Background and Introduction for AMS Council

In 2009, the National College Health Assessment found stress, anxiety and depression (first, third and seventh respectively) to be the top self-reported factors negatively affecting UBC students’ academic performance (Mirwaldt and Washburn, 2009). The survey also found that UBC students experienced higher levels of stress compared the average North American academic institution (Wellness Peer Educator Training, 2009). For example, 61% of undergraduate women and 55% of undergraduate men reported experiencing “more than average stress” at UBC (Mirwaldt and Washburn, 2009).

In response to these reports, student mental health has been identified as a priority by the UBC institution. Accordingly, the working document, Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy, was developed by the Vice President Students Office to address: policies and practices related to mental health, provision of a supportive environment, increased mental health awareness and self-management skills, early identification of students needing assistance and connection to appropriate resources, adequate and timely mental health services and case management and risk mitigation protocols (Student Development & Services, 2012).

The AMS has identified two areas of concern negatively affecting the majority of UBC students including: financial burden and academic stress (Cregten, 2012). In relation to academic stress Cregten (2012) stated:

In section 3.2, course workload was identified as a major factor causing students stress or anxiety on a regular basis, with 81% of all respondents supporting the statement, 35% strongly. While much work has been done to provide resources and support to students with mental health related needs, more work should be done to proactively address causative issues stemming from the student academic experience. (p. 5)

In light of the university recognizing the need to address student mental health, it is equally important for the AMS to support a parallel initiative on behalf of UBC students. Although the AMS has prioritized the need to address student mental health issues, the AMS has only recently developed a presence on campus specifically advocating for student mental health. In order to maintain this priority beyond the terms of the current executives and council, the AMS must invest in a sustainable partnership that ensures the appropriate time, resources and expertise are devoted to this important issue.

The document before you provides a framework for the AMS to achieve this through entering into a partnership with the UBC Mental Health Network. The UBC Mental Health Network is an organization made up of representatives from numerous student groups at UBC that make student mental health and wellbeing a priority. The UBC MHN is run on a volunteer basis with no financial support from the University or the AMS. In order to expand the breadth and capacity of the UBC MHNs advocacy efforts, this partnership offers financial stability and support from the AMS. By providing support and resources to the UBC MHN the AMS will support the Network in a capacity that allows autonomy to be critical of all UBC policies. Such a partnership would establish a firm commitment from the AMS to address student mental health.

The Network has attempted to engage in advocacy efforts with UBC in the past, for example, to have a mental health disclaimer and resource list mandated into course syllabi. However, without the working capacity nor knowledge of university procedures this goal was not achieved. Through establishing a partnership with the AMS to help advise and guide the Network through the maze of the university administration, the Network will be able to identify and act on relevant student mental health concerns.

The direct benefit to the AMS in entering this partnership with the MHN is a sustainable commitment to this issue that will be extend beyond the term and expertise of current executives and councilors. The goals and priorities that are set out in the 2013-2016 UBC MHN Strategic Plan identify the exact areas where the AMS should be advocating for change and improvement. Advocating for these goals requires a broad reach, links with the right students groups and expertise which the AMS currently does not have. The MHN has the right connections with the relevant student groups to help guide informed advocacy for student mental health.
Memorandum of Understanding

Between

University of British Columbia Alma Mater Society

And

University of British Columbia Mental Health Network

February 2013

University of British Columbia, Vancouver, British Columbia
1 Objective of the Memorandum of Understanding

The University of British Columbia Mental Health Network (UBC MHN) is proposing to work with the Alma Mater Society (AMS) in order to address the issue of student mental health at UBC. The Network offers the AMS an established and credible presence on campus advocating for the interests of student mental health, in addition to lending the AMS an informed and expert body on student mental health. The AMS can support the Network by providing guidance for campus advocacy through the creation of an annual “Project Assistant” position that would report to the AMS Vice-President Academic and University Affairs and Mental Health Network Chair.

2 Present State of Groups

Alma Mater Society

AMS Mission
To improve the quality of the educational, social, and personal lives of the students of UBC.

The AMS currently addresses student mental health indirectly through services provided by the Sexual Assault Support Centre (SASC), referrals from Speakeasy, and certain coverage policies within the AMS Health & Dental Plan. These support services help students to manage mental health issues as they arise. The mandates of these services do not target the prevention of mental health issues within the UBC community. Currently, there is no student group on campus focused on advocating for systemic changes to university policies, practices and service provisions in a collaborative and coordinated fashion.

Mental Health Network

Mental Health Network Vision:
We envision a community that strives to support a culture of holistic well-being for students during the course of their academic career at the University of British Columbia.

Mental Health Network Mission:
The MHN advocates for due consideration for mental health in present and future student affairs at UBC. To support student well-being the MHN works proactively to facilitate collaboration between key campus partners, engage in advocacy on mental health issues, and strive for a thriving and healthy UBC community.

The Network was formed after a Mental Health Symposium held in February 2011. The network was created to better coordinate and promote mental health resources and student groups on campus. This past year, the MHN has undergone an internal restructuring and strategic planning to shift its focus towards advocacy and lobbying.

The Network is made up of mental health related representatives and currently includes AMS Speakeasy, AMS SASC, Healthy Minds, The Kaleidoscope (a mental health support group), UBC Mental Health Awareness Club, UBC Yoga Club, UBC Wellness Centre and many others. The current VP Academic and University Affairs is a Network Member and represents the AMS. Representatives meet monthly to share ideas, collaborate on various events and projects and accomplish the goals set out in the 2013-2016 UBC MHN Strategic Plan.

---

1 See appendix for full list of active members and Advisory Board Members
3 The Joint Venture

The AMS and the MHN will partner based on the terms of this MOU to advocate for the goals and priorities set out in the 2013-2016 UBC MHN Strategic Plan. This three year agreement will result in the creation of a part-time “Project Assistant” position overseen by the AMS VP Academic and University Affairs and UBC MHN Chair and will conduct the background research, document preparation and administrative work to support the joint advocacy efforts of the MHN and the AMS with respect to student mental health. This agreement will also see the allocation of an additional $500 of funding annually to support the annual UBC Mental Health Symposium.

The responsibilities of the two parties are set out below and can be amended and adjusted based on the terms of the MOU outlined further in this document.

MHN Administration (Chair and MHN Team):
The MHN Administration consists of the Chair of the MHN and additional volunteer team members brought on to assist with the activities of the MHN.

Responsibilities of MHN
- Oversee the Network Members and Advisory Board membership and recruit new members
- Continue to develop the strategic plan to identify key areas of focus, with specific deliverables, for the Network over the next three years
- Approve official reports and advocacy documents
- Manages funds and maintains financial records for Network events and projects
- Facilitate and schedule monthly Network Member meetings and maintain meeting records
- Update the website with relevant documents and maintains a publicly accessible Network archive
- Organize and plan yearly Mental Health Symposium and other Network initiatives (annual campaigns)
- Issue annual Network progress report to the AMS

AMS Administration:
The AMS Administration consists of the Vice-President, Academic and University Affairs and Project Assistant.

Responsibilities of AMS
- Provide access to a financial account for Network deposits and withdrawals, accessible by a designated Network administrator
- Oversee the recruitment, hiring process, and payment of the Project Assistant
- Provide necessary training to the Project Assistant with regards to advocacy and lobbying projects on campus
- Provide a workspace for the Project Assistant, with relevant office supplies and resources
- Allocate agreed upon funding to MHN for Symposium

Responsibilities of AMS Project Assistant
- Attend scheduled meetings with Network Members
- Meet with Network Members as needed.
- Facilitate training sessions for Network Members and Team to aid in university lobbying efforts
- Report on, research and develop documents at Network’s request
- Communicate with various campus stakeholders in lobbying efforts
- Update Network Members and coordinate work on Network lobbying projects
- Gather and collect data on student mental health at UBC to support the Network and other student groups’ lobbying efforts
- Identify gaps in mental health data on campus crucial to advocacy efforts

2 Exact title of position may change
3.1 Financials

The AMS shall allocate the following sums annually for the duration of the three year term of agreement, beginning May 1st, 2013.

Funding for Annual UBC Mental Health Symposium: $750
Funding for Project Assistant Position: $5,460 in 2013\(^3\), and up to $8,500 in subsequent years\(^4\)

---

\(^3\) Wage set at Tier 1 Commission Position – 52 weeks x 10 hours per week x $10.50 per hour =

\(^4\) To take into account increase in hours with increase in workload anticipated as initiatives progress
4 Terms of Agreement

4.1 General

4.1.1 This Memorandum of Understanding will be a three year agreement, starting from when the MOU is signed to April 30, 2016.

4.1.2 All information and communication with the “AMS Project Assistant” will be archived in accordance with AMS policy.

4.1.3 All relevant documentation (e.g., Network Member meeting minutes) will be posted to a public website to maintain transparency for students.

4.2 Resource Allocation

4.2.1 Creation of part-time student position to support the Network - funding to support this position (position payment will follow AMS student staff guidelines).

4.2.2 The UBC MHN and AMS, in joint agreement, reserve the right to terminate and rehire AMS Project Assistant position within 3 months of start date (May, June, July).

4.2.3 The AMS will provide office or desk space for the “Project Assistant” in the Student Union Building.

4.2.5 Funding to support a yearly symposium (deposited into account created by AMS designated for UBC MHN funds).

4.3 Amendments

4.3.1 Amendments may be made to the MOU with the written consent of both parties.

4.4 Termination

4.4.1 Any Party may terminate this Memorandum of Understanding by providing written notice to all other parties during the months of May, June and July. The withdrawal is effective 90 days after written notice is provided with no monetary or financial repercussions to either party.

4.4.2 The MOU is granted null immediately if either party violates the terms of the agreement or fails to adhere to its responsibilities as outlined in the MOU.
5 References


6 Appendix - Current UBC Mental Health Network Membership and Advisory Board

Current Network Members:
Duties for each member include: attend Network Member monthly meetings, communicate respective groups’ events, initiatives and projects, provide direction for the Network projects and initiatives and work together to achieve the goals of the 2013-2016 UBC MHN Strategic Plan.
- AMS
- AMS Speakeasy
- SASC
- The Wellness Centre
- Healthy Minds
- UBC Mental Health Awareness Club
- UBC Yoga Club
- The Kaleidoscope
- Graduate Student Society
- UBC Neurology Club
- UBC International Student Association

Advisory Board:
The Advisory Board consists of UBC and Network alumni, faculty and staff working in the area of student mental health. The Board provides support and expertise and helps identify key issues for potential projects and initiatives.

UBC Instructional Faculty and Students
- Steven Barnes - Department of Psychology
- Michael Lee – Department of Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy
- Kristi Kenyon - PhD Candidate & Sessional Instructor

UBC Staff
- Dr. Cheryl Washburn - Director, Counseling Services
- Dr. Patricia Mirwaldt - Director, Student Health
- Patricia Hambler - Student Development Officer - Wellness
- Miranda Massie - Health Promotions, Healthy UBC
- Barbara Yearwood – Question Persuade Refer (QPR) Steering Committee
- Rebecca Shaw - Research Support Officer, UBC SPARC (Support Programs to Advance Research Capacity)

MHN Alumni
- Joshua Beharry UBC MHN Co-Founder