



**AMS Council - August 5 2020**  
Executive Updates

**Office of the Vice President External Affairs**

Compared to the weeks leading up to our last AMS Council Meeting, the past couple of weeks have been relatively simpler, yet very effective in terms of advocacy.

Sometime in August, we will be releasing our individual consultancy campaign for equity-based grants calling on marginalized students to take part in the consultation process for advocacy on equity-based grants. It is our belief that individuals consulting on these grants should be compensated for devoting their emotional labour towards helping us better structure these grants. As a result, we are working on developing an equitable compensation model to ensure that students who take part in the consultation process are compensated. In terms of the research phase into equity-based grants, we met with representatives from SEEDs on July 29th and discussed ways in which the initiative can support the AMS External Affairs Office on bettering our consultation process and researching the inequities that marginalized students face in the British Columbian and Canadian post-secondary education system.

In terms of provincial advocacy, we recently made another submission to both the Opposition Critics for Finance and Government Services and the MLA for Vancouver-Point Grey's office outlining the need for jobs, future housing supports in the event of a "second wave", amending models to the Sexual Violence and Misconduct Policy Act, and ensuring that the provincial government fulfills its commitment towards the collection of race-based data by January. This submission was followed up by meetings with both parties in which we proactively discussed important measures that must be taken in order to support the future professional generation of British Columbians. Similar submissions were also sent to the Premier's Office.



On a similar note, we are currently having ongoing meetings with Federal Government officials. We met with the BC Advisor to the Prime Minister, the MP for Vancouver-Quadra, and employees from the Ministry of Workforce Development establishing some of our immediate and year-long goals for the year. These goals included the removal of interest rates on federal student loans, extensions to the student loan repayment freeze, funding for the SkyTrain-to-UBC, and amendments to the Canadian Experience Class Express Entry program.

The AMS Transit Subsidy form has been going on as usual with the team reviewing applications in line with UBC. Unfortunately, however, we heard from a couple councillors and some students that the word hasn't gone out as much as would like it to, leaving some students unaware of the initiative. Therefore, we're working with the AMS Communications Department to see how we can ramp up our advertising for the subsidy to ensure that we can serve as many students in need of transit during the summer as possible. This will be especially useful for students that are purchasing Translink passes for August.

In regards to the fall, we recognize that the fall semester is going to look very different for many students; with classes online and COVID-19 still present in BC, many students will be learning from home, reducing their travel and chance of exposure, and some may not even be physically here in Metro Vancouver. Financial resources are also tight for students and any extra money in their pocket would be hugely beneficial. On the other hand, many students are still taking classes or conducting research on campus, travelling to and from work, and relying on transit for errands, groceries and social connections. For these students who rely on transit, the cost of a monthly pass is much higher than the reduced cost of a U-Pass BC and would be an even bigger financial burden during this challenging time. In short, there is unfortunately no easy solution for administering the U-Pass BC program in the fall semester considering the



large disparity in the number of students needing the program, the requirement to follow the terms of the U-Pass BC agreement, and importance of respecting the large amount of student support for the program in every U-Pass BC referendum conducted by Student Associations across the region. We are working tremendously hard with our partners at TransLink, other student associations, and post-secondary institutions across Metro-Vancouver to find the best path forward for this program. We know that a reduced transit pass is a lifeline for many students, while also being a huge financial burden for others during this uncertain time. We remain confident that we will be able to come to a solution that works for the largest number of students, but unfortunately don't have anything concrete to share with you at this time. The suspension is currently agreed to be in place up until the end of August 2020. However, as discussions with partners are ongoing to determine if and when the U-Pass BC program can resume, you may have noticed that your fee statement includes the U-Pass BC fee for fall course registration. Please note, this fee is still subject to change, as no decision has been made yet about the operations of the program. If the U-Pass BC remains suspended for the fall term, the post-secondary institution will provide those students who have paid the U-Pass BC fee an account-credit or a refund.

If you have any questions please feel free to reach out whenever. We also have some successes to celebrate such as the passing of the Neighbours' Agreement at the recent UBC Board of Governors meeting as well as the increased investment towards OERs by the BC Government. See you at Council!

Warm Regards,

**Kalith Nanayakkara** ([he/him](#))

Vice-President External Affairs

AMS Student Society of UBC Vancouver

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