



THE ALMA MATER SOCIETY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA VANCOUVER

AMS Advocacy Committee

Meeting Minutes of July 10, 2018

Members: Max Holmes (Chair – VP Academic & University Affairs), Cristina Ilnitshi (VP External Affairs), Andy Wu (Councilor), Kate Burnham (Councilor), Hannah Xiao (Councilor), Dylan Braam (Councilor), Daniel Lam (Student-at-Large)

Recording Secretary: Julia Burnham (Academic Campaigns and Outreach Commissioner)

Guests: Michelle Marcus (AVP Sustainability), Roshni Pendse (AVP Academic), Jason Tockman (Policy Advisor)

Land Acknowledgement

Call to Order

6:05pm

Approval of Agenda

Max Moved, Andy Seconded, unanimous consent

Approval of Minutes

Max Moved, Daniel Seconded, unanimous consent

VP Academic & University Affairs Updates

- Max:
 - Been away on vacation for the past little bit
 - Having discussions on tuition increases over the next year
 - Lots of work on policy and the Academic Experience Survey report
 - VPDAE search is now over
 - Almost done VP Finance and Operations search
 - Will be sitting on the UBC AVP Health and VP External Affairs search committees

VP External Affairs Updates

- Cristina:
 - Been working on the municipal election with the Get Out The Vote campaign and materials
 - Meeting soon with the mayoral candidates and ensuring we are bringing up student issues
 - Currently in contact with other student unions about Iranian student PR delays
 - Exploring millennium line extension advocacy, presenting to council
 - Meeting with Darren Fernandes about student financial aid
 - Research on affordability for post-secondary education to develop discourses for a one-day summit at UBC for student associations
 - Finalizing submission for the Copyright Act review
- Dylan:

- This is the first meeting of Advocom since the SASC decisions. I would like to note that this was absent in both of your reports. Please provide an update.

The Chair noted that there will be a fulsome discussion of the SASC decision at the July 11th Council meeting and that councilors questions will also be addressed there.

- Max:
 - A decision was made, there was a discussion with council about the decision. We've learned we need to improve on consultation and reaching out to communities.
 - We realized quickly it was the wrong decision, which is why we reversed the decision.
 - The town hall was a good first step, a document of minutes and progress will be sent soon.
 - There's been lots of outreach recently with the resource groups and the SASC moving forward.
 - We've learned we need to reach out to the membership more on matters like this and to continue to create structures for marginalized groups.
- Cristina:
 - We recognize we made a lot of mistakes throughout the process and that it was flawed.
 - We heard our membership and we are thankful that they were able to call us out.
 - We recognize there was a lot of hurt that came out from this decision.
 - We have a lot of action items moving forward so that we do better in the future.
- Kate: What action items?

The Chair, with consent from the committee, asked members to pose all further questions at Council on July 11th. It was noted that if there was time this could be added as a discussion item for the committee but there was an extensive agenda that the committee already approved for their official business.

- Andy: Is there an update on the copyright review? What is the main point of contention?
- Cristina: We wanted to include the importance on open educational resources for students and entrenching their importance within the act.
- Dylan: I would look into the regulations as well.
- Jason: The government is doing a review of the act right now and is soliciting feedback on this. We are seeking to make sure that OERs are not rolled back.

Approval of Committee Goals

- Max:
 - We did not get a chance to do key performance indicators yet, but can discuss this as a committee.
 - This was emailed to everyone ahead of time.
 - We have some routine goals first. In code, there's very little aside from advocacy and keeping the VP Academic accountable.
 - I think Cristina and I should be bringing something to this committee every meeting for review.
 - Are there any comments or KPI suggestions?
- Cristina:

- We can bring more presentations to you and make sure you are an active part of our advocacy work
- Daniel: That would be great. If there's anything that you want to consult us on, bring it up in updates.
- Kate: A good KPI would be the amount of documents sent out and the amount of time the members had to review them in order for us to give proper feedback.
- Andy: It would be good if we knew what the discussions happening were in order for us to give feedback.
- Cristina: We could send out the updates preemptively?
- Max: Changing 'assistance' to 'oversight' in terms of code. Will also be sending committee documents well ahead of time, including information relating to executive updates.
- Kate: Could we specify the amount of time?
- Max: Code says 48 hours ahead of time, we can write this.
- Max: The next goal is to hold the AMS accountable to engage with more diverse student groups. This sort of ties into the next two goals. This should be a routine goal for this committee.
- Hannah: It says hold the AMS accountable, we can word this better since this committee is part of the AMS.
- Max: Next goal, "Revitalize the Equity and Student Issues Caucus to take on a more meaningful role within AMS advocacy efforts"
- Max: This was supposed to be formed two years ago and have struggled. KPI could be that every spot is filled and starts meeting in September at least once a month.
- Cristina: We have had a difficult time trying to find people to fill these spots. KPI could be the active ways to disseminate this.
- Andy: Why don't we ask the resource groups to fill positions?
- Max: A good idea, but we have some positions that don't have a resource group – i.e. commuter students.
- Max: Need to add a KPI to make this a low barrier process.
- Max: Next goal, "Work in partnership with Indigenous student communities to establish a structure for increased, autonomous Indigenous representation on campus"
- Max: This should be a goal within the AMS as a whole.
- Dylan: Then that completely takes away what is meant by the word autonomous. The AMS is a parliamentary supremacy.
- Max: There are autonomous Indigenous groups on campus. Indigenous representation within the AMS, perhaps for wording.
- Max: KPI – we should create something made by Indigenous communities by September.
- Max: Last goal, "In consultation with UBC student groups, take a stronger position on social issues that would directly or indirectly affect UBC students' wellbeing"
- Roshni: For every issue brought to advocacy committee, we could draft a letter or response? Could be hard to represent all students.
- Cristina: I could bring our stance on referendums, Trans Mountain Pipeline etc.
- Kate: AMS should be representing on things that are appropriate to speak to on the student experience, a focus on student priorities.
- Max: Yes I agree, but also we could stand alongside moral values of our membership.
- Kate: Yes, but you can't play favorites for different views on campus. Need to be cautious when there are dissenting opinions on campus, there's a place for referendums on this too.

- Cristina: It's important to be flexible on these things
- Dylan: The more you make statements, the more it dilutes your convictions. Each policy you take a stand on is another opportunity to alienate students. All it takes is one or two issues.
- Max: It's a good goal, some wording can change. This is a conversation that we can have in more depth.
- Max: I will send this out with the KPIs for approval.

New External Mental Health Advocacy Policy

- Max: These policies are for consultation, they will go for approval at the next meeting.
- Roshni: We wanted to formulate this policy to direct where we are advocating for stronger mental health supports. We have consulted VPAUA, VPX, Speakeasy, Policy Advisor.
- Max: Do we support the idea of this policy?
- Dylan: This is an example of a policy that is very pertinent to students. This is a great opportunity to push UBC.
- Daniel: I like the intersectional approach to mental health in this policy, e.g. point 5
- Max: We will bring it back to committee for approval, there are a few more internal consultations to do. We can look at maybe external consultations with student groups.

New External Environment and Climate Change Advocacy Policy

- Max: This policy has changes that aren't reflected in the emailed version. It came originally from a policy on UBC divestment from fossil fuels, which we are mandated by referendum. Climate change advocacy and zero waste are new from a policy standpoint.
- Dylan: I think that the document does a good job of this, but we need to highlight that the divestment of fossil fuels cannot be removed. Putting it in a policy with things that can be changed could run the risk of this changing. We could change divestment into a reference point, or a separate document that cannot be touched.
- Max: We can make this more clear in the history section of the policy. AMS Sustainability, Sustainability Collective, VPX, VPAUA and Policy Advisor have been consulted on this policy.
- Dylan: Footnote edits needed for the hyperlinks to preserve them for the future if links are broken.

Trans Mountain Pipeline Statement Discussion

- Cristina:
 - We've been talking to students to see the movement that the sustainability collective has lead over the past year taking a stand on climate justice.
 - This is part of a larger discussion on the AMS being active on social justice movements that affect students.
 - This came from the action in the media of Canada purchasing the Kinder Morgan pipeline. There has been a lot of dissent on this.
 - I understand that we don't want to put a statement out there that won't be actionable.
 - This statement was going to be framed as an opposition to the pipeline, but a call to action for students to get involved in the conversation about climate action on campus.
 - We are opposed because of environmental damage, the burden on students and youth. We stand in solidarity with students speaking up against climate change.
 - This pipeline will be running through the backyards of Indigenous communities and the fact that Canada supports UNDRIP says that we value the consent of Indigenous peoples on the policies that affect them.

- The AMS as a whole is working on reconciliation efforts and to better include Indigenous voices.
- There is obviously a lot of contention on the Trans Mountain pipeline, but I think that at the end of the day dozens of Indigenous communities did not give consent to the pipeline and that it does disproportionately endanger their communities.
- Lastly, a call to action to get students involved in climate change.
- Kate: I think it would be really inappropriate for the AMS to make a statement on this right now. As you said, it's a really contentious issue. As per census polls, the majority of Canadians in BC support the pipeline.
- Max: AMS has taken somewhat of a stance on this in the past. Jude Crasta, former VPX, did take a stance against the pipeline. The AMS has taken stances on issues that don't necessarily have great public approval, i.e. gay marriage when it was divisive. That's not the same issue as this one, but we shouldn't limit ourselves from action if we think it's divisive.
- Kate: Definitely different now that the federal government has purchased the pipeline. Not a straightforward political move. I recognize there's a social responsibility, I still don't think it's the place for the AMS as a small group of people to make this decision. You also represent a lot of students who work in this industry and have different perspectives on this. The AMS had a referendum on this similar discussion with the divestment, which could be more appropriate.
- Dylan: I don't want to attack the strawman, but to distinguish this from the gay marriage debate, public polling was not indicative of a divisive issue. In terms of Canada as a whole, over two thirds of Canadians support the pipeline. In Lower Mainland 50% support the pipeline, 39% oppose. I think it would be irresponsible to advocate on a position that was not in an electoral platform. There are particular aspects of this project that engage more of the AMS mand. There are several legal challenges of this pipeline, i.e. federalism. There is a lot of concern that First Nations rights were steamrolled through. The requirement for consultation with Indigenous peoples has now skyrocketed that federal government has purchased this as a public project. We could speak of our support for Indigenous rights in this. Need to be careful that we are framing this as a student issue.
- Cristina: There are a couple pieces to this, the environmental piece, the support of Indigenous rights and the call to action for climate action. If we could frame the statement with the specific discourse about Indigenous peoples and their rights and ensuring its about the level of consultation that needs to be had, would that be more along the lines of what you are thinking?
- Michelle: I think that making a statement opposed to the project would be consistent with the new environment and climate change advocacy policy and the fossil fuel divestment policy that the AMS is mandated to have. I think the framing of the statement is more around solidarity with nations who were not consenting to this and solidarity with students standing up for this. We could also include a recognition that the oil and gas industry in Canada is important economically to a lot of people and to include people employed in these industries in these conversations.

The Chair noted that the divestment policy only applies to UBC's Investments and that the Environment and Climate Change Advocacy policy has not been adopted yet by the AMS.

- Jason: Obviously the AMS should be accountable to their membership. Ideally, we would bring it forward to referendum, but I don't think there's time for that based on the court timeline. I

don't think the judges are going to be influenced by a student society's opinion. There's about 3-4 months for this to happen, time is of the essence. The only guide that we have for how students feel is the divestment of fossil fuels policy, which was supported by 74% of the student body in the referendum.

The Chair encouraged committee members to try and not assume student support for a government advocacy position based off of a referendum about a university advocacy position that wasn't directly related to the topic at hand.

- Andy: There's more consultation to be done with students at large. We need to include not only the environmental groups on campus. I don't agree that we need to have a referendum. Situations like these happen and we as a society need to take stances on social issues like this. Not doing any sort of advocacy work on this would be against what we're talking about. It's ultimately up to us.
- Kate: This group is maybe being a little shortsighted about what sustainability means on a global scale. The divestment decision happened four years ago. There are a lot of complicated facts about this pipeline re: construction and repair. As a blanket statement, there needs to be careful wording and scientific accuracy rather than a generic student liberal perspective.
- Cristina: I agree that there's a lot of nuance in this conversation and that there would be opposition. There's a standalone discussion about how Indigenous communities are implicated in this expansion of the pipeline, which I think is separate from the economics of it.

The Chair ended the discussion in the interest of time since the committee had gone over its allotted time by almost half an hour by this point.

- Max: We should continue this discussion in the future. It'd be good for us to come to consensus when possible. Cristina, if you could bring more information to the next meeting. Indigenous consent is probably the most important issue here. We want to make sure that we're making an informed statement if we're going to be making any statement.
- Cristina: I can draft up a couple different statements and what they'd look like and discuss further then.
- Andy: If we include every single perspective, it's going to be so eclectic that it doesn't matter.
- Kate: I would like to see it be factually based with links to sources. Indigenous rights should be more highlighted than contentious takes on climate change.
- Michelle: I want to point out that this would not be a policy about the AMS's advocacy stance on the issue. This would be about bringing up discussion on a major social issue.
- Andy: Given this conversation, we should perhaps take another look at the environment policy. I'm not comfortable with the AMS using student resources to advocate on issues that do not directly pertain to students.
- Max: Please bring me back comments on the policy. There has been a lot of work and consultation that has gone into that policy. I am interested in opinions about the line about actively opposing fossil fuel extraction without the consent of Indigenous people line.
- Dylan: I am for it.
- Andy: I am not.
- Daniel: Probably yes.

- Kate: I disagree as long as actively stays in the wording. Lots of nuance with permitting process.
- Max: We can look at the word actively.
- Kate: You could change to morally.

Other Business

Adjournment

Next meeting two weeks from now. Adjourned 7:32pm.