
SUBJECT	AMS Peer Support Service Proposal
MEETING DATE	March 25th, 2020
	FOR INFORMATION SUBMISSION AND CONSULTATION
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DOCUMENTS	1. AMS Peer Support Presentation 2. AMS Peer Support Proposal

**DESCRIPTION &
RATIONALE**

This submission is to provide the AMS Council with a proposal for a new service, AMS Peer Support. This proposal is based upon a recommendation as put forward by the upcoming Services Review, and includes details on the aim of the new service, proposed structure, and rationale for this change. A top-level overview will be presented, with more in-depth details being found in the report.



AMS Peer Support

Restructuring of AMS Speakeasy and AMS Vice

Ian Stone, Student Services Manager 2019-20

Executive Summary:

AMS Services has always aimed to operate based on two principles: providing services that are in-demand and that fill gaps in our community; and to provide services that are accessible and low-barrier as possible. In the context to wellness and mental health support, Vice and Speakeasy have been filling gaps that we have seen in our community related to peer support and harm reduction when it comes to substance use. Since the last Services Review, much has evolved on the campus community, with new services being started, others shutting down, and existing ones changing their focus (as just a few examples). It is in this context of change, and with our operational principles in mind, that the below recommendations have been made.

- As per the triennial Services Review Recommendation:
 - *AMS Speakeasy and AMS Vice be consolidated into one Services and be re-named AMS Peer Support, in line with and similar to those employed by a majority of comparable student union/associated in Canada.*
- Recombining Speakeasy and Vice back into a singular service, which will be renamed “AMS Peer Support”.
- This Service will have a structure similar to SASC – that is, two “branches”, with one focused on providing peer support sessions, and the other branch focused on Outreach and Education.
- This new Service will have a Coordinator, and two Assistant Coordinators (one focused on each branch).

Background:

Speakeasy was created back in 1970 as “...a talk and information center ... to help fill gaps left by other student counselling services available on campus and in the city.” Now, it is still related to the same purpose with “... providing free, confidential, one-on-one peer support for UBC students and staff facing a wide variety of challenges.”

In its current form, Speakeasy has a Coordinator and Assistant Coordinator (part-time paid student staff); 5 Peer Support Team Leads (TLs), 1 Marketing and Outreach Team Lead, and approximately 40 Peer Supporters and Marketing and Outreach volunteers. The TLs oversee the Peer Supporters and Marketing and Outreach Volunteers, who directly provide peer support sessions to clients and engage in boothing/outreach. A similar structure is graphically outlined in the proposed tree graph later on in this report.

Vice was founded back in 2016-17, with the goal of, “a service to help any student on the UBC campus who has either an addiction or would like to garner more information about different types of substance abuses, how they can get help on and off campus, and what resources are available through insurance. Vice [is] three pronged focusing on education, community outreach, and student peer support networks.”

Vice has a smaller, but similarly structured teams, with a few different Team Leads who oversee projects within the Service. Vice has evolved to be much more outreach based, seeing few sessions for peer support, but seeing great turnout at events such as Naloxone training.

Environmental Scan:

Since the founding of these two Services, the landscape of available resources and issues that students face has changed (and continues to do so) on campus. Funding for UBC Counselling has increased, a new integrated health building is being constructed on campus, and the UBC Wellness Centre has expanded, as just a few examples.

For brevity, a mostly comprehensive list of all available resources can be found on the Campus Lightbox website (campuslightbox.com).

Two organizations that are of significant note in relation to the operations of Vice and Speakeasy:

- [UBC Wellness Centre](#): “At the Wellness Centre, Wellness Peer Educators are trained student volunteers who can answer your questions, talk with you, and recommend resources for everyday concerns related to health, relationships, and workload.” They also provide safer sex products available for purchase and have a Nurse on Campus during certain hours, but are limited in certain topics that they cover (ex. Substance use) and their peer support is provided in a more open setting (in comparison to our private room for sessions).
- [Student Recovery Community](#): “The recovery community at UBC is a safe space for students who are in recovery, or pursuing recovery from drugs, alcohol, or other types of addictive behaviour.” Student-led, and focuses less on harm reduction, more on supporting those in recovery.

Below is a brief comparison between peer support services as provided by institutions that are similar in ranking to UBC (originally prepared for the 2019-20 Services Review):

	Alberta	McGill	Queen’s	UBC
Name	Peer Support Centre	Peer Support Centre	Peer Support Centre	Speakeasy
Link	https://su.ualberta.ca/services/psc/	https://psc.ssmu.ca/	http://amspeersupport.com/	https://www.ams.ubc.ca/student-services/speakeasy/
Hours	Monday to Friday Spring/Summer: 9:00am - 5:00pm Fall/Winter: 9:00am - 8:00pm Exam Weeks: 10:00am - 6:00pm	Monday to Friday 11 AM – 5 PM (recently changed to 7 PM); adjusted hours during exams.	7 Days a week 10:00 AM – 10 PM (Fall/Winter Hours)	Monday to Thursday 10AM-6PM Friday 10 AM – 4 PM
Call line available?	Yes	Yes (as a separate service, Nightline)	No	No
Does external presentations?	Yes	Yes	No	No
Number of Volunteers + Staff	53+	10 executives, approximately 60 student peer supporters, and 6 promo &	100+ volunteers and paid staff	34 volunteers, 2 staff

		outreach volunteers.		
Languages other than English:	Yes (Hindi, Gujarati, Urdu, Arabic, Vietnamese, Nigerian Pidgin, French, and Punjabi)	Unclear	Unclear	None

Motivations for restructuring:

In short, with a long history and very structured operations, Speakeasy is very strong at providing peer support. However, with this target being at the core of the Service for so long, marketing and outreach activities have not been a strong point of the Service, and have led to a stagnant usage rate of Speakeasy Peer Support Services.

On the flipside, Vice, as a new Service, has been stronger in marketing and outreach – with less of a cemented structure, it has been able to adapt to the needs of students more quickly, and provide workshops/engagement with students on the most up-to-date topics (ex. Joint rolling workshops, planned drug testing at future AMS festivals, information on the effects of study drugs, etc.). However, with less “credibility” as a service that provides peer support, and much less of a focus on that as a core activity, Vice sees very few peer support sessions.

It is with this in mind that we believe resources could be better utilized by combining these Services into one. The overlap that is seen between the two, and the efforts that are replicated twice in each Service would be more effective if the same number of people worked and volunteer for these Services, and only slightly expanding the scope of work done in each.

Further detailed in a proposed structure below, the aim would to have 2 Assistant Coordinators within this new Service: one focused on Peer Support (including individual sessions for any topic, phone/online support, group sessions, and so on); and the other focused on events, marketing, and outreach (including the events that Vice holds, boothing, and online advertisements). We believe that this will allow Peer Supporters and the Assistant Coordinator to focus on their strengths, and the volunteers for Marketing and Outreach and their overseeing Assistant Coordinator to do the same.

Proposed structure:

The combined Service will do its best to include all activities, in some way, that were previously done in both Services. The entire Service will be broadly split into 2 branches:

- The Peer Support branch that will be focusing on our confidential peer support sessions and our to-be-implemented chat/call services. They will have knowledge on all the topics that Speakeasy currently training on, as well as training on the topics that Vice is training on, such as substance use and addictions.
- The education, outreach, marketing, and events branch, that will focus on events such as Naloxone training, boothing that we regularly do, and any promo of our Services. Further sub-divisions are to be determined.

