

**Executive Committee
Vice President, External Affairs
2016/2017**

Kathleen Simpson

1 Introduction

The first couple of months of the term have been dedicated to planning for the upcoming academic year. This process has largely involved working on planning for the campaigns we will be running throughout the year, as well as completing the research that will inform these campaigns. During this time, the staff team has come together and we have seen some big progress on projects that will be unfolding over the next year.

2 General Progress Update

Over the past three months, I have had the opportunity to step into the role as VP External, as well as make some big progress on laying the foundation for the year ahead. The first month in August was a chance for me to get to know my staff team and executive team better, as well as re-introduce myself to some of the key external stakeholders as the new VP External. One such stakeholder that we have worked to build a partnership includes the UBC Government Relations team. The month of May was also used for extensive goal setting for the upcoming year. Although all of the objectives were set out in my elections platform, it was invaluable to take the time with both my fellow executives and my VP External staff team to come up with concrete plans for how these goals could be actualized.

Following May, more of a routine began to be established in the office, with work being regularly delegated to staff at team meetings, and regular check-ins occurring to keep track of project progress. I have been especially happy with the great work being done on student housing rights and the affordability campaign. Our team is well on-target to move forward with our advocacy campaigns for the upcoming year.

In addition to working on research for larger advocacy projects and helping with the coordination of SUDS, there have also been a few smaller projects that have arisen. In May for instance, I coordinated with Kelsi, our policy advisor, and Ashley from the Sexual Assault Support Centre to give feedback on a proposed provincial bill on campus sexual violence. The bill has since passed and gotten Royal Assent, and the VP External Office continues to communicate with the Ministry of Advanced Education on the implications the bill has on UBC's proposed sexual assault policy. After working on this project, I have become invested in the issue, and I have begun working in collaboration with SASC, Kelsi, and the VP AUA Office to promote student participation in UBC's sexual assault policy consultation.

Another task that often consumes time throughout the week on a consistent basis are U-Pass inquiries. Students often come to the AMS to inquire about issues they may be having with the U-Pass, and I have come across a number of exceptional cases where the typical U-Pass eligibility rules don't yield good results. This often results in problem-solving endeavors between the AMS, Enrolment Services, and the student's faculty. It is worth noting that the Student Caucus of the U-Pass Advisory Committee is also ramping up for a very active year, as they try to defend the U-Pass program's future.

3 Hiring

The hiring process this year was successful, in that I was able to successfully fill each of the five positions in the portfolio for my first day in office. Hired staff include Leslie Tulett as the Associate Vice-President, External Affairs, who brings great experience with her, especially in the field of campus-housing and advocacy issues pertaining to student residence. Stacey Ng has taken the role of the External Advocacy Commission Vice-Chair, and has been doing an incredible job at planning our campaigns for the upcoming year. I am also very pleased to say that Jael Lumba is continuing to work in the External Affairs Office as the new External Relations Research Commissioner. Last year, Jael worked as the Transit Commissioner, a job that has since been expanded into her new position. After one staffing change, Sally Magharius has taken up the role as the new SUDS Coordinator, and from her first day, she has been an invaluable help to the office and has helped us surpass SUDS ticket sales with 103 current delegates.

4 List of Committees

AMS COMMITTEES

University and External Relations Committee

Education Committee

Executive Committee

EXTERNAL COMMITTEES & BOARDS

U-Pass Advisory Committee

University Neighbourhood Association Board of Directors

5 Conferences

STUDENTCARE Annual STAKEHOLDER MEETING

In the beginning of May, Louis and I travelled to Montreal for the annual meeting held by StudentCare, the provider of our AMS/GSS Health and Dental Plan. At the conference, we had the opportunity to meet with other student associations from across the country, share ideas, and discuss issues pertaining to mental health on-campus. The conference was particularly useful in speaking to other student unions about the SUDS conference. Many delegates expressed a large interest in SUDS, and since then, we have seen many of them sign up for the conference.

6 Portfolio Goals:

For clarity, I have divided my goals for the year into two categories; portfolio goals, and project-specific goals. It is worth noting that the project-specific goals often directly tie into larger portfolio goals.

6.1 RESEARCH

One of the goals that I have for the year is to increase the research-capacity of the office, so that we can work to better support our policies and advocacy with concrete data. This will also include beginning to collect relevant data about our membership to include in this research.

This goal will be accomplished through a variety of combined efforts. The first step, which has already been taken to increase research, is to expand the scope of the Transit Commissioner to be the External Affairs Research Commissioner. With increased hours and a larger prelude for research, it is my hope that this new staff position will be able to bolster the research capabilities of the office while working closely with the Policy Advisor.

The VP External Office will also be commissioning Seeds Projects as another means of improving the quality of research in the office. Seeds Projects are run through UBC and grant students credit hours for completing a large-scale research assignment under the supervision of a professor, at no cost to the commissioner of the project.

Progress Update:

Expand Scope of Transit Commissioner: Completed

During the initial hiring process, the job description for the Transit & U-Pass Commissioner was expanded, to focus on all research projects, as opposed to just transit research. This change has already proven to be beneficial, as Jael, our new External Affairs Research Commissioner, has already been able to make meaningful contributions towards ongoing research projects, including housing rights research. This work would have fallen outside of the scope of her job if the job description had not been expanded.

Conduct External Affairs Survey: In Progress

We are currently in the early stages of completing the draft survey, which includes sections asking students about their political ideology, attitudes towards the U-Pass Program, and voting habits. We have commissioned Insights West (the firm that also conducts the Academic Experience Survey) to program the survey and conduct the analysis on the results. So far, they have already been quite helpful in creating the survey and wording questions as best to obtain results. We have also had a number of preliminary discussions with other student associations in BC, including members of the U-Pass Advisory Committee Student Caucus, to engage them in the creation and the survey, and to encourage them to participate in the survey itself by administering it to their membership. Our current timeline for the project, is to have the survey questions and format finalized by the end of August, to have the survey administered in early October, and to have the final results and analysis by the end of October.

Commission SEEDS Project: Upcoming

Given the reduced number of students and faculty on campus during the summer, as well as the challenges that the office has faced in the past in finding qualified and interested students and faculty for SEEDS projects, we will be waiting until mid-September to begin this project.

6.2 CAMPAIGN ENGAGEMENT

On-campus engagement is an area that the VP External Portfolio has generally suffered in, aside from the very successful Get-Out the Vote Campaigns. With a general apathy from the average AMS member on external issues, it can be an uphill battle to foster engagement and action from the student body on policy issues. This year, the VP External Portfolio will work to engage students on all issues that it works to address, through on campus engagement campaigns, composed of informational material, events, and more. Without demonstrating strong support for policy changes in these areas, we cannot expect government officials to be as eager to assist us in our goals.

To make this happen, the External Affairs Office will never run a passive advocacy campaign. That is to say, that we will never run a campaign that does not ask for some level of student engagement. This engagement could be encouraging students to vote or to sign a letter as a part of a letter-writing campaign. We will also always give the opportunity for students to become involved in a more meaningful way; as outreach volunteers for instance.

Progress Update:

For the campaigns that we are already in the planning-stages for, special attention has been given to ensuring that opportunities are provided for students to engage with the campaign. For instance, our plans for the Affordability campaign currently include a letter-writing campaign that students can participate in. To provide larger opportunities for students to become involved, we will also be working in the next couple weeks to organize volunteer opportunities for those interested in volunteering with the campaign.

6.3 RECONNECTING THE EXTERNAL PORTFOLIO w/ THE AMS BRAND

One of the chronic problems that I feel that the AMS suffers from is the lack of clarity with which we communicate to our membership what we do. Advocacy in particular, suffers from little student engagement and awareness. To combat this problem, all campaigns run throughout the year will feature prominent AMS branding. I hope that in future years, these efforts will pay off and will be reflected in higher ratings of AMS advocacy effectiveness, as measured by the Academic Experience Survey.

Progress Update:

All material for campaigns that have been planned so-far include AMS branding, and our office has worked with the Graphics Team to create AMS branded T-shirts that will also be used by our staff and volunteers during all campaigning. Moving forward, we will work this goal into all upcoming campaigns as well.

7 Project-Specific Goals:

7.1 PROVINCIAL ELECTIONS

This year, we are fortunate enough to have the opportunity to use the provincial elections to highlight student advocacy interests. The task of bringing out student voters for this elections however, will be especially difficult due to the scheduling of the elections in May of next year, when students are not in school and therefore are harder to reach out to. While it will be challenging however, the provincial elections are critical to the AMS's lobbying strategy and goals. Many of the issues that students and the AMS care most about, including tuition caps, funding for post-secondary institutions, and student loan programs are all provincially controlled. It is critical that the AMS membership's voice be heard and listened to on these important issues. A poor voter turnout also has the potential to send a message to provincial politicians that students are apathetic to these issues.

For this reason, the External Affairs Office has made the goal of reaching a 60% voter-turnout rate among eligible UBC students. We hope to make this possible by mounting a robust and engaging campaign, which will begin well before the immediate lead-up to the elections. We also hope to work closely with Elections BC to make voting as easy as possible for students, with possible options including on-campus voting, and advance mail-in ballot.

Progress Update

Coordinate Voting Options with Elections BC: In Progress

To make voting as accessible as possible to students, we will be working with Elections BC to try to have as many voting options available as possible. In a best-case scenario, students would have access to an on-campus advanced polling station, as well as mail-in ballot. I have already had a preliminary conversation with an Elections BC employee, who has indicated that they will be doing boothing on-campus. We will be scheduling an in-person meeting to go over more details in October.

Create Campaign Plan: Upcoming

Since we are currently focused on the Affordability and Housing Rights campaigns, we will begin working on plans for the provincial elections campaign in the late fall. That being said, it is worth noting that the Affordability Campaign is meant to serve as a prequel to the BC Elections Campaign, and that the External Affairs Survey is also a part of the Provincial Elections Campaign.

7.2 AFFORDABILITY

The goal of the Affordability Campaign is to serve as the pre-cursor to the provincial elections campaign, and to establish affordable post-secondary education as a priority youth-voter issue in the upcoming elections. Through a series of informational campaigns and action items for engaged students to participate in, we hope to draw atten-

tion to the consistent decline in provincial funding to core university funding and deferred maintenance, as well as the high interest-rates on provincial student loans. It is our hope that these campaigns will demonstrate the importance of these issues to student voters, which we hope, in turn, will lead to discussion and elections promises on these issues.

Progress Update:

Create Campaign Plan: In Progress

We are currently mid-way through planning for the affordability campaign, with the schedule and budget mostly finalized. We are now just looking to produce our graphics and finalize campaign tagline.

7.3 HOUSING CAMPAIGN

The housing campaign this year will focus exclusively on housing rights that are not afforded to student who live in Student Housing, as a result of them being excluded from the Residential Tenancy Act of BC. The campaign will work to bring awareness to this issue, and have the ultimate goal of gaining greater legal protection for students living in student housing. This can be achieved in one of three ways: 1) provincial regulations, 2) provincial legislation, 3) improved UBC housing contracts.

Progress Update:

Complete Preliminary Research: Completed

In May and early June, the VP External team worked with our Policy Advisor, Kelsi, to conduct some preliminary research on the state of student housing rights in BC. This research was meant to inform the lobby asks that we would be making in the future. This preliminary research is now completed, and has informed the rest of our work on the issue.

Develop List of 'Asks': Completed

To move forward with our goal of improving rights for students living in student housing, we determined that we should have a list of specific recommendations for tenant rights that we feel should be explicitly granted to students. In developing these recommendations, we were fortunate in that a number of previous VP Academics (notably Anne Kessler) have produced a volume of research and tenant rights for UBC students. This allowed us to adapt previous recommendations that were made to UBC to fit a provincial level of regulation. We have also discussed these recommendations at the University & External Relations Committee and with the UBC Student Ombudsperson.

Consult with Other Student Associations: In Progress

To ensure that the policy recommendations that the AMS is making are in the best interest of all student living in student housing across BC, our office has begun a consultation session with other student associations who would be impacted by provincial regulation of student housing. We will be continuing this process until the recommendations are finalized, and we will also be taking this opportunity to look for other student associations who may be willing to sign-onto the initiative.

Finalize Lobby Document: In Progress

We are currently in the final process of finishing our lobby document, which will include the recommendations for student tenant rights, explanations for those recommendations, and background information and statistics on the number of students in BC in student housing. Once the text of the document is completed, it will be sent to the graphics team to be formatted, before we start sending it out to decision-makers.

Create Campaign Plan: In Progress

The campaign, which is set to launch in mid-October, is currently in the preliminary planning stages. We are currently working with the University of Victoria Students' Society to develop graphics and a tagline.

Present Asks to Relevant External Stakeholders: Upcoming

Once our lobby document is completed, we will be presenting it to relevant decision-makers at the provincial level.

7.4 STUDENT UNION DEVELOPMENT SUMMIT

This year, the goal of SUDS will be both to increase attendance from 80 delegates last year to 100 delegates, as well as to have the conference set the stage for collaboration between student associations for the coming year. On an AMS level, this will help make connections with both U15 schools, and BC student associations that we will work with to collaborate on Provincial Elections campaigns. As of July 5th, we reached 70% of our overall enrollment goal, with 20 schools participating. Over the coming weeks, we will reach out to other schools personally to work towards our registration goals.

Progress Update:

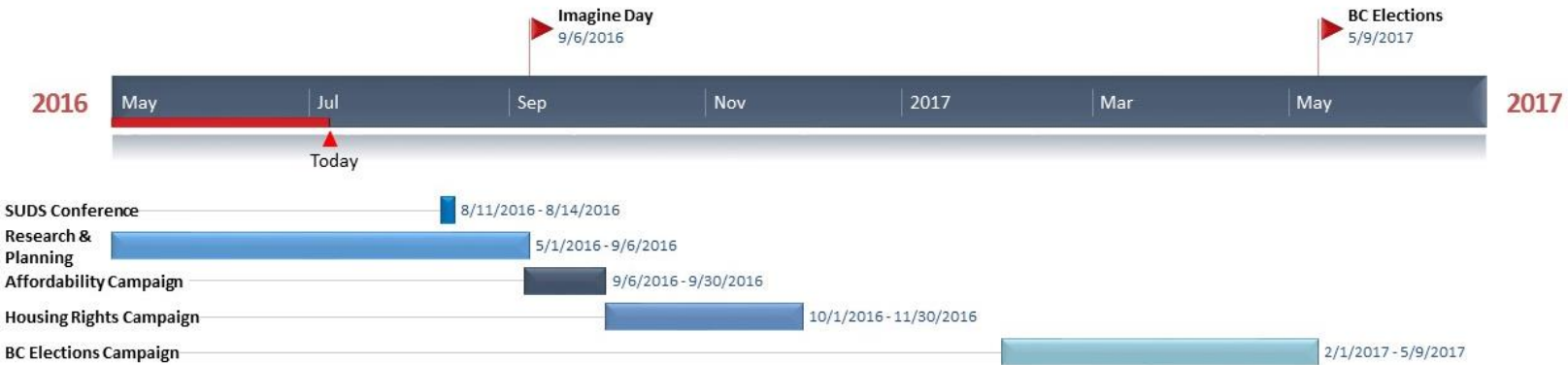
Complete Conference Planning: In Progress

With the bulk of the workshops and programming finalized, we are now in the final stages of ensuring that all events and activities go as smoothly as possible.

Complete Registration: In Progress

Early-bird registration opened on July 4th, with regular registration opening the following week. As of July 28th, we have received 103 registrations, with over 30 schools participating. These numbers indicate that this year, we will host the largest SUDS delegation to-date.

8 Timeline



9 Questions?

As always, my office (Nest, Room 3524) is always open to those who have questions or would just like to discuss anything. I can also be reached at vpexternal@ams.ubc.ca and (604) 822 2050.

Thank you!

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