership that is starting to take a harder look at the state of student mental
health and wellness on this campus. Recent results from the National Survey of Student Health show that
UBC students are facing higher instances of feeling hopeless, overwhelmed, depressed and even suicidal
relative to research intensive universities of a similar size. It is important for the AMS to play an active role in supporting existing Mental Health and Wellness resources for students and engage in crucial lobbying efforts to ensure that the university academic policy and curriculums are support to the mental health of students.

**Mental Health Steering Committee**

Matt Parson, the AMS President, and I are both student representatives on a new Mental Health Steering Committee that was struck by the University to explore avenues for the institution to address both academic and nonacademic issues that impact student mental health on campus. Thus far discussions in this committee have shown a strong commitment from students, staff and faculty at UBC towards addressing the systemic issues we face in regards to student health on campus. I am looking forward to seeing the collaborative efforts that stem from the work of this committee.

**Bell Impact Project**

Bell has provided a $1M in funding to a researcher at UBC to develop an online platform for E-Mental health. This project will provide cutting edge resources for youth facing anxiety and mood disorders with components focusing on online diagnosis, treatment and intervention with the potential and plans to expand to other mental health disorders. I had a chance to meet with the lead researcher on the project to find out ways the AMS can get involved as well as attend the kickoff event which provided a unique glimpse into the vision and initial plans for the project. I have passed along the information to the AMS Speakeasy Office to explore AMS involvement in input for the development of the platform. This project is a very exciting one and is taking innovative steps to address the way that mental health is treated around the world by taking an approach aimed at empowering individuals to address and shape their own treatment.

**Mental Health Network**

Over the past year I have been involved with the UBC Mental Health network as a representative of the AMS and SUS. The UBC Mental Health Network (MHN) has grown tremendously in size and scope since its inception. With representation from many different groups on campus, it brings together various student groups over the common thread of a desire to improve the overall Mental Health and Wellness of UBC Students. This diverse organizational representation and broad vision provide the right mix for continued growth and even greater impact on the campus community. In its current structure, the MHN has difficulties in ensuring continuity and the right administrative support to allow the leadership of the network to focus on creating a strong plan and goals for the organization. I have been working alongside the current leadership of the MHN to establish a new structure for the organization as well as engage in strategic planning exercises to set a more focused mandate and mission for the group. We are also exploring ways for the AMS to provide more support and resources to this group to assist them in carrying out their work.

**Syllabus Proposal**

This project is one which is being carried on from an initial proposal that the UBC MHN brought to Senate to include a write up with information regarding mental health and wellness resources on campus into the course syllabus for all undergraduate courses. Including a write up of this sort into the most important document of a course sends a strong message to students about the importance
of being healthy and taking ownership of their health and wellbeing. By providing information on
resources professors will not only be providing students with essential information but also sending
a message that the course instructor is aware and supportive of students who may be facing mental
health challenges at any time during the course.

ACADEMIC SURVEY
Our office developed and administered an online survey in late April to the general AMS membership asking
questions relating to the academic and campus experience of UBC students. We had over 2,400 responses to
the survey and were able to use this data to identify key issues that are of importance to students. This
survey helped to shape some of goals for the office for the year and will be used to evaluate and finalize a
Long Term Academic Plan for the AMS that was started by last year’s VP Academic. This data has already
been incorporated into lobbying efforts by the AMS as a whole. We are currently in the process of analyzing
the data and will be presenting the results of the survey to various stakeholder groups on campus including
students, staff and faculty. We are planning to have a second round of the survey which is more focused on
specific issues in September and will provide more comprehensive data to gain student feedback on
upcoming issues and projects on a broader AMS level.

TOWN AND GOWN SYMPOSIUM
This past week, I had the opportunity to attend the Town and Gown Association of Ontario’s annual
Symposium along with my Associate VP. This symposium was a great opportunity for us to engage in
discussions with representatives from universities, cities and student unions about governance and
relationships between universities and the communities that interact with them. This is a topic that is very
relevant to UBC given the development of residential communities around campus. Some of the sessions that
were of interest to the AMS at the symposium included:

- An overview of the City of Kingston’s Town and Gown Strategic Plan which aims foster strong
  relations between the City and the post-secondary institutions in the city by addressing areas that
  unite all parties such as quality of life, community planning, student engagement, and economic
development
- Fostering Talent, Research and Innovation in Town-Gown Communities – how student innovation
  can help to power economic growth in University towns
- How stronger links can be made between campus and community health organizations to support
  student mental health and wellness
- Student led initiatives and community projects and how they benefit a University town
- Building community pride
- Creating vibrant mixed use communities
- Sustainable communities and academic initiatives

MEETINGS WITH STUDENT UNIONS
While we were out East attending the Town and Gown Symposium we were also able to meet with student
unions in Ontario and Quebec to learn more about the services they provide and issues that impact students
across Canada. We were able to meet with representatives from:
During these meetings we were able to share best practices and initiatives from the AMS as well as identify potential projects and service expansion opportunities for the AMS. We are currently working on compiling the information from our meetings into a report along with recommendations for various areas of the AMS.

OTHER PROJECTS AND AREAS OF WORK

HOUSING ACTION PLAN SUBMISSION

Our Office took part in the workshop and consultation that took place for UBC’s Housing Action Plan. This plan, developed by the Community Planning Task Group of the UBC Board of Governors, identifies issues and provides recommendations surrounding student, staff and faculty housing on campus. The AMS put forth an official submission in the consultation process from the Office of the VP Academic that addresses the issue of housing affordability for students. Our Campus Development Commissioner, Brittany Jang, has been working on developing a report in regards to affordable student housing.

KICK OFF RECEPTION

In order to start some conversations among UBC staff members and the AMS student government and services, I worked with Alumni Affairs and Student Development & Services to organize a Kick-Off Reception which brought together over 60 students and staff members for an evening of networking to spark discussions about potential areas for collaboration. The feedback received from this event was very positive and we are confident that it was a starting point for many great collaborations to follow in the coming year.

JUST DESSERTS

The VP Academic along with the VP Administration has the privilege of hosting the annual AMS Just Desserts Ceremony which recognizes individual students, faculty and staff that make an outstanding positive contribution to the AMS and its constituencies.

WOW PLANNING

The VP Academic organizes the logistics and sessions for the annual Whistler Orientation Weekend for AMS Council and staff members. This retreat is a chance for council to become more familiar with their roles and engage in strategic planning as a group.

WORKING WITH GSS

I have had the pleasure of working with the Graduate Student Society (GSS) on a number of key areas so far this year. We have had some productive discussion around student services, communication and ways to increase the AMS’ awareness of graduate student issues. I am very excited to continue to build our
relationship and ensure that the VP Academic Office is able to provide representation along with the GSS on key issues that impact graduate students.

**QUALITY ASSURANCE FRAMEWORK FOCUS GROUP**

The BC Ministry of Higher Education is currently working on creating a new [Quality Assurance Framework](#) for BC Post-Secondary Institution (private and public). The AMS submitted a formal response during the feedback process through a submission from the VP Externals Office. I had the opportunity to take part in a focus group facilitated by the Ministry regarding the Quality Assurance Framework along with one of my staff members. It was very interesting to hear the point of view from students attending other institutions in BC. It was very interesting to see how much common ground there was in regards to student frustration around the funding of post-secondary education and the focus group requested that the Ministry conduct a similar focus group in the near future on the topic of PSE funding in the province. We are looking forward to seeing the results of the consultation process in a report that is forthcoming from the Ministry.

**COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY**

UBC recently released a draft [Community Engagement Strategy](#) which was open for public consultation and feedback. I was able to meet with Michelle Aucoin following a discussion we had in executive committee to learn more about the strategy and plans for implementation. I am looking forward to the AMS being involved with key areas of the plan including helping to define community engagement from the perspective of student led initiatives as well as exploring potential options for student recognition in regards to community engagement and other involvement on campus.

**ACCESS COPYRIGHT**

We have been monitoring the situation and developments on the issue of Access Copyright since the new proposed agreement was released. Now that the University has released an official statement on the matter we are working with Education Committee to assess the impacts on students and develop a policy for the AMS surrounding this.

**ACADIA PARK**

We have engaged in meetings with residents of Acadia Park being relocated in preparation for the redevelopment of the Acadia Park neighborhood. We have been working to understand their concerns and assist them with their efforts to start dialogues with the University (Student Housing and Hospitality Services, Campus and Community Planning) on the neighborhood planning process as well as best practices for relocations of residents in the future.

Respectfully submitted May 20th 2012,

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