



THE ALMA MATER SOCIETY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Minutes of the AMS Advocacy Committee on the 30th October, 2020

[30th October, 2020] [5:00 PM PST] on Zoom

<https://zoom.us/j/96991215514?pwd=NmFHk9QOWRoYUdwUllKSWNVd0cwUT09>

Attendance

Invited: Georgia Yee, Kalith Nanayakkara, Laura Beaudry, Joshua Kim, Jackson Schumacher, Mathew Ho, Mahmoud Borno, Saad Shoaib

Present: Mathew Ho, Laura Beaudry, Joshua Kim, Kalith Nanayakkara, Jackson Schumacher, Morgan Mahmoud Borno, Shivani, Georgia Yee, Saad Shoaib

Regrets:

Recording Secretary: Chair, Vice Chair

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 5:05 pm

Land Acknowledgement

Approval of Agenda

MOVED by Laura, SECONDED by Joshua

“BIRT the agenda of the AMS Advocacy Committee on the 30th October, 2020 be adopted as presented”

– Passed

Minutes of the Previous Meeting

MOVED by Georgia, SECONDED by Laura

“BIRT the minutes of the AMS Advocacy Committee on the 18th August, 2020 be accepted”

– Passed

Agenda Items

Chair Remarks

1. Introductions

Made by the new members to the committee: Mathew, Mahmoud, and Jackson.

2. Logistics + Contact Info

Voting and communication procedures presented by Mathew

Gmail accounts of Mahmoud and Jackson shared to the Chair, and then to the Vice-Chair

3. Election of Vice Chair

Vice Chair: Technically to represent the chair when the chair is unable to attend committee meetings, and take meeting minutes. Will help coordinate with chair in arranging meeting minutes and agendas, and connect with interested student clubs and campaigns as listed in committee goals.

- ❖ Joshua: As Vice chair, would like to help give feedback to the Chair and support him, even though he stepped down as previous chair of Advocacy Committee. Also a fast typer, if that helps.
- ❖ Mahmoud: As Vice chair, would like to use prior experience as Vice-chair of Operations Committee. He is a Fast writer, and will work directly with the chair to efficiently run the advocacy committee meeting for results. He also hopes to bring in experience working in the AMS bureaucracy, in resource groups.
- ❖ Results: Joshua (4) vs Mahmoud (2)

4. Committee Goal overview and review + Year Plan

Mathew: Introduced committee goals established by the Advocacy Committee in the Summer, as included in the docket before the meeting.

Georgia: In regards to the goal related to Just Recovery Principles, there is a working group on running a Just Recovery symposium that will be integrated with the VP Admin's Sustainability Symposium. They will centre around what a just recovery from COVID will be like, in collaboration with the Climate Hub and Climate Justice UBC. More details to come. Feel free to reach out to her if interested in the symposium.

Portfolio Updates

1. AMS VP External

Kalith: Provincial elections had been quite of a surprise to the portfolio. Successful projects such as the candidates' debate across platforms were organized, along with the Get out the vote campaign, that included social media, and postering. With an NDP government, most work at present is researching the NDP platform, and identifying the AMS's key asks.

Kalith (cont'd): He will be meeting with the Student Union of UVIC, SFSS, GSS, ABCS to align advocacy aspects, such that they can be on the same page. So far the work has been going well. He will also be scheduling meetings with relevant MLAs as soon as possible, putting together a welcome package about the AMS, and methods of reaching out to the AMS, such that they can be comfortable with having these consultations. One MLA they are waiting a response from is David Eby. Provincial advocacy is its early stages but the AMS will be drawing from party platform points.

Kalith (cont'd): The portfolio has compiled a report derived from the NDP platform, including areas such as housing affordability, and TRFs. This time around, future programs will include students living in UBC housing, and will be used to hold the government accountable.

One area of focus are Operational funding reviews. As the NDP didn't promise any changes to operational funding, but promised that they would review it, the AMS will try and advocate on the issue and highlight how it can impact tuition rates. Work will be done in conjunction with the VPAUA's portfolio.

Kalith (Cont'd): Another area of focus is on UCRU in the federal stage. UCRU is officially incorporated now. There is work on by-laws, and policy constitution documents. The University of Ottawa has joined the conversation in UCRU. Alireza from the GSS is working with the AMS to push for the creation of a graduate equivalent, GCRU. Currently all 15 schools talking about this possible creation, which is incredible. Other work include budgeting and restructuring. There is not a lot of tangible info yet but a lot more will come soon.

One aspect of advocacy through UCRU is the review of the Canadian Express Class Entry Program for employment of international students, which should be changed, such that there is promotion of entrepreneurship in international students. More updates might be posted in the near future.

Kalith (Cont'd): The Upass conversation is ongoing, with no updates. AMS is working with other schools to get things together and come to a decision soon. The portfolio is aware of Upass related emails from students who are unsure about opting out, so there is a need to improve the process. A lot of research on Upass has been done by staff.

Kalith (cont'd): A Presentation about UCRU and elections is to be made to Council. The portfolio hopes that there will be presentations to council about the overall advocacy situation, and sexual assault support in the near future.

Mahmoud: How are our relationships with other unions, as poor relations may have been due to miscommunications?

Kalith: It's a lot harder to build these relations due to miscommunication, with SFSS being one of hardest to get a hold of, as there has been no response in getting some emails. However, there are strong relations with UVIC, along with

BCFS, where we have connections to Douglas College and some other institutions, who have a lot of good relations with us, thanks to GSS. On federal level, the AMS is very close with Western, U of T, University of Saskatchewan, and University of Manitoba. However, acknowledges that sometimes getting people on board is hard.

Mahmoud: Comments expressing appreciation. Hopefully there is going to be connections along the line of BC Student unions in the lower mainland, since UBC covers most of the BC student population across province.

2. AMS VP AUA

Georgia: One of the things that they are working on is pushing for understanding on what follow up plans are regardless of people and outcomes of the investigations.

Georgia (cont'd) : The AUA portfolios have also been working on an MOU with the Ombudsperson. Morgan and Georgia have worked on creating resources on anti-racism, and creating campaigns on how to report mistreatment.

Joshua: Highlights educational resources on AMS Anti- racism resources page

Georgia (cont'd) : There has also been a combination of tuition and budget consultation processes. Due to COVID, there has been an opportunity for tuition and budget consultations to align. The portfolio is against tuition increases, and has been working along with SUO and GSS on making submissions to the Board to pressure UBC administration to consider other models of funding in advance.

Georgia (cont'd) : Another area is on operating grants for post secondary institutions.

Georgia (cont'd): Proctorio remains controversial due to its tabs, and other sagas. There is an RFP process for alternatives.

Georgia (cont'd): There is also work on a sexual assault awareness fund. In addition, Thrive month is 2 days from now, from NOV 1st to 30th, which is dedicated to mental health awareness, and research on culturally appropriate mental health.

Georgia (cont'd): Also working on research on mid-term scheduling and assessing impacts on student wellbeing.

Jackson: For Proctorio, as we're trying to get seed on the consultation process, when will they look for in a new service, and what are we asking for in terms of wanting the new 'proctorio' interface to look like?

Georgia: For possible replacements of Proctorio, there are a variety of applications for remote proctoring, such as Exemplify, Lockdown Brower, Proctor U. The difficulty is that they have a lot of same capabilities of Proctorio, which is something that needs to be looked at. Analogy: Is it essentially just as same dog? In a pet shop, while it has a different colour, does it still has the same potential of biting?

Georgia: The AMS is calling for an equity stance that should be approached with when looking at software procurement, especially watching out for AI algorithms that have skewed biases embedded within. In regards to proctorio replacements which hope on negating that matter, is the software a pass fail thing? Can it be made to cut down to adhere to requirements? What is the stance of the company, and how do they accommodate for equity in software? Is their CEO going to attack students on twitter, just like how Proctorio's CEO attacked technologists?

Jackson: Sees a lot of work that is needed on advocacy committee. From the perspective of the GSS, work is needed on determining what the next 'Proctorio' is like, which is hopefully not like putting lipstick on a pig. Is interested in how it will develop.

Mahmoud: What are the options that VPAUA has outside of Proctorio?

Georgia: This is going to be part of proposals process. There are a variety of options. Remote invigilation at UBC is currently run through proctorio and lockdown browser. The latter is less invasive but there are still privacy concerns. To adhere to the addressing of these concerns. Exemplify also needs cut its requirements down down (no camera, voice recording) to meet minimum standard requirements. Examity, soft touch invigilation, zoom are problematic.

With software such as Proctor U, I Dream (open source software created by Canadian institutions) etc, there is an abundance of software. But a lot is needed to ensure privacy and equity standards

Motion: MOVED by Kalith, SECONDED by Mahmoud

“BIRT this meeting be extended for 15 min extension”

- Passed unanimously

Discussion

1. AES Survey Report Draft Feedback (in combination with GSS survey results)

Georgia: For 2021, drafts for the AES survey will hopefully make some changes to content. Changes include:

- Taking out questions around their experience of the AMS (since there will be an alternate survey), services

- Specifying questions such as 'Where do you experience discrimination', and online specific as well.

Georgia (cont'd) Would love to hear some of the feedback on what you would like to see next year. Hopefully the draft, being a part of the docket, has been looked at. Will bring back several drafts regarding this. Portfolio is planning to add other questions where students might face, such as mental health challenges. The main question is: **Are there any feedback on this draft?**

Laura: Does the survey talk about racism in classroom?

Georgia: In the past it didn't talk about areas such as where you have experienced racism, so we are now planning to see if we can put more, such as in AMS clubs, classrooms, varsity athletics etc, which will be one detail to look into and how to gain more information. It's a long survey, with 100s of questions. We are trying to max out questions that can be asked. So we are exploring mechanisms that make it easy to fill out, particularly if students want to elaborate on their experiences as well.

Laura: Even under disability experience demographic, more questions like have you experienced discrimination in the classroom due to disability, and details can be made.

Georgia: Marking it down as suggested question and option

Mahmoud: How will you get survey out, due to AMS surveys being often ignored? Previously, the student population has not really cared as these surveys take a long time and are intrusive. What is the approach that will be taken with the survey? Will it be in the same way it has been in the past?

Georgia: How do we better promote it? That is a good question. Currently the Ratio in UBC distribution of surveys is 13% of students

(Laura: better gift cards!)

Georgia (cont'd): Gift card options is a good one way of doing it. 2 years ago, they were added into the elections survey. Aside from that once reps are elected people can be directed to that survey. The core of issue is recognizing survey fatigue, and the fact there are a lot of surveys. In person questions are not possible currently, but there are ways we can explore the reduction of survey fatigue. Often something we will consider is, if it is very long , and if there are parts that we can make optional potentially (e.g. the part about sexual assault, due to sensitivity about traumas and triggers). parts which are optional and whether it can be taken out. Furthermore, does it affect integrity of research if these questions removed. Ultimately, it can be balanced, and suggestions are welcome.

Mahmoud: A suggestion that he would like to give in relation to past surveys. The AMS should use relations with clubs and subsidiaries to have a middle man to reach out to student population. Based on his first year at UBC, clubs have been 1 thing of the AMS that introduced him to the AMS world. If not for that, he would not be sitting here today. Therefore VP AUA can work with VP Admin to have better AMS surveys rather than just general emails.

Jackson: Question on the structure of survey question. If you say no, you can skip x and go to thing y

Georgia: Yes you can create branches, where if x applies you can ask further questions

Jackson: Yes this can help reduce fatigue a lot. Cole mentioned an AMS canvas page. If you can put the AES on canvas page, more people may fill it, since people stare at that every day.

Georgia: yeah, can be considered. Campusbase has also been considered in addition to that.

Laura: Response options such as strongly in favour, partly in favour etc makes surveys annoying. Yes, no, maybe, and kinda, are more relatable to students.

Georgia: is interested in best practices and better ways of fixing the issue.

Mahmoud: The Geography Department is one good place to consult for surveys than ones we have right now

Georgia: One other concern is that the survey is 8 years old, and there is a need for replicability, so some questions can't be changed too much. Otherwise, results will be harder to analyze.

Georgia: We will follow up, send out reports from insights west, and academic experience survey, with issues with questions on including online atmospheres, and questions like where you experience discrimination , and areas in regards to opportunities to learning about Indigenous Culture: whether you feel like you have that opportunity to learn and engage with that, and would you like more of that. There will likely be a follow up on that will probably be on the docket of future meetings for pre-reading

2. Provincial election (Advocacy Priorities post-election)

Saad: Work is being done on provincial and federal lobbying, particularly strategies for provincial lobbying after elections. This presentation will focus on Key areas from collaborations with other student unions and other campus, and What they want the NDP to be accountable towards

Saad (cont'd): The first area is Housing affordability: The issue has gained traction during elections. BCers are facing financial difficulties. Key

promises from the NDP are rent freezes for 2021, and cap increases to inflation. The Common formula at present is 2% but the new government wants to amend that. While talks about Renter's rebate for households earning up to 80000 dollars is ongoing, our work is to make sure it includes student housing. There may be eligibility restrictions, but aid should be accessible to all housing. One main thing using is that in the AMS all candidates meeting Eby mentions that all further rental support programs will be inclusive of student housing. Therefore, when sending demands to attorney general and MLAs, the AMS will be making sure they are inclusive of student housing, and if not, figure how to work with the ministries to address that

Saad (cont'd): Another area is the NDP commitment to investment 500 million to new homes for Indigenous people, Saad will be meeting the AMS Indigenous committee to talk about that, learning from their perspective on the matter in pushing accountability on the issue.

Laura: Is the govt meeting on that?

Saad: We need to wait for ministerial mandates at end of November. As the Writs of elections are going to return to the Chief Electoral officer by Nov 16th, we hope mandates will be out by end of Nov.

Laura: Can we lobby them until then?

Saad: Yes. So the AMS's strategic plan with lobbying is to meet at least 58 MLAs, which is all NDP MLAs and all Green MLAs. There is no point in meeting Liberal MLAs, as they haven't been cooperative in the past. The BC Liberals have focused a lot of fiscal and monetary policy, and anything on additional spending not going to get passed. Nor will they hold the government accountable for their promises.

Laura: Not understanding why people getting 400 for rent, esp when first nations don't have running water, or even homes.

Saad: The NDP is establishing a new homes for BC plan, with a stress on working on Co-op Housing which is useful in addressing the housing crisis in Vancouver and lower mainland. One thing that the AMS is doing, is to work with student services manager to work on commitment and potentially AMS co-op Housing projects.

Mahmoud: One Small suggestion in regards to Renters rebate in MLA discussion. There's a need to highlight indigenous student challenges on campus,

Saad: This is one thing he wants to meet Indigenous committee on. Having met them 2 times before elections on youth and care program and emergency funding program, he hopes to join their meetings once again and in turn make lobbying and asks relating to things that the NDP have committed to.

Motion: MOVED by Saad, SECONDED by Mahmoud.

"BIRT the meeting is extended by 10 minutes."

- Passed

Saad (cont'd): Another topic is COVID19 recovery.

As the NDP government is planning on running a huge budget deficit, making sure that BCers are prioritized instead of the economy, as made clear by John Horgan. Accountability for COVID 19 recovery is needed. There are several key points the AMS wants to make sure are fulfilled by NDP Commitment:

- The \$1000 commitment to families, and \$500 commitment to single people. The portfolio doesn't think these figures are adequate enough. This will be something they will be trying to fight for in incrementals for that. As a budget deficit isn't something NDP is concerned for, they should do more to help BC people.

Jackson: What will support for International students be?

Saad: This leads to the next point on international student perspective, which is on the federal level. One way has been done through working with UCRU on fast track Permanent residency which has been successful.

Saad (cont'd): The Next thing is the BC Access Grant. There are a lot of lobbying points, that are being in collaboration with the GSS because it doesn't account for graduate students. The AMS is making sure the NDP govt should make grants to support student loans and financial wellbeing. They are also going to work with ministry of advanced education to come up with measures to encourage expansion.

Saad (cont'd): With student employment being terrible, and students being the hardest hit demographics, one thing to work on after the elections is to work for wage subsidy for students (Manitoba has done that). The portfolio has been meeting with U of Manitoba student union to see ways of engaging with the government. The AMS is collaborating with GSS too.

Saad (cont'd): The next part is Post secondary policy and operational funding:

- One thing back in June raised to the government is related to problems with operational funding. Currently the Province funds 30% of funds, whereas in the 1980s and 90s it was 80% percent. Universities are forced to make up for it in tuition increases. As the NDP promises a funding review, the AMS believes if it can be nudged in right direction, it can revolutionize how the provincial govt fund postsecondary institutions. Therefore, the AMS is working with other student unions on that and working with provincial govt on possible plans.

Mahmoud: Shouldn't that be directed more at UBC administration through the VPAUA, particularly on ways on how they can run their budget more

effectively? Suggestion to hold UBC more accountable to run budget more efficiently

Saad: We have been working with Georgia's office on that. However, work on the provincial side is more important, as UBC doesn't have other financial choices. This is not something of change that is happening overnight. It will take reviews, and legislative reviews, which take a long time. The AMS will be working with them on this, and try to provide a realistic timeline.

Motion: MOVED by Mahmoud, SECONDED by Saad

“BIRT the meeting is extended for 15 minutes”

- Passed

Saad (cont'd): Another point being made in conjunction with working with the Indigenous committee is on youth in care, particularly on lifting age restrictions. One thing the AMS has noticed in NDP platform is tuition waivers don't apply to all youth in care. So there is a need to make sure it applies to youth in care no matter their age. Saad hopes to work with Indigenous committee on the matter.

Laura: It is also about the type of care and length of care received. Because, in the program there are some conditions such as being in a stranger's home.

Saad: There is a preliminary brief on the subject, which will include areas on what needs to be worked on. This will be included in either the November or December submission to government, to make sure everything runs smoothly in regards to their commitment.

Jackson: Great work, particularly on federal funding for university being an existential situation. In regards to youth in care, the AMS Impact Grant committee is currently funding a researcher on the university experience of

former youth in care. When she presents her results to GSS, the Impact Grant Committee would be happy to loop AMS in on the findings

Saad: The last point is on Sexual violence protection. The Misconduct policy act ensures post secondary institutions have policies, but there no minimum standards - just a report mechanism, complaint mechanism, complaint to report, and report to complaint mechanism. UBC has a lot of comprehensive sections while a lot of small colleges only have barebones. The AMS is working with a lot of groups such as the BCFS and other student unions to establish minimum standards with government and move to legislative amendments. Ending gender based violence for sexual assault response and establish centres is a priority. In recommending standards, certain institutions have more resources than others, thus, with the budgetary promises NDP made, we can have the government help institutions with less resources establish dedicated offices for sexual violence prevention. One staff will be presenting in next couple of weeks to council on the sexual violence discrepancies project, which surveys all post-secondary institutions in UBC, all the way to smaller colleges that have non-existent policies. One of the problems we're facing right now in presenting that to the government, is pointing out that this is a problem they have no choice but listen, as the government currently only has a working group which doesn't function, so there is a need to nudge them in the right correction. Saad looks forwards to suggestion of amendments.

Next Meeting

The next scheduled meeting is 13th November, 2020 at 5:00pm on Zoom

Adjourn

1. Moved Jackson, Seconded _____ laura

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 6:42 pm

Action Items:

1. AES Survey Draft Feedback
- ~~2. Committee Goal Review Feedback~~