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1. Message from the AMS Vice-President, External Affairs

Dear Colleagues,

Since coming into office in March 2013, I can say with some certainty that the past four months have been rewarding, thought provoking, and memorable. While I was no stranger to the AMS coming into the position, taking control of the reigns has truly opened my eyes to the trials, and sometimes tribulations of leadership. Through the successes and temporary hurdles, I am always humbled and honored to be acting as the Vice-President, External, representing 50,000 UBC students to the outside world. My many thanks to all UBC students who had faith to elect me to this position, and to all of the wonderful individuals within the AMS for their guidance and expertise. I look forward to the upcoming year, expected to be full of challenges and surprises, but always in pursuit of a better experience for all UBC students.

This report encompasses most areas of my office's activates to date and in the future, including my goals while in office. Should you have any other questions, please don't hesitate to contact me at vpexternal@ams.ubc.ca

Sincerely,

Tanner Bokor
Vice-President, External Affairs
2. Staff Hiring

Before I took office in February and acting as the AVP External with the assistance of Kyle Warwick (the previous VP External Affairs) began the process of hiring new staff for the External Office. As I was vacating the position of AVP External, there was an immediate need to replace that position by the February 27th transition date. However, after beginning the process of planning for the year to come, I recognized a need for assistance in the areas of event and campaign planning, eventually resulting in the revision of the External Events Commissioner position from five hours to ten with additional duties added to assist in carrying out external-related campaigns.

In the month of March, after Council had adopted a new code change to create the External Advocacy Commission, I began the search for a new ADVOCOM Vice-Chair, who is ultimately responsible for the development of the External Advocacy Commission and carrying out all duties there in. This role is brand new to the External Office, taking duties of former commissioners in the portfolio and combining them into one position that deals with the office’s outreach component.

Unfortunately, Andrew Jackson, the former U-Pass & Transit Commissioner, had vacated the position in February, the duties of the commissioner being absorbed by the AVP External and Vice-President, External. Andrew’s contributions to the society have been immeasurable and have greatly aided students in the field of rapid transit, his research being a great resource to the External portfolio for many years to come.

2.1 Associate Vice-President, External

Of all Vice-President, Externals’, I have probably had the best idea of the role this position plays in the External Office. As the former AVP External, I wanted to ensure that I did not set my expectations to the same exact standard that I had held in the position, instead shaping them to what is necessary for the upcoming year. 2013-2014 is expected to be a very active year for the office, and with a focus of policy implementation and outreach for this year, my AVP needed to be well-versed in work that the VP External takes on, able to be self-directed, and have the necessary skills to act not only as the Vice-President’s advisor, but be able to take personal initiative to see the societies’ policies through.

After vetting roughly 10 candidates, I ultimately chose Ekaterina Baranovskaya. Ekaterina comes to the role as the former chair of the University & External Relations Committee and has multiple years’ experience with the External portfolio. She has proven herself to be a dedicated and knowledgeable asset to the office, and her skillset will be greatly needed in the upcoming year. This year, the role is assisting me in policy development, as well as taking over much of the U-Pass customer service duties, the development of policy and structure with the Alliance of BC Students, and working on external campaign development from a policy perspective.

2.2 External Events Commissioner

In November 2012, Kyle and I had created the position of External Events Commissioner to help assist the office with event programming related to campaigns the office was operating, such as the Get OnBoard campaign and the Where’s the Funding campaign. Unfortunately, we were only able to hire a position for five hours per week, however, the former commissioner significantly helped with volunteer coordination and creating event concepts. In this year’s push for policy implementation and outreach, I
made the decision to bump the hours to ten per week and redefined the role to be more hands on with event development, allowing the role to be more self-directed.

After vetting about 10 candidates, I ultimately selected Francesca McDowell. Francesca has been active within UBC organizations, currently part of Orientations and the UBC Student Leadership Conference. Her enthusiasm, quick thinking, and creativity has been a welcome addition to the office and will be a great tool in designing events to engage students on issues being worked on by the External portfolio. This year, the role is working on the new rapid transit campaign, the Student Union Development Summit, the Alliance of BC Students, and has successfully programmed a number of events for the Make Your Mark UBC campaign for the 2013 provincial elections.

2.3 ADVOCOM Vice-Chair

The External Advocacy Commission Vice-Chair is a hybrid between the former duties of the AVP External in terms of external campaign operations and the role of the SUDS Commissioner. The Vice-Chair is responsible for overseeing the operations of external-issue campaigns, developing the commission, creating an audit of the societies’ engagement methods to students, while also coordinating and programming the Student Union Development Summit in August of this year. The positions day to day duties are being shaped and modified as deemed necessary, however, to date the ADVOCOM Vice-Chair position has been a valuable aid to the work of the Vice-President, External.

There was a sense of urgency when hiring this position, as I needed the position to assist with creating and programming the Make Your Mark campaign in only a month’s time when all other staff time had been allocated with other projects. After vetting seven candidates, I ultimately hired Patrick Meehan. Patrick rejoins the AMS after several years, formerly being an assistant to former VPX Matthew Naylor and also as an Elections Administrator in 2008. His past experience in the portfolio, combined with his balance between big-picture and detail-oriented planning has proven to be exceptional, and with several new campaigns under-development, his skills will be crucial.

2.4 Other Hires

While not as direct members of the AMS, upon taking office, I had to vacate my role as Campaign Director of Get OnBoard BC. In seeking a replacement, I worked with Pierre Cenerelli, AMS University & Government Relations Advisor and Get OnBoard BC Secretary to create new criteria. I am pleased to say that I had selected Nick Smith and Lee Haber to take on the roles of Strategic Director and Campaign Director of Get OnBoard. Nick comes to Get OnBoard from Sustainable SFU, an organization focused towards regional sustainability, and was ultimately chosen to act as Strategic Director, responsible for the development of the campaign’s outreach component. Lee is a UBC School of Regional Planning student studying for a Master’s degree, but has been very active in the regional transportation sector. I am confident that the both of them will be fantastic leaders of Get OnBoard and work to see its ultimate expansion and success.
3. Year Goals

3.1 External Advocacy Commission:

With the creation of the External Advocacy Commission, one key goal is the development of ADVOCOM and carrying out its mandates in a way that brings in a wide diversity of ideas and backgrounds, and assist with the creation and operation of externally focused advocacy campaigns.

These mandates include the Strategic Outreach Plan, and audit of the societies’ external outreach to students, the development of new Advocacy guidelines to help shape the development of campaigns under future VPX’s, and multiple interactive consultation sessions around external policy issues in a manner that engages students and collects feedback to help design messaging for future campaigns. In order to fulfill these mandates, we will be developing an application process for the commission in order to fill all six code-mandated seats.

3.2 Student Union Development Summit

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, and this year the coordination and execution of the conference is under the External portfolio.

This year, my goal is to run the conference with no more than $2,500 of operating loss, as well as create new methods to collect feedback from delegates to be used for future conferences, and also develop a best-practices and skills-sharing online platform for student unions that extends SUDS past the physical conference.

The conference will be held on August 8th-11th in Vancouver, with accommodations booked in Totem Park Residence. Our target is 80 delegates from 20 schools, and given that the previous year had been coordinated in five weeks with 67 delegates in attendance, this goal is attainable. The theme of the conference is “student unions moving into the 21st century” with a focus on the fundamentals of what makes a student union and what the current generation of university students need out of their student societies.

On the financial front, we have budgeted for the conference to be net neutral. All expenses will be covered through delegate fees and potential third-party sponsorship. To date, I have had communications from four student executives including Carleton University, Kwantlen Polytechnic, University of the Fraser Valley and Simon Fraser University express interest in the conference and are expecting to attend. Overall, I am looking forward to the opportunity to speak with student union executives across the country and develop new partnerships to benefits not only UBC students, but students across Canada.

3.3 Alliance of BC Students/Lobby Days

On issues that directly relate to post-secondary education, regional transportation, and childcare, the provincial government is the body that is overall responsible. To effectively address the societies’
provincial lobbying efforts, we will be working closely to develop the Alliance of BC Students, a loose coalition of student unions across BC, as well as a new campaign around post-secondary student issues with the Alliance.

Part of this is the restart of the annual Lobby Days event, where the AMS would hold lobbying sessions in Victoria with governing and opposition parties. Our goal is to expand this to the ABCS, and also create a more presentable and comprehensive document outlining the AMS’s external priorities that can be used for lobbying purposes.

3.4 Rapid Transit

Last year, the society took the approach of focusing on the regional transportation picture through the Get OnBoard BC campaign. While still a major focus of our external priorities, we are in a critical decision point regarding the proposed Broadway rapid transit project.

For 2013-2014, we will redevelop our approach to rapid transit, including a new Broadway-centric transit campaign alongside our support of the Get OnBoard BC campaign. This campaign will follow a similar approach, with engagement to stakeholders along the corridor in the campaign, lobbying regional mayors on the issues surrounding regional transit, while also including new tools for engagement for students and the general public in an aim to make the Broadway Line and regional transit a critical issue.

3.5 U-Pass

The U-Pass BC program, first introduced at UBC in 2003, is evolving and expanding with the renewal of the collective agreement in March 2013. With the introduction of the Compass program, an entirely electronic fare collection and enforcement network, there is a great need to review the External portfolio’s customer service methods around subsidies and opt-in/opt-out issues, as well as the implementation of a communication plan around how to use the new Compass U-Pass system.

3.6 Office Modifications

The Office of the Vice-President, External is perhaps the most ambiguous and shifting office of all AMS executives. In order to make the office easier to connect with and act as more of a resource to the entire student population, the office will be undergoing a review of its structure and how we develop and implement society policy. Furthermore, to ensure the societies continuing non-partisan stance, we will look to formally entrench the “all political, non-partisan” method for lobbying.

4. Lobbying Projects

4.1 Get OnBoard BC

As the founding members of Get OnBoard BC, the External portfolio still has deep ties with the organization and interest to see it succeed. However, as Get OnBoard has become a separate entity, the AMS no longer has direct influence over its operations. To date, a majority of the work with Get OnBoard has been transitioning the new directors and working on a MoU for information and resource sharing. I
expect that as the new directors get up to speed, our focus will be on exploring new methods to support the organization and getting involved in its call for sustainable and equitable regional transportation funding, with much of this work expected to happen around August or September.

However, as the BC Liberal government has stated its interest in a referendum on regional funding mechanisms and infrastructure, there will need to be close coordination to ensure an outcome that benefits students. Over the next few months, I will be monitoring the situation closely and working to schedule meetings with provincial and regional leaders on this issue.

4.2 Alliance of BC Students

Formerly known as the Where's the Funding campaign, I have been working with other Alliance members, including UVic, SFU, Capilano University, UBC-O, and the UBC GSS, on creating a new organizational structure for the organization in aims of make it a more cohesive and active coalition. While this document has been finalized, work is still ongoing to get all Alliance members to ratify the document and solidify the structure. On May 6th, the Alliance held their first official event in Victoria to deliver 6500 signed petition cards from the "VOTE EDUCATION" campaign launched in September 2012. The event was successful, with 27 student representatives taking part in the event on the steps of the legislature and numerous MLA candidates attending, including BC Green Party leader, Jane Sterk.

Over the next few months, the office will be continuing to work with other members to develop the coalition and plan its upcoming projects for 2013. Discussions are beginning on potential expansion of the Alliance’s policies to include additional points around graduate student issues, transportation, and childcare. I expect to have at least two meetings with the Alliance over the summer months to develop our plans further, and I am beginning the process of developing a new website with the assistance of UVic for the ABCS.

This organization will be our primary provincial lobbying body, as I firmly believe that lobbying as a united student voice will prove more effective for our members. While there is much work to be done to get this young organization to be viewed as a credible voice on the provincial level, I have great confidence in its potential.

4.3 Make Your Mark UBC/Provincial Elections

As the first official campaign of my term, Make Your Mark UBC was the office’s get out the vote initiative for the 2013 provincial elections. The campaign was launched in mid-March, and operated until May 13th, the last day of active campaigning for third-party advertisers. As a registered third-party advertiser with Elections BC, we first developed guidelines for the society and its subsidiaries (clubs and constituencies) to operate under during the writ-period, and agreed on the three areas that the AMS would support as lobbying priorities during the election: post-secondary education, transit, and childcare.

To represent the views of all students, the office choose to remain non-partisan during the writ-period, never endorsing or supporting any particular party in the election. This was a strong value that we held during the campaign, and at no time did it shift.

The campaign itself was mostly run digitally, with a social media presence and website developed to act as a central resource for all students, hosting party platforms and information, voting information, and a series of videos on the external priorities as approved by Council. Engagement was decent overall, with
58 “likes” on Facebook and the videos being integrated into the WaterFillz system. On the physical
engagement front, we held a series of all-candidates debates and forums, two specifically for Point Grey
MLA candidates (the only debates in the riding during the writ period), one on post-secondary issues
with the ABCS and BC graduate student societies, and one on the Broadway corridor.

While the first all-candidate debate held before the writ period was met with some controversy
surrounding a decision on non-Point Grey MLA candidates sent to represent other candidates, these
debates did bring student interest to the issues being discussed in the election, and had attendance of
between 50-80 people per event. Much credit is to be given to Francesca McDowell, Ekateryna
Baranvoskaya, Patrick Meehan, and Pierre Cenerelli for their fantastic effort to get the campaign up and
running in such a short period of time and act in a highly professional and efficient manner during the
writ-period.

In terms of election turnout, the BC Liberal party won a majority of seats in the province, holding onto
government after 11 years, however, Christy Clark, the BC Liberal incumbent candidate for Point Grey
and Premier of BC, lost her seat to NDP candidate David Eby. Regardless of which government is in
power, the office continues to lobby on issues relevant to UBC students, and there will be a continued
effort to reach out to both governing and opposition leaders to seek solutions on these issues. My next
step will be to connect with the newly appointed cabinet ministers, including the Honorable Amrik Virk,
Minister of Advanced Education, the Honorable Todd Stone, Minister of Transportation, and the
Honorable Andrew Wilkinson, minister of newly created Ministry of Technology, Innovation, and
Citizens’ Services. I will also be connecting with the newly elected MLA for Point Grey, the Honorable
David Eby, to begin dialogue on areas of collaboration and on seeking support for AMS policy.

The one disparaging fact of the 2013 election is that voter turnout in the 18-24 age bracket was less than
50% of eligible voters (though Elections BC registered 93% of eligible voters in the province for this
election, with overall turnout being the second highest in BC history.) This can be attributed to a number
of issues, especially voter apathy, however, another issue is the fixed voting dates put into place in 2001
that enshrine the second May of every four year voting cycle to be the general election date. Students
across the province are either in exam period or off-campus, which greatly impacts the percent of
students motivated to vote. This is an area that the office is doing research on in aims of eventually
creating an external policy directing the office to lobby for a change of the fixed voting date from May to a
more accessible date in the fall or in February/March.

4.4 Rapid Transit/Broadway Line Campaign

The main focus of my term will be on rapid transit along the Broadway corridor and regional
transportation. To finish up projects leftover from transition, with assistance from UBC’s office of Campus
+ Community Planning, I completed the GIS mapping project started in 2011, graphically displaying the
location of all 50,000 U-Pass holders and demonstrating that roughly 40% of all UBC students commute
from an area outside of Vancouver, highlighting the importance of regional transit infrastructure.

Currently, the office is looking to update and omnibus policies on the AMS’s rail rapid-transit stance for a
long term solution and regional funding proposals, while also developing a new short-term transit policy
for solutions in the period before opening of a rapid transit line to aid in easing the commute on the
corridor. I met with representatives from the City of Vancouver, Vision Vancouver and the NPA on
gathering information and support for both sides of the transit issue, and will be setting up meetings with
other stakeholders to bolster further support.
Once ADVOCOM is functioning, they will be tasked with modifying a Broadway-centric transit campaign, scheduled to begin in August of this year and will run through the duration of my term. The campaign calls for a final funding solution for the corridor project and regional solutions to fix TransLink’s funding formula. Should a transit referendum be called, the campaign will be adaptable to advocate for a “Yes” position. This campaign will be multi-faceted, much like Get OnBoard BC, and will feature in person engagement on-campus and off, different transit forums in locations along the corridor, petitions, advocacy events, and will also include a new website based on the Nationbuilder digital platform, which is currently under construction.

I expect that this file will be shifting quickly, and it will be key to be flexible and adaptive to new developments. While an ultimate decision may be a year to two years from now, our focus must be fixed on continued advocacy for a long term solution for the corridor, even if that solution may not affect the current generation of students. Short term transit mechanisms will be temporary and will ultimately not solve the corridors issue, but are also equally as important to lobby on.

5. U-Pass

The U-Pass agreement was ultimately signed on March 15th 2013, and was executed shortly after. With the new agreement comes the introduction of the Compass electronic fare card system and subsequent changes to fare distribution, enforcement, and administration. Many of the details of Compass are still being finalized by TransLink and all signatory post-secondary institutions, however, work is underway to prepare U-Pass for Compass.

I had the opportunity in late May to test the new U-Pass administration website with Elizabeth Snowdon, a TransLink software engineer attached to the Compass program, which will be the portal used by all 200,000 post-secondary students in the Lower Mainland using their U-Passes. Furthermore, I am beginning conversations with UBC regarding a communications plan around general U-Pass information for a September rollout and Compass communications for a fall rollout.

Since March, I have also received 57 U-Pass customer service requests, many regarding opt-out requests, but periodically cases of students requesting exemptions with extraordinary circumstances. To properly deal with all cases coming in, the office is implementing a support ticket system and new workflow protocols to process requests within 48 hours. The office is also continuing to work with Enrollment Services on implementation of a cross-campus MoU signed between the AMS and UBC-Student’s Union Okanagan regarding student fees, where students studying on exchange to the opposite UBC campus are responsible for paying that student union’s range of fees. Currently, an interim solution of manually assessing UBC-O students the AMS General Fee ($21.50) is in effect, and I have reached out to all students effected to inform them of the fee assessment. The goal is to have the MoU fully implemented by September on both campuses, but more work is needed to program the change into Enrollment Service’s fee assessments.

6. Budgeting

While not a process I directly control, I have been working with Joaquin Acevedo, VP Finance, to craft the VP External’s operating budget for 2013-2014. Recognizing the societies’ temporary financial issues and following the societies new zero-based budgeting approach, we re-evaluated the External office’s
expenses, creating a much leaner office, but retaining funding in core areas. The budget reflects necessary funding for the office’s expected costs related to the ABCS, rapid transit campaign, Get OnBoard BC, as well as a modest increase in staffing to reflect the addition of the ADVOCOM Vice-chair. For more information on the budget, please contact Joaquin Acevedo at vpfinance@ams.ubc.ca

7. Miscellaneous

Day-to-day in the External office encompasses so many different facets and duties, and while some are so miniscule that they need not be mentioned here, it is important to mention several other initiatives currently being worked on by the office.

Committee Reform: Though not within my position's duties, I have been working on a report regarding Committee Reform which will present a number of suggestions to make the committee structure more efficient while encouraging more participation for general students. This report will ultimately be submitted to Council and to LPC, with a motion directing LPC to review potential changes to make the structure.

UNECORN + SLCC: The two committees that I sit on, UNECORN (University + External Relations Committee) and SLCC (Student Life and Communications Committee) have met several times over the course of my term to date. Most of my offices work is sent to UNECORN for review and passage, however, SLCC has some great potential to assist with our upcoming campaigns and lobbying indicatives. I have also attended several meetings of LPC as a guest while working on policy guideline code changes and ADVOCOM.

Meetings: Most of my days are spent in different meetings with a range of organizations. To date, I have met with representatives from the university administration, City of Vancouver, the BC Liberals, BC NDP, BC Greens, BC Conservatives, as well as from other student unions including Kwantlen, SFU, UBC-O, UNBC, UFV, and UVic. I am working to coordinate meetings with different regional mayors and provincial leaders to discuss the transit and post-secondary files, and expect a bulk of this to occur in late summer.

Conferences: In late May, I had the opportunity to attend the Federation of Canadian Municipalities Trade Show & AGM in Vancouver which provided me with an opportunity to speak with municipalities across Canada on issues effecting different municipalities, which benefited greatly for insight on the transit file. In September, I will be attending the Union of BC Municipalities Conference also in Vancouver to speak with local municipalities and provincial leaders on a number of different issues, which I am expecting will provide a great opportunity to connect with other groups in preparation for any potential transit referendums and changes to childcare programs in the province.

Public Visibility: From time to time, I have fielded different media calls, most being related to the provincial elections and student voting. I was also recently part of UBC’s spring congregation ceremonies as part of the academic procession, which was a great opportunity to congratulate the newly graduated Class of 2013 and wish them luck in their future endeavors.