

## MEMORANDUM

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FROM: AMS Vice President External Office  
 TO: AMS Council  
 CC:  
 SUBJECT: Implementation of Student Issues and Equity Caucuses  
 DATE: November 1, 2017

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The purpose of this memorandum is to provide council with an overview of AMS' efforts in implementation the student issues and equity caucus, and provide further context by illustrating the implementation of student issues and equity caucuses at other post-secondary institutions across Canada. The AMS Governance Review in 2016 highlighted student representation of certain groups as inadequately addressed with the current structure of Council. As a result, they recommended the implementation of Student Issues and Equity CAucuses to provide these individuals with a direct form of representation on Council to address their interests and backgrounds. They cited the University of Toronto's Student Union (UTSU) as a format to potentially replicate.

This document will proceed as follows:

1. Overview of the UTSU Social Justice and Equity Commission
2. AMS Efforts to implement caucuses since Summer 2017
  - a. Terms of Reference
  - b. Job Descriptions
  - c. Summary of Promotion
3. Challenges to the caucuses
4. Appendix

### **1. Overview of the UTSU Social Justice and Equity Commission**

The University of Toronto's Student Union has seven elected executives who answer to their Board, which acts similarly to the AMS's Council. The Social Justice and Equity Commission at the UTSU is designed to build a more inclusive university experience. This is done by:

- Actively challenging/ resisting oppressive structures off and on campus
- Local and Global Issues
- Celebrating Diversity
- Building Inclusivity<sup>1</sup>

The format of this commission is flexible, where the only elected official is the Vice-President Equity of the UTSU. The VP Equity is responsible for holding meetings that are open to members of the university community. This member-driven approach allows students to bring forward issues and initiatives and collaborate with both the UTSU and other student groups on

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.utsu.ca/commissions/>

campus. The commission is primarily designed to be a space for students to get resources and support for their proposed initiatives. The purpose of the commission has changed from in previous years, where it was primarily designed to help run events that were planned by the VP Equity's office.

The procedure for implementing a program through the social justice and equity commission is as follows:

- A member<sup>2</sup> brings forward a proposal for a new social justice/equity initiative
- The initiative is discussed within the commission, and the VP Equity provides the members with resources and information
- The Board accepts or declines the request for the initiative
- If approved, the initiative develops a budget, and a voluntary task force is created among the membership of the commission to work on the initiative
- The initiative is developed in collaboration with student groups if applicable, and supervised by the VP Equity

The composition and purpose of this commission is different than the proposed structure of the AMS's Student Issues and Equity caucuses. The informal nature of the process allows for greater flexibility, and less barriers to student driven initiatives. However, the process seems similar to that of any AMS club that chooses to conduct any social justice or equity campaigns as smaller organizations. Moreover, its informal nature may have the adverse effect of not attracting students to participate. Finally, it does not provide direct representation to Council, which is why the caucuses were created initially.

## **2. AMS Efforts to Implement Caucuses Since Summer 2017**

### **a. Terms of Reference**

This was first created in the late spring/early summer by the External Affairs office staff members. The Terms of Reference were crafted from scratch as there was not a pre-existing framework in place. This was not finalized until close to the end of the summer as it also received consultation from members of the Academic office and the Policy Advisor of the AMS.

### **b. Job Descriptions**

Nine new Job Descriptions (JDs) were created by a staff member in the External Affairs office. These JDs outlined an overview of the position, the purpose of the position, duties and responsibilities, and qualifications and experience required for each position available. These were all posted to the AMS website.

### **c. Summary of Promotion**

Extensive engagement efforts were made to promote these positions. We promoted the positions on Facebook which included a graphic to draw more attention, and encouraged AMS staff, executives and councillors to share. We also reached out to each constituency urging them to share this information on their social media and to their members, for those who did not

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<sup>2</sup> Defined as any student that has attended two meetings of the Social Justice and Equity Commission

respond right away I emailed them to follow up. Also, we reached out to other universities including the University of Toronto and Queen's University in mid-August to see how they recruited for these positions, with multiple follow-ups, and little reply was had. A new strategy that was employed was reaching out to various clubs on campus as well as the AMS Resource Groups. This was done through the use of the AMS Engagement Map the External Office made this summer. In total, the External Affairs staff emailed a plethora of clubs paying special attention to those who may be interested in these positions such as political, cultural and social groups. These groups were also emailed again after little reply was given after the first round of emails. The emails sent to these groups were targeted to best match the needs of that individual group, for example when emailing Pride Collective they were specifically addressed and given a reason as to why they should share this as well as apply themselves. The information for the positions were also listed on the AMS website for interested students to consult.

### **3. Challenges of the Caucuses**

The main challenge for the implementation of the caucus is the lack of engagement by the general student body. Despite significant efforts to create and promote this initiative, there was little response or attempts by students to participate. In fact, only 2/9 positions actually received applications from the student body. This was despite significant efforts to develop and promote the positions.

### **4. Appendix**

All documents referenced in section 2 are attached in pdf format.