Sharing of Information on the Sexual Assault Support Centre (SASC) following the July 5th Town Hall Meeting

Dated: 20th July 2018
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To the community,

On June 25, the AMS Executives reversed its plan to transfer sexual assault support services to UBC, in response to the significant feedback we heard from the Sexual Assault Support Centre (SASC) and those served by SASC. We hope that the last few weeks have served as a time of healing for all. The AMS has taken the past couple of weeks to reflect on the actions that were taken, and the impact it had on the AMS community. We recognize that the decision was upsetting to many, and we sincerely apologize for the uncertainty, frustration and anxiety that was provoked by our action. Each AMS Executive genuinely cares about the wellbeing of survivors and strengthening supports that they, and those supporting them, access. We deeply regret that we did not include the communities that would be affected by a decision like this from the beginning. We recognize that as a consequence of our lack of outreach, we missed important perspectives that would have better informed our decision making. Over the past few weeks, we have been listening to and learning from SASC and those who benefit from SASC’s services. The AMS Executive is grateful for the many community members who reached out to us, took part in the conversations online, and who showed up at the Town Hall Meeting.

The Town Hall Meeting was an important step toward transparency, clarity, and a robust dialogue between the AMS and our members on this issue. This document is our next step.

1. Summary of the Town Hall Meeting

The AMS held a Town Hall Meeting on July 5, 2018, in the Nest Performance Theatre after the AMS Executive reversed the decision to no longer offer on-going support services from the AMS Sexual Assault Support Centre. The AMS and SASC invited Dr. Aftab Erfan, UBC Director of Dialogue and Conflict Engagement, to facilitate the meeting. In attendance were the entire AMS Executive, AMS Student Services Manager, staff from SASC, and over 25 other community members.

The Town Hall began with Dr. Erfan acknowledging the meeting was taking place on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the hən̓q̓əmí̑n̓əm speaking x̌óməy̓əm (Musqueam) people. She then recognized the pain and hurt that has been experienced by the community due to this decision and expressed the wish that the work done at the Town Hall will benefit those harmed the most by the decision. Those in attendance then introduced themselves and said why they came to the Town Hall. Many emphasized solidarity for SASC, support of the resource group letter, to listen and understand, clarity, accountability, transparency, and the hope that some healing could take place.

After introductions, there was a statement from the Executive that included an aim to rebuild trust with the community and to be more transparent and consultative. The floor was then opened for community members to ask any questions and to state concerns that they had. One of the issues raised was why efforts were not made to consult survivors, SASC, AMS Council, and community members. The Executive acknowledged that this was one of their greatest regrets, which contributed to mistakes in the original decision. In making the decision, the AMS Executive felt that they were under time constraints to act before the beginning of the academic year; however, the Executive acknowledged that that was not a legitimate reason to forgo consultation.

An additional concern brought forward by several participants was why the Executive made the decision to no longer offer on-going support services from SASC, and count on and believed that the UBC’s Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Office (SVPRO) to serve the entire community. The AMS Executive explained that they were concerned with the stability of personnel and funding for SASC, the new
landscape of support services created by UBC Policy 131, and incorrect information relayed about SVPRO having the sole ability to offer accommodations and academic concessions. The Executive stated that many of these concerns about support services and the overall direction to phase them out was an idea that was not only discussed by past Executive teams but that there was also a feeling from this year’s Executive that this decision seemed inevitable in their transition. However, the Executive acknowledged that, past work on this issue notwithstanding, the June decision and responsibility rest solely with this year’s Executive.

Finally, there were many concerns raised about the future of SASC and how the AMS will make decisions in the future. The Executive affirmed that SASC will offer support services in the upcoming year and that hiring will take place for all of the currently vacant SASC positions. Moreover, more support will be offered to SASC with the hiring of a Senior Student Services Manager and a Human Resources Manager, exploring what a more independent SASC might look like, and the future of a fee referendum to ensure SASC’s financial stability. The Executive also promised to make consultation not just a priority in advocacy but also internal AMS decisions. The Executive emphasized that they know that they must always listen to the AMS membership when making decisions, and committed to more open and transparent conversations like the Town Hall before major decisions that affect students are made.

For more information and particular questions answered in the Town Hall, the minutes are available in Appendix 7c.

2. Additional Questions

The following are responses to questions that we had received over the past few weeks. These are questions that we did not have the opportunity to respond to directly during the Town Hall Meeting.

What will you do to ensure adequate consultation in the future?
The AMS is dedicated to ensuring that we consult with students regarding future major decisions and policies. We very much value the information and lessons that students and student groups are able to provide; therefore, we are committed to regularly meeting with on-campus groups (Sustainability Collective, Resource Groups, etc.) for consultation and opening up lines of communication.

Are you still considering ending the SASC’s support services in the future?
The AMS is invested in guaranteeing that the SASC continues to provide support services to the community. With the members of SASC, we are planning for SASC’s future in a manner that is both sustainable and inclusive.

What was AMS Council’s role in making this decision?
AMS Council was informed of the decision. Please see Section 3 for more information on the AMS Council’s in camera session.

Will you commit to making the records related to this decision available to AMS members?
The AMS believes in transparency as one of its core values and we are dedicated to enacting this by providing full clarity around our decision making. As authorized by AMS Council, we will provide AMS members information regarding the in camera session discussion about SASC. We also hope that this document and the Town Hall Meeting is able to provide our community with the transparency and information they seek behind what had happened and future plans to continue providing support services through SASC.
Is there option for SASC to work with SVPRO - either through a referral service or simply through a request for academic concession on behalf of a student?
The AMS is committed to continuing its advocacy goal of having a working and cooperative relationship between SASC and SVPRO and we hope that our current and future meetings between both parties reflect that.

Can the SASC be recognized by Advising Services at UBC so that students don’t have to disclose to a formal administrative body in order to get concession?
Students will always have the ability to choose a third party service or to arrange accommodations and concessions themselves. While SVPRO’s mandate is to act as a single point of contact, UBC cannot restrict the autonomy and agency of their students to acquire accommodations and concessions. Any effort to limit students’ autonomy and agency to acquire accommodations and concessions will be actively opposed by the AMS.

Will the AMS advocate for SASC to become an equal partner with SVPRO? Will the AMS advocate for SASC to have the same authority in cases requiring accommodations?
The AMS has always and will continue to advocate for SASC to have the same authority as SVPRO to offer both accommodations and concessions. It is fundamental that all survivors have choices and are not limited in their ability to acquire accommodations and concessions in the manner they choose.

Are there long-term protections for the SASC to prevent the University from getting rid of this unique resource?
SASC is independent from UBC and the University has no ability to end the service. SASC is a part of the AMS; however, the AMS is an independent society and UBC has no control over our operations, including the services offered by the AMS.

When will those promised talks between SASC and SVPRO occur?
The AMS has begun meetings with both parties and would like to continue having these talks frequently to ensure a strong and cooperative relationship between the SASC and SVPRO. SASC will be invited to all university-level consultations, meetings, and workshops to provide their insight and input.

What steps have the AMS taken since the announcement to work with the members of SASC?
The AMS Executives have been meeting with the members of SASC to discuss and consult on what steps should be taken to ensure the sustainable and inclusive future of the SASC. The AMS has also committed to including SASC staff in the process of hiring the Senior Services Manager and the SASC Manager. This will help ensure that SASC members are comfortable with and confident in the abilities of the permanent staff that are hired.

3. AMS Council In camera Session

On June 20, 2018, AMS Council went into an in camera session on the discussion topic ‘SASC’. During this session, AMS Council discussed the decision to transition out support services from SASC and move SASC to education and outreach services along with an hours increase to the existing positions. AMS Council had discussed the possibility of forming an agreement with UBC to ensure the continuous
resources to SVPRO and an opening of an SVPRO office within the AMS Nest. AMS Council had also talked about the future efforts to continue advocacy regarding Policy 131 and the hope that the new SASC would be able to provide students and the AMS Executives more information regarding University policies. AMS Council had also hoped to release a statement on the decision before any other outlets did. Furthermore, AMS Council had mentioned the possibility of increasing the SASC fee through a referendum.

For full minutes, please see Appendix 7d.

4. Financials of SASC

During the town hall, we presented some budgetary details, but we did not have the opportunity to provide the full financials for the past and present year. This section provides the financial status of SASC for the last fiscal year (2017 – 2018), current fiscal year (2018-2019) and the future fiscal years (2019-2020 and beyond). We hope that this will show the entirety of the financial situation for SASC.

The largest part of SASC’s expenses are salaries/wages, benefits and staff development. SASC focus areas are: advocacy and support, outreach and volunteer, and healthy masculinities leadership program.

In the last fiscal year, SASC revenue was $180,173. This amount was raised from 50,000 AMS members. Each AMS member contribute $3.55 (after CPI adjustments from previous year contribution per student). However, the expenses for SASC in 2017 – 2018 totaled $310,165. Hence, SASC had a financial shortfall (deficit) of $129,992. There was a major increase in SASC expenses due to extended hours of hospital accompaniments to better support survivors. Some of the shortfall was covered by the AMS general operations and the rest was covered from the Sexual Assault Initiative Fund (SAIF Fund).

For the current fiscal year, each AMS member contribute $3.63 which is previous contribution per student of $3.55 adjusted to CPI. Same numbers of members; 50,000 resulting to the 2018 – 2019 SASC revenues totaling $180,500. After the executive reversed the decision to end SASC support services, SASC expenses for this fiscal year are expected to be at least $340,280. Therefore, SASC has a financial shortfall of $159,780 this year. SAIF fund account balance is $59,106 at the moment. This amount can cover all of the shortfalls. However, various AMS departments will commit to slightly spend below their budget in order to help raise $100,674 to cover the deficit for SASC in this current fiscal year.

For the 2019 – 2020, and beyond fiscal years, the SASC general operational expenses are expected to increase to $375,000. If the revenues side does not change, SASC shortfall is expected to be at least $193,500. The SAIF will contribute zero dollars to the SASC expenses as from 2019 – 2020 fiscal year. AMS general operations may contribute some small amount of dollars to support SASC but will definitely not be capable of covering the huge SASC deficit for next fiscal year and beyond.

Moving forward, the focus is to find ways to increase SASC revenues. Of the input collected from various stakeholders in the past and present, the most prominent suggestion includes running a new standalone referendum for SASC fee increase. A referendum asking for per member contribution to increase to approximately $8.50 would be proposed during the AMS General Elections. If this is successful then SASC will be in a healthy financial situation and probably in financial sustainability for the future.
5. Lawyers memo - future of SASC

Information from Legal counsel for an independent SASC Society:
This section was created with the information obtained from the AMS legal counsel. They were directed by the AMS Executives after the first meeting we had with the SASC Team post reversal of the decision. During that meeting, the SASC staff asked us to explore the possibility of making SASC an independent body, similar to that of CITR. Following that, the AMS Resource Groups along with members of the larger student body inquired about this as well. As a result, we are presenting the information that we have so far on this topic. This section will contain a background, opportunities and challenges to the proposal and is written with only the logistical and legal parameters of creating an independent body. As such, it is not conclusive of the many considerations that will have to be factored in the creation. Further exploration will need to be conducted for any option that is ultimately chosen.

For the purposes of this section, the “Act” will refer to the Societies Act (BC) and “SASC Society” will refer to the informal name used by legal counsel to describe a potential new independent body.

Background.
The AMS Bylaws do not mention SASC or any other Student Services of the AMS. Instead, Student Services are governed by Section X of the AMS Code.

The AMS Code, Section X classifies SASC as a Student Service of the AMS. Generally, Student Services are special organizations created by the AMS Council to offer services and resources to AMS active members in order to better the lives of students on campus. Section X of the Code prescribes generally how Student Services are to be funded, how AMS resources including office space and services are to be allocated to Student Services, how Student Services are to be organized and sets out the individuals within the AMS to whom the Student Services must report. SASC is expressly carved out from certain general provisions regarding Student Services and is treated as a special Student Services that reports directly to the Managing Director instead of the Student Services Manager like the other Student Services. SASC is led by a SASC Manager who reports directly to the Managing Director of the AMS. The SASC Manager prepares the SASC budget in consultation with the Managing Director.

The AMS Code, Section IX, B, provides for the Sexual Assault Support Services Fund (“SASC Fund”), which was created by referenda of the AMS and directly funds the operations of SASC. The SASC Fund, like other funds of the AMS is funded in large part by the fees paid by members of the AMS. $3.55 of fees paid by each active member of the AMS are allocated to the SASC Fund.

As a Student Service, SASC is a part of the AMS, which although operated on a day-to-day basis by its Manager and staff, is directly accountable to the AMS, follows the process and procedures approved by the AMS Council and is funded directly by the AMS. The AMS is accountable for services provided by SASC, and its Council and Managing Director must diligently discharge the oversight and monitoring duties prescribed by the AMS Code in respect of SASC.

In light of the decision to change and the subsequent reversal, the AMS membership has voiced their concerns over any future changes to essential student services like SASC. As such, we are looking at the feasibility of legal structures whereby SASC can remain operational and provide support services to AMS members but do so as an independent body outside of the AMS. One possible structure is through the creation of a new society under the Act (“SASC Society”) that would operate SASC but would be a separate legal entity from the AMS and would not be controlled by the AMS. The AMS would then enter
into a service contract with the SASC Society so that the SASC Society may continue to provide support, advocacy, education and outreach services to AMS members but would operate with greater independence and autonomy than currently afforded under the AMS Code.

Opportunities:

- **Greater Autonomy and Independence:** A society, as a separate legal entity, can own its own assets and enter into contracts independently. If the SASC Society is created, the AMS would be able to grant the SASC Society greater autonomy to provide services to AMS members and, depending on the terms of any service contract between the parties, relieve SASC from having to directly report and agree to decisions made by the AMS. Further, one of the advantages of this approach would be that this would enable SASC staff to be employed directly by the SASC Society and convene its own board.

- **Rules/Policies/Laws:** A society is governed by the Act, the Bylaws and the Constitution of the society. This feature of a society provides predictability and transparency to their decision-making and organizational structures. Formation of the SASC Society would require the SASC Society to create its own bylaws and procedures that may be different from and would operate independently of the AMS Code and Bylaws.

- **Precedent:** There is precedent for AMS creating a separate society to provide services to its members formerly provided by a part of the AMS. This was undertaken in connection with the student campus radio station, CiTR, and led to the creation of the Student Radio Society of UBC (“CiTR”) with which AMS has entered into a services agreement. If the AMS Council decides to pursue the formation of the SASC Society, the creation of CiTR and its related documents would serve as a useful roadmap allowing the process to be more efficient and cost-effective.

Challenges:

- **Complexity to Create:** Incorporating a society requires numerous documents to be created and completed, as well as filed with the BC Registrar of Societies (the “Registrar”). This process can be costly and time consuming. As mentioned above, a society must adopt bylaws which set out provisions regarding the internal affairs of the society, including provisions pertaining to members (such as admission of members, rights and obligations of members, classes of membership and in what circumstances members are not in good standing); directors (such as their qualifications, the manner of their election/appointment, length of terms served); conduct of general meetings (such as voting rights and rules, quorum, whether voting by proxy is allowed); and restrictions on power and authority of directors. Consideration must also be given to the various default rules in the Act and whether the SASC Society should opt out of any such default rules.

The AMS would also have to consider who would sit on the board of directors of the SASC Society. Directors are responsible for the governance and management of a society and can be held liable for their acts and omissions if they do not properly discharge their duties. Regardless of whether the directors of the SASC Society would be nominated by the AMS or that the AMS would otherwise have some say in the slate of directors to be appointed, the directors of the SASC Society would owe their duties to the SASC Society itself rather than to the AMS. This can at times lead to conflicts of interest, particularly if the SASC Society would provide services to the AMS by contract. As an example, pursuant to the AMS Code and the CiTR Bylaws, the AMS Council must appoint three members to CiTR’s Board of Directors one of whom must be the
Vice-President Finance of the AMS. If the AMS does not reserve the right to appoint directors to the board of the SASC Society and if the AMS is not a member of the SASC Society, it will be difficult for the AMS to provide ongoing support within official capacity.

- **Complexity to Maintain**: In order to maintain its status as a society, a society must comply with annual corporate requirements such as holding annual meetings and filing annual reports with the Registrar (as well as interim filings, such as to reflect a change in director mid-term) as well as annual financial requirements, such as the preparation of financial statements and filing of tax returns. If on top of that, SASC Society also registered to take on additional status as a charity, the ongoing administrative and financial costs associated with that would have to be added to this. The navigation of these rules would require considerable work on the part of the SASC Society to maintain and be compliant with at all times.

- **Challenges entering into a Contract with the SASC Society: Finances, Insurance and Allocation of Risk.** In the event of this new society, the SASC Fund would continue to finance SASC after the creation of the SASC Society. This may be achieved by way of fee payments by the AMS under a service contract between the AMS and SASC or to follow the model used for CiTR. However, other than funds paid by the AMS to the SASC Society it is likely that the SASC Society would not have other material assets or funds to service unexpected contingencies or liabilities. A services contract between the SASC Society and the UBC AMS would require careful consideration of how risk is allocated between the two entities. Further, the SASC Society would have to carry its own insurance, under which the AMS would also likely need to be named as an additional insured, and the service contract would have to contemplate indemnities by the SASC Society in favour of the AMS. The whole process of creation along with ongoing maintenance would mean that SASC Society and AMS would need to be represented by separate lawyers so as to best represent the needs of each party without ever having a conflict of interest. As mentioned in the section above on SASC Finances, in order for SASC Society to be able to function with all its functions, a fee change of more than double that of the amount charged currently would have to be successful with the entire AMS membership.

**Information on getting Registered Charity Status for AMS:**
The application process for registered charity status in British Columbia is lengthy & involved. It typically involves legal fees of approximately $5,000, after first incorporating a separate society, which would involve legal fees of approximately $3,000. This [link](#) outlines what the process for that would look like. Assuming that charitable status is granted there are numerous ongoing filing requirements that will have to be fulfilled. The option to attempt registration of a registered charity as part of the AMS, if granted, would also necessitate the hiring of additional qualified staff. It is noteworthy to add that the threshold to get charitable status includes many conditions which would be difficult for AMS to navigate. Given that the AMS owns and operates businesses and services and cannot be exclusively charitable, the process may prove to be difficult. Being a registered charity also entails requirements on board governance which may not be possible without drastic changes to all current structures.

6. **Next Steps**

We hope that this document has served to clarify questions around the decision that was taken and what is currently happening. We know it is absolutely important that these are not just words and our actions going forward reflect our dedication to our community, their needs, their inclusion and consultation in AMS decision making, and working hard to rebuild trust. Our collective commitment to
better practices will not just reflect our work on this issue going forward but the efforts made to ensuring that we create sustainable structures that last beyond our time.

The following are some of the actions we are taking immediately moving into the future:

Relationship with SASC:
- We are holding regular meetings with our SASC Team to ensure that lines of communication always stay open. We hope that these meetings serve as effective avenues for us to learn from their knowledge and integrate their feedback in our work.
- Along with the SASC team, we are making a plan on what the needs of the service are for the upcoming year and the steps that we have to take to ensure that excellent service is continually provided by the AMS. This includes understanding of hiring needs and the timeline and structure we will pursue to do that. We hope to actively have the SASC team guide us in that process.
- We are committed to keeping the SASC team involved in all Policy 131 discussions and workshops that we will have with the university. We hope to amplify SASC’s voice at the table and make sure that we continue to hold UBC accountable to the implementation and review of the policy.

Relationship with our community:
- We will actively reach out to the Resource Groups to begin and maintain a closer and more open relationship with them. We will respond back to their letter as a first step in developing our relationship.
- Work on a referendum to increase the SASC fee will begin early on and we will involve our community members to ensure their needs are reflected in it. We will do wide outreach and partner with groups in our community to collectively promote the referendum.
- We will continuously keep AMS Council updated on the progress of these goals to ensure transparency and accountability in our actions moving forward.

These actions, however, are just the beginning of what we want to accomplish this year. We are committed to continually updating our community and disseminating information about our progress throughout this year.
AMS Statement on Changes to SASC
JUNE 22, 2018

The AMS Sexual Assault Support Center (SASC) has served the UBC community for years with its exceptional support work, outreach, education, and advocacy. They have continually stood by survivors and offered our community the chance to engage in much-needed conversations about consent, with the overarching goal of creating a safe campus for all.

The implementation of UBC Policy 131, Sexual Assault and Other Sexual Misconduct, in May 2017 led to the mandated creation of UBC’s Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Office (SVPRO) offering the AMS and SASC an opportunity to work closely with this newly-established support office and hold UBC accountable in the implementation and improvement of Policy 131. The collaborative and successful work over the past year confirmed the AMS’ confidence in SVPRO’s ability to fully serve our community and function as one centralized space providing ongoing support services for survivors.

As such, we have decided to focus SASC on education, outreach, advocacy, and an integral role in ongoing assistance for AMS human resources, clubs, and constituencies’ responses to sexual violence. This means that starting at the end of August, ongoing support services will no longer be offered by SASC, and SVPRO will provide enhanced ongoing support services and additional services.

For years, the AMS has advocated for a standalone UBC Sexual Violence Policy that included a survivor-centric office dedicated to support services and offering accommodations and concessions for survivors. As we have familiarized ourselves with the new landscape at UBC and the new resources available, it is clear SVPRO is well equipped to provide support that is survivor centric, trauma-informed, anti-oppressive, and intersectional.

SASC was created because there was a gap and a need in our community to provide support and advocacy for survivors when support and advocacy structures within UBC did not exist. With the creation of SVPRO, there is now a structure that has the capacity to offer ongoing support services to our community and to do so in a manner that is inclusive and accessible to all. This creates the opportunity for there to be one centralized space for ongoing support services available to all students, faculty, staff, and community members to access as a valuable resource.

The end of August was chosen because a new year, with a new cohort of students, and an upcoming significant awareness campaign by UBC and AMS provides the ideal opportunity to educate students about support on campus and communicate a clear avenue for ongoing support services. As we look forward to the new academic year, we are enthusiastic about the potential that these changes to SASC have in implementing a new vision to tackle the many gaps that have not yet been fully addressed.

We thank our dedicated SASC team that has diligently worked to provide a space where survivors have always felt they are believed and supported and we look forward to all the great work that will continue to happen from SASC. The AMS, with SASC and community members, will continue to actively advocate.
for a university community that believes survivors and holds all stakeholders accountable for their commitment to make our communities a safe space for all.

Sincerely,
The AMS Executive
Marium Hamid, President
Max Holmes, Vice-President Academic and University Affairs
Cristina Ilnitchi, Vice-President External Affairs
Chris Hakim, Vice-President Administration
Kuol Akuecbeny, Vice-President Finance

b. AMS’s reversal of the decision

AMS Apology and the Future of SASC
JUNE 25, 2018

To our community,

Over the past few days we have seen, heard, and read your responses to the decision to transfer support services out of the Sexual Assault Support Centre (SASC). The AMS sincerely apologizes for the harm that this has caused survivors, those supporting them, and the rest of our community members. It was never our intention to do so, and we have heard your voices and we recognize that we made mistakes throughout this process. We will always stand by our membership and, as such, we are reversing our decision.

The AMS took this decision with many considerations in mind and with concern about sustaining SASC’s operations and what the future of SASC will look like. Our actions have not reflected it, but each one of us genuinely had survivors and the support they receive at the forefront of our thoughts. This Executive team wanted to take responsibility and leadership to pave the way for a stronger SASC that is sustainable in its services and quality for the next year and beyond, with the many changes that have gone on over the past few years. Concerns for what the future of SASC will look like and how we will operate over the next year are still issues that need to be addressed. As next steps, we will do our best to not only ensure that SASC is able to serve the community at its best capacity but we will also work to set the foundation for what continuity, stability, and sustainability looks like for SASC to serve anyone who needs its services.

We acknowledge that the reversal of this decision is necessary and it is also a preliminary measure to much more work that we will need to do going forward. We will make sure survivors are getting the best support possible, SASC is providing the highest level of care possible, and survivors and the community are important stakeholders at the table in doing this work.

We recognize that it is necessary and extremely important to engage our entire community. We are committed to transparency, clarity, and wide dissemination of information. As such, the AMS will take the following actions immediately:
● Disseminate comprehensive information about the considerations and challenges regarding support services at the SASC and the rest of campus.
● Meet regularly with the SASC to rebuild open lines of communication, work together, and create avenues for the community to provide their voice.
● Seek out and create spaces for SASC to share its extensive knowledge and experience in AMS’s advocacy.
● Be accountable to the student body through early consultation in order to listen and act based on our community’s needs from the beginning of the process.

We know it will not be easy but we are committed to doing all that we can together and throughout our different portfolios to rebuild lasting trust among the SASC team, all AMS departments, and our community across campus and beyond.

Sincerely,
The AMS Executive Team
Marium, Cristina, Max, Kuol, and Chris

c. Minutes from the Town Hall on July 5th, 2018

TOWN HALL ABOUT SASC
(the AMS Sexual Assault Support Centre),
July 5, 2018
Notes

Attendance
Present: The AMS Executive:
Marium Hamid (President), Max Holmes (VP Academic & University Affairs), Kuol Akuechbeny (VP Finance), Chris Hakim (VP Administration), Cristina Ilnitchi (VP External)

Plus about 25 others and facilitator Dr. Aftab Erfan (UBC Director of Dialogue and Conflict Engagement)

Recording Secretary: Sheldon Goldfarb (AMS Archivist & Clerk of Council)

The meeting was called to order at 7:12 pm in the Performance Theatre in the Nest.

Land acknowledgement.

Opening comment:
● Dr. Aftab Erfan:
  o This is a story of hurt we are processing.
  o The wish is that all the good we do here can benefit those harmed and hurt the most.
  o There has been a reversal; SASC (the AMS Sexual Assault Support Centre) is staying; now it’s a question of how.
Introductions:
- Marium Hamid: I want to apologize in person. I understand there’s a lot of fear and hurt.
- Several of the attendees said they were looking for clarity, accountability, and transparency.
- Some said they were there in solidarity with SASC.
- Some said they were in support of the open letter written by the Resource Groups.
- Some said they were there to listen and understand.
- Questions raised during the introductions:
  - How will the AMS change its systems to make sure such an assault on services doesn’t happen again?
  - What were the factors considered in making the original decision to shift SASC support services to UBC’s Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Office (SVPRO)?
  - What’s going to happen going forward?
- There was a hope that healing would take place.

Statement from the Executive:
- Cristina Ilnitchi:
  - Thanks to everyone who’s come out and engaged on this issue.
  - Our aim is to rebuild trust.
  - We reversed the decision because we heard from our community and recognized our mistakes.
  - We know meaningful action has to follow.
  - We need to make the AMS more transparent and consultative.
- A SASC staff member expressed gratitude for support and for people showing up.
- Cristina Ilnitchi:
  - SASC is a service the AMS provides.
  - SVPRO is a service UBC provides.
  - The decision was to transition support services from SASC to SVPRO.
  - There was no plan to defund or shut down SASC.
  - The reversal means:
    - SASC support workers will have their jobs back.
    - We will go forward with SASC support services for next year and the foreseeable future.
- Questions for clarification
  - Question: Why didn’t the AMS advertise SVPRO? What is SVPRO? Why doesn’t anyone here know about it?

Max Holmes:
- From the start the AMS has said there’s poor awareness of SVPRO.
- There was going to be a large campaign to raise awareness of all resources on campus (not just SVPRO) and to stand in solidarity with survivors.
- We would have established a referral process.
- We’ll continue to go forward making resources known, so survivors will know of all resources available to them.
- SVPRO was established in October and will have a full team by this September.
  - Q: Why weren’t efforts made to contact survivors?

Marium Hamid:
- This is one of our biggest regrets.
- When we took office, our focus was mostly on enacting this.
- We wanted SASC to focus on outreach.
• We had limited time because we didn’t want to change SASC in the middle of the year.
• Consultation got lost in doing this.
• I very much wish it had been done.
• It was our oversight to not realize we couldn’t go forward without consulting survivors.

Max Holmes:
• This stemmed from discussions held before some of us took office, but we could have said this wasn’t the decision we had to make: that was one of our mistakes.
• And it’s not just for this decision: Any time we change our services or advocacy we should be reaching out and consulting more.
• We’re here to do what students want. That’s why the decision was reversed.
• But we don’t want to have to reverse decisions; we want to make sure we consult in the future.
  • Q: There was a lack of transparency. This was supposed to be discussed at Council, but the discussion was held in camera. Why was a discussion on changing the mandate of an important service like SASC held in camera with SASC workers out of the room?

Marium Hamid:
• We wish we had a mechanism to have every stakeholder present, but we had a legal requirement not to reveal personnel/employee aspects. It would have put us in legal jeopardy.
• We wanted to inform Council, so the decision was made to do that in camera.
• It wasn’t about excluding SASC workers. No employees stayed for the in camera discussion. We couldn’t discuss some employees in front of other employees.
  • Dr. Erfan: Isn’t a change in the mandate of SASC different from a personnel discussion?

Marium Hamid:
• We had already prepared termination letters.
• Any discussion at Council would have led to discussing that.
  • Dr. Erfan: You couldn’t separate the two.
  • Cristina Ilnitchi: We wanted to keep having discussions with SASC, but got into a difficult position about HR matters.

Marium Hamid:
• We were contemplating how to break the information.
• There could have been harm in how the information got disseminated.
  • Max Holmes:
• There was the difficult reality of giving termination notices and then asking them to help to communicate this.
• We realize this was no way to do this.
• If the first thing you’re told is termination, that’s an impossible position to put support workers in. It was unrealistic of us.
  • Q: Why was it unsustainable to run both SASC and SVPRO? Why would their coexistence conflict? Why the decision to wind down part of SASC?

Marium Hamid:
• The unfortunate reality that we discovered is that SASC is currently in an unsustainable financial position, a precarious financial situation.
• UBC’s Policy 131 (on sexual violence) had changed the landscape a lot.
• There were demands for outreach, education, and advocacy from SASC, but there was a limit to what SASC could do.
• To fill gaps in outreach, more could be done at SASC if support services were shifted to SVPRO.
There was a question of to what extent we could stretch ourselves, doing everything: we were stretching ourselves thin.

- Dr. Erfan: Conceptually there’s no conflict between having both SASC and SVPRO? It’s a question of limited resources?
- Kuol Akuechbeny: Financially, there were concerns. How many people could we afford to hire compared to SVPRO?

Max Holmes:
- People have rightly pointed out that Policy 131 led to the notion of a single point of contact.
- This created a difficult situation.
- We [previous AMS Executive teams, as well as SASC] advocated that SASC retain the right to represent survivors on concessions and accommodation, but we were not successful in getting that in UBC’s policy.
- Currently, SASC has to go through SVPRO: our support services have to go through another support service, something we still need to address.
- Some people don’t want to go to SVPRO or don’t want SASC to have to go to SVPRO.
  - Q: On the single point of contact issue, I have heard that there is actually no requirement to go through SVPRO. My understanding is that SASC and individual students have agency; they can pursue concessions and accommodation.
  - Dr. Erfan: So the AMS did lobby on this issue? It sounds like there’s a lot to work out over how SASC and SVPRO work together.

Q: Who was consulted?

Marium Hamid:
- We got a legal opinion and spoke to last year’s Executive.
- We consulted our HR department as much as we could (in the absence of an HR Manager).
- Some survivors and community members spoke to us.
- In all honesty, we didn’t have a full consultation and I’m deeply sorry about that. We did not reach out to all stakeholders.
  - Dr. Erfan: Was SASC consulted?
- Marium Hamid: No, we haven’t had a SASC Manager.
- Max Holmes: We had conversations around the transition of support services with the past SASC Manager, HR, the AMS Managing Director. No conversation beyond that.
  - Q: Can we see some documentation to support the claim of a lack of financial sustainability for SASC?

Kuol Akuechbeny:
- There’s a $3.55 fee for sexual assault support services. Multiplied by 50,000 students, that produces about $180,000. [Corrected to reflect $3.63 to $3.55]
- The cost of SASC was $310,000 last year, so it was in deficit.
- There was a referendum last year to increase the fee; it didn’t succeed.
- That’s why we’re talking about SASC not being financially sustainable.

Marium Hamid:
- Conversation about SASC’s finances began after the failed referendum.
- The central AMS budget was providing funds to fill the gap.

SASC staff member:
- Hours were expanded last April, leading to increased costs.
- Also there was a new support group and more referrals.
- SASC was overwhelmed.
- Also added hospital accompaniments.
• This is the first year our spending was more than our budget.
  · Q: What does the AMS do with its surpluses? How are they allocated?

Max Holmes:
• It was a mistake to combine the fee restructuring referendum with the SASC fee increase. It failed.
• We [the past AMS Executive] should have put forward a Council motion to run a referendum just to increase the SASC fee.

Marium Hamid:
• No other service has a dedicated fee associated with it.
• Speakeasy, Vice, and the other services are budgeted to match expenditures.
• We offset deficits from other departments.

Kuol Akuechbeny:
• 88% of the AMS budget is non-discretionary. [Corrected to reflect 80% to 88%]

Marium Hamid:
• Last year the AMS had a surplus for the year, but there’s a rolling deficit.
• Surplus money has to go to pay our debts.
  · Q: The referendum was crucial to SASC: why wasn’t there a giant campaign?
  · SASC staff member: We wanted a big campaign; we didn’t know the two questions would go together.

Max Holmes:
• There was poor outreach with that referendum.
• I wish I’d pushed more for a strong Yes campaign and for separate questions.
• We need to consult more in general on referendums.
• We didn’t discuss the referendum with the SASC Manager. We should have made sure of SASC involvement.

SASC staff member:
• At SASC we understood the importance of the referendum.
• The SASC Manager was told there was nothing to worry about, no need to campaign.
• Why were we told it was fine?

A Resource Group member:
• There was a lack of consultation with us.
• Your apology means a lot, but this is not a time for celebration.
• We want tangible steps to bridge the hostile gap.
• Can we sit on Council? Attend Council?

Marium Hamid:
• I’m not sure who talked to the SASC Manager.
• The President’s office takes care of referendums.
• Many departments were not consulted.
• We need to change that.
• In consultation with SASC last week, I received multiple wonderful suggestions.
• We need to ensure contact, look at various options, and report on where we are at.

Cristina Ilnitchi:
• We recognize the huge gap between the Resource Groups and the AMS.
• I want to apologize for not acting on that knowledge.
• Illuminating that gap is huge.
• There has been a gap in consultation with groups affected by our decisions and with members of marginalized communities.
We are committed to closing that gap.

Q: Was SVPRO involved in the decision? Were there discussions on how they would handle support services?

Max Holmes:
- They were never at the decision-making table.
- It was the Executives, the Managing Director, and legal advice.
- SVPRO was not involved.
- Of course, we made sure to speak to SVPRO to see if they were going to hire their full staff and to find out what their hours would be.
- They were consulted on their capacity, not on whether it was a wise decision.

Cristina Ilnitchi:
- The decision was made by us after conversations with SVPRO about their hours, expansion.
- We received information. We had conversations.
- Our big mistake was that the public wasn’t part of the conversation.
  - Q: SVPRO belongs to UBC. Was that a consideration?

Cristina Ilnitchi:
- As an internal part of UBC, SVPRO has certain advantages.
- It can look at schedules to keep survivors away from offenders.
- It can facilitate access to counselling services.
- It’s connected to the UBC Early Alert system.
- But we recognize the importance of having an independent body and of having more choices.
- Taking away choices was a wrong decision.
- SASC has a lot to offer.

SASC staff member:
- This description of SVPRO’s advantages is not entirely accurate.
- They have to go through the same processes we did.
- And with the shift to SVPRO the accommodation rate dropped.

Another SASC member:
- There’s an attempt to reframe SASC as a complementary system.
- We’ve been doing this for 16 years.
- We do the same things as SVPRO.
- Having to go through SVPRO creates a bottleneck.

Dr. Erfan:
- Clearly the relationship between SASC and SVPRO has to be worked out.

Max Holmes:
- With no consultation, our information was limited.
- That led to mistakes.
- We’re more than interested in advocating for the agency of students and SASC.
- UBC is often looking out for its own interests and obviously that has created distrust; some people don’t want to access any part of UBC.
- I want to point out that SVPRO people have been very helpful; we have collaborated; there have been good parts of the relationship.
- SVPRO is supposed to be looking out for the best interests of survivors, and we need to get UBC to recognize that its best interests are in looking out for the best interests of survivors.

A Resource Group member:
- The referendum last March would have put our funds in precarity.
- We weren’t consulted on this; we only heard about it by chance.
Once we did, we decided to launch a No campaign – and then found out that we were campaigning against the increase for SASC.

Think about the position you put us in. It was divisive and hurtful.

I am still confused about the AMS decision to close the SASC.

You need to change the way you’re behaving.

We feel our continuation is in jeopardy.

Will the AMS be able to reverse its reversal?

Where are the checks and balances?

Do you believe that the AMS government should be able to shut down services for survivors?

Should the AMS government have the power to close SASC, the Social Justice Centre, etc.?

Marium Hamid:

- We are looking into the idea of making SASC an independent society.
- Hope to release information on that.
- Historically speaking, we’ve done a horrible job of the relationship with the Resource Groups.
- The relationship has been damaged.
- Whether creating formalized avenues or coming to you more often can fix that I don’t know. What are the checks and balances we can put in place?
- It takes time to make structural changes.

Kuol Akuechbeny:

- The referendum was a bad situation to put students in.
- We need more information sharing.
- As to how to increase funding for SASC, we will consult and not put forward a referendum like last year’s.

A Resource Group member:

- We were going to present four demands that have already been published in the Talon, but it doesn’t look like there is time to discuss these now.
- We would like to reconvene to discuss these points.
  - The Executive agreed.

Marium Hamid:

- Yes, and we will bring these proposals to Council.
  - Question about accountability and permanent AMS staff, given the annual turnover of Executives.

Marium Hamid:

- We have moved to reinstate the position of Senior Student Services Manager.
- That position will have continuity.
- Once we fill that position again, that will help us create structures that can make the AMS go beyond our own time.
- We also need to make our minutes [more accessible to the] public.
- Hope we’ll get a website that does that.

Chris Hakim:

- Student consultation is very important to us.
- We know what it’s like when speaking to UBC; we want them to consult better.
- The lesson from this is learning about consultation by us; we have to do better too.
  - Q: The AMS has the power to reverse its reversal and the power to rerun the referendum. Do you believe the AMS should be able to close down the SASC, the Bike Co-op, the Resource Groups?

Kuol Akuechbeny: The Executive cannot do that.

Q: That was done.
Dr. Erfan: Clearly it’s within their power to do that. Do you think it needs to be changed?

Max Holmes:
- We couldn’t completely close SASC.
- We closed a part of SASC.
- To close Resource Groups, we would have to go to referendum.
- AMS Executives shouldn’t be able to make a unilateral decision to close down SASC.

Cristina Ilnitchi:
- I have seen that the AMS has made decisions to put services needed by vulnerable communities in jeopardy.

Chris Hakim:
- The Resource Groups are extremely vital for us; they’re one of the places we need to go for information.
- You can bring up points we may not know about.
  - Q: How will structures at the AMS be addressed?

Max Holmes:
- We are reinstating the Senior Student Services Manager position.
- We need to have more support services.
- With the hiring of a new HR Manager, we’ll be looking at how to support people more.
- A large difficulty is the new landscape: SVPRO hiring.
- It is difficult to compete with UBC when they can offer more money and resources.
- We need to look at what needs to change culturally in the AMS.

Marium Hamid: We’re hoping to increase the pay for the SASC Manager.
- Q: In the past the UBC Administration didn’t want to advertise SASC. All of this is spilling out of that.
- Q: UBC seems like a faceless mound of red tape. If we move counselling and support services to UBC, will UBC care? SVPRO works with Vancouver Rape Relief, which is very transphobic. SVPRO’s hours are inaccessible to a lot of students. SVPRO doesn’t have the historical knowledge SASC has. How to make SVPRO accountable?

Marium:
- You raise lots of concerns we have.
- They are talking of setting up an advisory committee.
- Policy 131 says they have to advertise Vancouver Rape Relief: that’s a problem. I hope they take it out of their policy.
- It’s been a very rushed process by UBC.
- The AMS has a responsibility to help people feel listened to.

Cristina Ilnitchi:
- Many groups on campus are already doing important advocacy.
- We should be taking tangible steps to work with those groups.
  - Q: You say you don’t have the power to shut things down. But you don’t need to shut something down to put it in the freezer. You should have to go to referendum to make changes like these; you should not be able to make these changes unilaterally.
  - Dr. Erfan: We don’t want to forget the commitments made here.

Marium Hamid: We will release a document.

A SASC staff member:
• You’ve told us that UBC was not involved in the decision to shut down the SASC support services.
• But did the climate created by UBC lead to that decision?
• It seems UBC was taking steps to block us even though for 16 years we built up our services.
• It would be good to have a voting voice in hiring the Senior Student Services Manager and the new SASC Manager.

Another SASC staff member:
• We’ve been ignored.
• We don’t just want to be involved; we want our opinions taken into account.

Marium Hamid:
• The Senior Student Services Manager will not have control over the Resource Groups.
• They will oversee SASC and the Services.
• We will take input from others.
• We want to formalize our processes.
  • Dr. Erfan: And in the process of formalizing, you may want to consult SASC.

Max Holmes:
• The climate created by UBC I agree did create pressure that led to the decision.
• The way Policy 131 was set up, the way SASC was sidelined: that led to it.
• The AMS needs to make sure we’re not always accepting the situation UBC creates.
• Sometimes we need to put pressure on UBC.
• UBC doesn’t always communicate clearly to the AMS.
  • Dr. Erfan: I want to thank the Executive for sitting and answering questions for more than two hours. That’s a lot.

d. Transcribed notes from in camera session of Council on June 20, 2018

• In camera session is called.
• In camera session is explained.
• Motion to stay in camera.
  o Passes.
• Context to SASC and its service and support it has provided students.
• Advocacy has pushed for the implementation of Policy 131 and the care for survivors.
• After the end of August, SASC will no longer provide support services, which will be handled by SVPRO.
• SASC has been going through bumps, especially with turnover of staff.
• Councilor calls for a legal contract with UBC in regards to SVPRO.
  o Response is that the quality of SVPRO has never been put to question because of how well it provides its services.
  o We still need to ensure the quality.
  o Councilor is concerned about the stability and continuity of the resources of SVPRO.
• SASC will move to outreach and education services. The structure of the new SASC has been planned for along with hour increases to existing positions.
• Hope for creation of an office for SVPRO within the Nest.
• Push for the role in new SASC that will be able to collect feedback regarding Policy 131 to assist the Executives in their advocacy in Policy 131.
  o Role would be able to provide expertise in regards to University policy
• The AMS will release a statement on this before any other outlets do.
• The volatility of SASC has been an issue from previous Executive teams which has led to this change.
• With the change in structure and the costs of SASC, the possibility of increasing the SASC fee through referendum arises.
• When the full implementation of SASC changes happen, Code change will be required to change its mandate from “support services”.