



UBC-V Student Senate Caucus Meeting

Date: April 16, 2014 **Time:** 4:30 - 5:50pm **Venue:** SUB 206 (Council Chambers)

Present:

Voting Members: Graham Beales (Applied Science), Daniel Munro (Arts), Jared Lee (Dentistry), Elaine Kuo (Education), Nani Yahya (Forestry), Julienne Jagdeo (Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies), Collyn Chan (Land and Food Systems), Brenda Gershkovitch (Law), Aliya Daulat (Pharmaceutical Sciences), Aaron Bailey (Science), Anne Kessler (Member At-Large), Mona Maleki (Member At-Large), Eric Zhao (Member At-Large), Christopher Roach (Member At-Large)

Guests: Kiran Mahal (Previous Student Senator), Dr. Hugh Brock (Associate-Provost, Academic Innovation), Sukhpaul Gurm (Incoming Dentistry Student Senator), Winnie Ho (Vice-President of the Music Undergraduate Society)

Regrets: Cole Leonoff (Commerce and Business Administration), Casey Chan (Medicine), Nina Karimi (Member At-Large), Justin Wiebe (Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies)

Meeting start: 4:34 pm

1. Adopt Agenda

Christopher Roach, SSC Co-Chair

Be it resolved that the UBC-V Student Senate Caucus meeting agenda for *April 16th, 2014* be adopted as presented.

Carried.

Moved: Graham Beales; Seconded: Eric Zhao

2. Minute Approval

Christopher Roach, SSC Co-Chair

Due to technical issues, the previous minutes were not completed for the meeting. The motion was postponed until May 14, 2014.

3. Topic of Broad Academic Interest and Ad-Hoc Committee Proposal

Kiran Mahal, AMS Legend

The Topic of Broad Academic Interest on Mental Health and Well-Being originally started as an idea in the AMS, where it was decided that the idea would be better accepted if created within the UBC Senate rather than coming from an outside body. At the April 16th meeting of Senate Proper, Mona and Christopher were going to make a presentation to the Senate Floor for discussion. It was



recommended that the SSC focus the topic into areas that are most important to students, rather than allowing Senate to make assumptions by accident.

Mona mentioned a few points that individual senators had raised against the creation of the ad-hoc committee, and our response as a caucus. Specifically, this included the ideas that Senate has no reason to take a role in the discussion around mental health and well-being, and that the stress affecting a university student is expected and needs to be accepted. Mona emphasized that the goal of this topic is to convince Senate that a framework is needed that can be applied across faculties.

Kiran mentioned that the caucus needed to talk about the timing of the ad-hoc committee, and when it should come back to Senate with a list of recommendations, while Christopher mentioned that there are two particular points to consider with respect to this: that most senators are turning over in May, and how quickly can the committee complete the work required. He also reminded the caucus that senate does not like to push things through on a tight schedule, and would rather take the time to complete things correctly. There were differing opinions on the matter, Aaron recommended that the caucus push to have the ad-hoc committee created for the summer so that both outgoing and incoming senators may work on it. Eric hoped that the committee may be created so that it could return to Senate with terms of Reference in September. Christopher mentioned that he did not believe the administration would be able to catch up that quickly, but there is nothing stopping the caucus from creating an unofficial committee to work over the summer.

4. Caucus House-Keeping Items

Christopher Roach, SSC Co-Chair

Christopher thanked everyone who had filled out the committee preference form, and reminded the caucus that the deadline was Friday April 18th. The timing was strict because of the need to complete the assignments and get them to the Nominating committee before April 29th.

Mona asked for a show of hands as to whether the caucus wanted to hold another meeting to go over the assignments. The caucus said it would like the meeting.

It was decided that Christopher would email the committee meeting times as well as the SSC contact list to the caucus, and that Mona would create a doodle for the caucus' meeting to discuss committee assignments and strategic planning meeting(s).



5. April Senate Meeting Material Review

Christopher Roach, SSC Co-Chair

The first topic from the Senate Proper Agenda was 9a entitled “English Language Requirements for Vantage College”.

Vantage College was quickly introduced. Christopher explained that the purpose of Vantage College is to allow gifted international students who are below the required threshold for English test scores to attend UBC. Kiran clarified that currently international students are only accepted if they came from a school that taught using either the International Baccalaureate or the A-Levels system. Vantage College would change that.

Anne mentioned a concern that the caucus did not know whether proper evaluation would be done during a student’s first year to ensure that he or she would make it into his or her second year. She received the replies that there are a lot of tests going on, but it would be good to ask for an update from Vantage College at Senate Proper.

Aaron mentioned that he is concerned with multiple aspects of Vantage College, especially the price tag as it comes across as allowing a student to pay a higher dollar value to decrease admission requirements to the university. As well, he was worried about students’ success after reaching second year, as well as whether students will be able to integrate into the UBC community as three residence buildings are going to be dedicated to Vantage College students until Vantage College is built. Christopher commented that when Vantage College was originally proposed to Senate the benefits to the UBC budget were placed first and foremost.

The discussion was ended due to time constraints.

A new topic from the Senate Proper Agenda was viewed: 9b entitled “International Undergraduate Student Enrollment Policy”.

Bob Sparks asked to introduce this to the SSC during its meeting, but had to be refused due to time constraints. This proposal allows UBC to accept more international students.

Kiran let the caucus know that the proposal was first brought up in the Admissions committee a year previous because UBC had been violating the previous version of the policy for some time. The idea behind the proposal is to change from placing a hard cap on the number of



international students admitted to UBC to use wording such as “international students will never displace domestic students.”

Christopher questioned how the university planned to support these students on the current heavily taxed infrastructure, and how they would fit into first year classroom spaces.

Aaron mentioned that he did not see a process detailed for evaluating the new admission guidelines. Anne commented that it would be good to ask for this detail in the provost’s annual report on admissions, and it was decided that she would ask for this at Senate Proper.

Aaron asked what the budget breakdown is for how this money is going into student support. Christopher replied that as Senators, we tend to be pushed not to think about money.

A new topic from the Senate Proper Agenda was viewed: 10a and 10c entitled “New Degree Program: master of Community and Regional Planning” and “New Degree Program: Doctor of Pharmacy”, respectively.

Christopher raised the concern that for both the Master of Community and Regional Planning, and the Entry-to-Practice Doctor of Pharmacy academic programs were being replaced with professional programs, which have a history of much higher tuition costs.

Graham mentioned that although not apparent from the proposal to Senate Proper, it was made clear at the previous meeting of the Curriculum Committee that the Master of Community and Regional Planning would not displace the current program.

Anne commented that although the Entry-to-Practice Doctor of Pharmacy had much higher stated tuition costs than the current Bachelor of Pharmacy

Mona mentioned that many graduate students that she has talked to who are in changing programs notice neglect from their department if they are in the “old” program.

6. UBC Connect System Discussion

Dr. Hugh Brock, Associate-Provost Academic Innovation

Flexible Learning is UBC’s response to learning the methodologies that people use to learn, new learning technologies, and what is wanted from UBC graduates. There are two ways of thinking about the word ‘Flexible’. This discussion focuses on what is flexible for students with the goal of improving the student experience at UBC. The other way to think about the word is to look at the many different learning and teaching modalities that exist.



The primary point of discussion at this meeting is to discuss UBC's current Learning Management System (LMS): UBC Connect. Because UBC licensed this LMS until the year 2020, it has to either work with it, or completely remove it while eating the cost.

Aaron mentioned that the biggest issue students in his constituency have had with Connect is the fact that each professor sets it up in his or her own manner. A template system for professors that would create some level of standardization for students would significantly reduce confusion at the students' end. Dr. Brock replied that some faculties did hire "technology rovers" to find professors and help them set up their courses, but even this did not always meet the needs of students. He also stated that the conversation did leave him knowing that professor training in the LMS would be needed, but he was still unsure of how to implement it.

Eric brought up a few often-requested features: customization of the Connect start screen, a listing of deliverables on a timeline such as a calendar, as well as integration with third-party systems. He also mentioned two modifications Medicine has made to connect that were praised by students. First, course calendars, assignments, and exams can be synchronized with a Google Calendar account. Second, some courses allow course documents to be downloaded and/or synchronized to a network folder. Dr. Brock replied that an issue with third-party integration is that UBC's privacy policies do not allow the hosting of student information outside of BC. Aaron commented that he eventually discovered that there was a calendar hidden within Connect, but that his experience with it is that it is unreliable, as it requires professors and/or students to enter dates into the calendar.

Sukhpaul mentioned that Dentistry has developed a program named Oscar to use connect on a mobile device, and that it has been well received. Elaine mentioned that a useful feature on mobile would be to receive notifications on the device. Upon being reminded of notifications, Jared brought up the issue of the large number of often useless notifications generated by Connect, and the fact that there is no way to quickly sort through them.

Anne mentioned that the discussion board is difficult to look through, as a thread is not marked as read when the "read unread posts" option is used.

A guest mentioned that Connect is not used often in music, but the school does use the quiz portion of the system. This has been problematic for students because the instability of the server often leaves students unable to access the time-dependant quizzes. As well, attempts to hold office hours through Connect proved too difficult to access by students that professors in the school were required to change formats.

Elaine mentioned that submitting and downloading assignments is surprisingly difficult to do using the system, and Graham commented that the outlined goal of using Connect to collect a students work into a portfolio is wrong for the system, as a portfolio that is hidden behind the Campus Wide Login system is useless outside of the university.



Brenda mentioned that she currently works in the software industry, and mentioned that there are many strong tools to test usability available, which should have been used to ensure users are satisfied before a product goes to market, and expressed her surprise that no equivalent seems to have been used. Dr. Brock replied that as the supplier licensed the system to UBC for eight years, they no longer have an incentive to keep UBC happy.

Mona brought up the point that how well buildings on campus accommodate technology can significantly help or hinder a student's experience with an LMS. This includes communal computers for students' use, outlets, etc. while Julianne reminded the caucus that not all students can afford laptops, mobile phones, or other similar technology. Dr. Brock told the caucus that he raised the issue of equity to the Senate Policy Committee a year previous, and there learned that there is a policy to help students in financial need, although he did not know how accessible the policy is. Graham mentioned that it is put into practice through the general bursary program, while Kiran added that a student must be on student loans to receive financial help.

The 140 character limit for course descriptions on the student service centre (SSC) was mentioned as ridiculous by Christopher, with the addition that posting past syllabi may give students a better idea of what is offered in a course. Aaron added that there is a link on some courses that says it goes to the course syllabus/outline, yet every one of these links seems to be dead. He also commented that building a schedule must be done by trial and error in the new course system. Dr. Brock replied to these issues to let the caucus know that UBC is looking at moving to a new course management system named Tribal, in which the different components talk to each other. This does not happen in the current system due to the fact that it is a conglomeration of many home-built systems which can no longer be updated.

When asked by Eric, Dr. Brock stated that if students who have a particular interest in the subject of the LMS would like to give more feedback they should contact Dr. Simon Bates.

Be it resolved that the Student Senate Caucus meeting is adjourned.

**Meeting Adjourned:
5:56pm**

Moved: Elaine; Seconded: Brenda