VP Academic & University Affairs
November 2015 Newsletter

Prepared by
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VP Academic & University Affairs
1. **WHAT IS THIS DOCUMENT?**

The VP Academic & University Affairs (VP AUA) office will be releasing monthly ‘newsletters’ to EduCom, UNECORN, the Student Senate Caucus, the VP Academic Caucus, Vancouver Student Board Reps, and VP AUA Staff Members in order to ensure clarity about the work being done, as well as to find opportunities for work between these groups and the Academic & University Affairs office. Some initiatives will not have bearing on these different groups, but many issues and projects do align with these groups.

Additionally, here is the contact information for the full team in the VP AUA Office:

- AVP Academic & University Affairs - Daniel Munro (avpacademic@ams.ubc.ca)
- Equity Commissioner - Emmet Lee (equitycomm@ams.ubc.ca)
- Campus Development Commissioner - Emily Rennalls (cdcomm@ams.ubc.ca)
- Mental Health & Wellbeing Commissioner - Lina Castro (mhwcomm@ams.ubc.ca)
- Aboriginal Students' Commissioner - Salia Joseph (aboriginalcom@ams.ubc.ca)
- International Students' Commissioner - Saxon Coop (internationalsc@ams.ubc.ca)
- Academic Affairs Commissioner - Dario Garousian (academicaffairs@ams.ubc.ca)

2. **NOVEMBER IN REVIEW**

1. **OPEN EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES (OERs)**

   - Educational Technology User Group (ETUG) Presentation

   Daniel Munro, AVP Academic & University Affairs and myself presented at the ETUG Unconference in one of the panel presentations on “Engaging Student in OER and #textbookbrokeBC.” Since then we have further connected with staff and faculty at UBC, as well as provided many staff and faculty from other institutions the tools to work with their students to advocate for OER adoption and creation.  

   - Open Education Conference

   Daniel Munro, the VP University Affairs from the Simon Fraser Students’ Society, a UBC faculty member and myself presented on a panel at the Open Education Conference on November 19th on, “Faculty and Student Collaboration for OER and Open Textbook Advocacy.” It was extremely successful and following up from that we did multiple interviews with online open advocates, created many connections with other institutions, and will be writing a few blog posts for Flexible Learning and Open Education blogs. This
also allowed more connections to be made with open advocates at UBC and from around the world.

2. **ACADEMIC AFFAIRS**

   • Impact Grant

   The Impact Grant is funding given to research projects that are determined to have the potential to be impactful, however has not truly made positive change on this campus in the last few years. As such, a review is being done of the Impact Grant itself, but also of the processes and planning that underlie the fund. The hope is to ensure that the grant can be more impactful, fund projects that can make change on this campus, and have proper processes that can be an example for all other projects that we carry out.

   • Undergraduate Research Platform

   The creation of an undergraduate research platform is underway, with the Academic Affairs Commissioner working with many campus stakeholders to compile a list of undergraduate research opportunities and determine the best way to present the opportunities to students. This platform will be housed at [http://www.ams.ubc.ca/leadership/executive/key-projects/undergraduate-research/](http://www.ams.ubc.ca/leadership/executive/key-projects/undergraduate-research/)

   • Learning Technology

   The Provost’s Office and the Centre for Teaching, Learning and Technology are working to implement a Learning Technology Ecosystem, which would not be based on a sole Learning Management Software (LMS), but would allow for more flexibility and better pedagogical benefits from an array of learning technologies. There are many groups working on this, all connected in together, and within the VP AUA office there are multiple people on many levels of the project.

3. **INTERNATIONAL TUITION**

   • International Tuition Consultation Implementation

   The International Tuition Formal Consultation started on October 15th and continued on until November 12th. All the information you will need throughout the consultation can be found here: [www.ams.ubc.ca/tuitionincrease](http://www.ams.ubc.ca/tuitionincrease). So far the town halls, think tanks and consultation sessions have been successful and interesting in terms of garnering student opinion. We already seem to be hearing from students who do not normally get involved in these sorts of discussions, which is very positive.

   • Board of Governors Submission & Presentation on International Tuition

   The VP AUA Office worked throughout October and November to create a submission outlining the issues with the proposed international tuition increases that the university administration put putting forward. This submission included research into questions of diversity, recruitment and retention, excellence, and peer institutions, provided an alternate methodology to assess international tuition increases, as well as a proposal for a
new needs-based international student financial aid award.

The submission was presented to the Board of Governors, and Aaron (AMS President) and I presented to them at the Finance & Property Committee of BoG on November 24th. Though unprecedented, the Board of Governors found merit in the concerns brought forward by the AMS. The board instructed the UBC administration to work to compromise and bring down the numbers on most programs, asked for a thorough consultation to occur on Dual Degree Programs, and for the Strategic Investment Fund and Diversity Funding to come back with clear terms of reference before the Board would approve the allocation of the funds. The exact result will be known on December 3rd when the Board of Governors votes on the motion.

4. **Respectful Environment Policy & Sexual Assault**

   • Respectful Environment Policy

      The VP AUA Office is still working on revamping the processes for the Respectful Environment Policy, with the AMS Equity Commissioner, Sexual Assault Support Centre, and AMS HR. There should be a policy coming to AMS Council sometime in January.

   • Sexual Assault Prevention Team (SAPT)

      Along with the AMS Sexual Assault Support Centre (SASC), the VP AUA has been sitting on the UBC Sexual Assault Prevention Team, which seeks to coordinate educational and outreach activities on campus. This group is now working to solidify a 3-year education plan for the university and support Sexual Assault Awareness Month in January.

   • Sexual Assault External Policy

      The Sexual Assault University-Facing Policy has been completed, gone to UNECORN, and will be going to AMS Council on December 2nd. This policy asks the university to review proper processes and protocols with a survivor-centric lens, also asking for an overarching policy once proper processes are in place. This has been created with the AMS Sexual Assault Support Centre (SASC) and specifically with Eleanor Waring, the research assistant that was hired during the summer in the SASC to do research on sexual assault policies.

5. **Academic Experience Survey**

   • AES 2016

      Work has already started on the AES 2016, with a strategic outlook done, the deletion of questions that will not be needed, and the beginning of re-writing questions. Staff within the AMS will be asked to weigh in throughout October and a consultation of all major stakeholders (essentially all those who received this newsletter) will be done in November. All questions should be complete by beginning/middle of December to allow time for Insights West to weigh in on questions and survey composition, with time to make changes as needed.
6. **ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS**

- **Musqueam Weaving Project**
  
  The AMS Aboriginal Students’ Commissioner is currently working on solidifying funding for the rest of the weaving project, which will commence once all funding has been collected. This weaving will be an acknowledgment of the territory that the AMS Student Nest is built upon, and serve as a permanent reminder of the importance of the Musqueam Community to UBC.

- **Powwow**
  
  The Aboriginal Students' Commissioner is working with Aboriginal groups on and off campus to coordinate the second annual powwow at the end of March. This event was immensely successful last year with over 1000 people coming through throughout the course of the day.

7. **MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING**

- **Wellbeing Steering Committee & Leadership Meeting**
  
  The Wellbeing Steering Committee, which the VP AUA sits on, is currently preparing how the dialogue surrounding wellbeing will be carried on with President Martha Piper, and is planning next steps into carrying on the conversation surrounding wellbeing at the university as a whole. The direction of the committee has changed since the acceptance of wellbeing as the foundation of strategic planning at the UBC executive going forward. The VP AUA is also sitting on a Working Group of this committee that will be facilitating a workshop on empowerment in wellbeing with the university’s senior administration.

- **Academic Policy**
  
  Big things are happening in the realm of Academic Policy. The AMS Mental Health & Wellbeing Commissioner has been working on the attendance policy, withdrawal dates, a fall reading break, and a policy surrounding syllabi. Headway has been made on all, especially attendance and withdrawal. Many Senate committees have also set themselves up to work on pieces of this academic policy and practice this year.

8. **INTERNATIONAL STUDENT FINANCIAL AID & WUSC**

- **International Student Financial Aid**
  
  With increasing pressure for international students, especially with rising tuition prices, it is apparent that the current financial aid available for these students is not sufficient. The VP AUA is working with the VP Finance and has created a proposal for a new Student Financial needs and merit based award that would offer $15,000-$30,000 to incoming students. This award would ensure that more students have access to UBC with increasing international tuition fees, but would also help to address the increasing need for
needs-based awards for international students. Additionally, the AMS is proposing in-
program loans for continuing international students with changing situations.

- **WUSC**

  The World University Service of Canada is an organization that works with universities
  and their student societies to provide an education to refugees. The AMS works with
  WUSC and students are levied a fee of $2.61 every year to support about 12 refugee
  students every year at UBC. With recent events showcasing the need for the support of
  refugee students, the VP AUA office is working with WUSC students to run a referendum
to double the WUSC fee to $5.22, ensuring that the University Administration and Stu-
dent Housing & Hospitality Services are willing to offer their part of the funding for new
students coming to UBC through the WUSC program.

9. **OTHER**

- **Meeting Month**

  “There are all these projects, but what exactly is Jenna doing?” This month in particular
  was very meeting heavy, and so though the focus was on international tuition, most
meetings and committees were outside of that realm. Any questions about those specific
committees and work stemming from them is always welcome.

- **New Goal!**

  After exploring new goals to pursue in the second semester, the VP AUA has identified a
few areas where more work is needed:

  A. **AMS Impact Grant**

  The Impact Grant has not had significant executive input in quite awhile. The VP AUA
office will be identifying problems with the current system, updating the processes that
exist for the fund to ensure that research done has impact and the fund can continue on,
as well as looking at processes more broadly for funds at the AMS.

  B. **Continuity in University Lobbying**

  With some of the successes that we have experienced this year, especially in terms of
strategy to engage and lobby UBC, proper communication and transition on these spe-
cific pieces is needed. I will be putting together a specific how-to guide for tuition consul-
tations that can be used in future situations like we have experienced, and a larger inter-
nal transition for university strategy and lobbying, hopefully with support with the incom-
ing University and Government Relations Advisor.

- **December/January Newsletter**

  Just an FYI that the newsletter for the coming months (December & January) will be
combined and released in early February. I will also be away on vacation from Decem-
ber 28th-January 13th and not be easy to contact, so if anything is coming up for the new year please bring it to my attention ASAP!

3. **WHAT’S COMING UP?**

- Interactive Student-Friendly Campus Map (Through the AMS App)
- Complete undergraduate research platform
- Second semester OER campaign
- OER Sprint (with CTLT and with faculty members)
- AES 2016
- Musqueam Weaving Project
- Impact Grant Re-Imagine
- Safer Party Plan Roll-Out
- And much more…

Feel free to send along any questions or concerns to vpacademic@ams.ubc.ca, or drop by Nest 3522! Thanks for reading.