



**THE ALMA MATER SOCIETY  
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA VANCOUVER**

**AMS EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

Minutes of January 13, 2021

**Attendance**

Present: Cole Evans (President), Georgia Yee (VP Academic & University Affairs), Lucia Liang (VP Finance), Sylvester Mensah Jr. (VP Administration), Kalith Nanayakkara (VP External, left 12:55), Ian Stone (Student Services Manager), Keith Hester (Managing Director, left 12:48), Sheldon Goldfarb (Archivist & Clerk of Council)

Recording Secretary: Sheldon Goldfarb

**Call to Order**

- The meeting was called to order at 12:14 pm and took place by videoconference.

**Agenda**

- The agenda was adopted (Lucia, Sylvester).

**Minutes**

- The minutes of December 9 were approved (Sylvester, Kalith).

**Co-op Housing**

- Ian:
  - I've circulated a document, a feasibility study from Utile, the non-profit organization that promotes student housing co-operatives.
  - We made an application for funding, but it was denied; we're looking for other sources.
  - Will send the feasibility study to Council.
  - Looking for feedback.
  - Hope to get going this term.

**Surveys**

- Cole:
  - Have received a bazillion requests for surveys: surveys on the Equity Plan, Utile co-op housing, elections, a legal service.
  - This is the worst term to run them; they'll conflict with the Academic Experience Survey (AES).
  - Which ones should we do? And how schedule them to avoid conflicts?
- Lucia:
  - When is the AES?

- Georgia:
  - Hoping to align with the elections, beginning in February and wrapping up in March. Haven't finalized the date.
- Lucia:
  - Is it a targeted survey or a mass survey?
- Georgia:
  - Some surveys are huge; some are super long; some take only two minutes.
  - Can we combine some to avoid having so many?
  - Is there a centralized coordination body for surveys that we can check with?
- Cole:
  - I think the Executive Committee is that body.
  - We want to avoid annoying our members with a survey in every newsletter every month.
  - If it's on our social media, though, I'd consider that not a violation, if it just said go check out this survey.
  - Out of the surveys, the most important is probably the Equity Plan.
  - The least important is probably elections for Isabelle (the Chief Electoral Officer).
  - The Utile survey: maybe in April?
- Ian:
  - I'll check with Utile.
- Kalith:
  - I think we can do it whenever.
  - The sooner, the better; but April should be fine.
- Cole:
  - The legal service: probably could run on social.
  - Hard to ask: people won't know what it is.
- Lucia:
  - The survey would be an opportunity for students to learn about the service.
  - Essentially, we'd be asking whether they'd pay a fee (suggesting a possible fee range) to cover services like this (legal services).
  - Nicolas at the GSS is working on this.
  - The GSS could run it.
- Cole:
  - Just because we get another organization to do it doesn't mean we can do it.
  - And we should only be asking about fees if we're seriously interested.
  - People will say the AMS is doing this.
  - Running a survey is not necessarily the best way to do this: maybe gather anecdotal responses instead.
- Lucia:

- The plan originally was to do a targeted survey, but the Health and Dental Committee had a discussion and decided that for a big thing like this it would probably be better to engage a larger group.
- We got feedback on what to do with the health and dental surplus that way, and got a good result.
- So we were thinking of doing the same thing with this.
- But we could hold off for another year.
- Sylvester:
  - Focus groups may give more input.
- Cole:
  - Maybe build it into a general survey on the Health & Dental Plan. ...
  - So there's nothing imminent beyond the AES.

### **Athletics & Recreation Fee**

- Georgia:
  - We have been advocating to the University to lower the amount of this fee, but they've said a discount is not possible due to problems re-programming the system: it would have to be all or nothing.
  - Students are concerned over not being able to access services or the athletic and recreational facilities.
  - But Athletics & Recreation is still doing programming that students can access, and a lot goes to facility maintenance.
  - Communication was not the greatest on this: they did discuss the possibility of not charging the fee, but then we learned they were going ahead with charging it.
  - Options:
    - Could work with Enrolment Services to create a subsidy like we do for the U-Pass for those not able to access services and facilities. But not sure of our capacity to administer that.
    - Leave things as is, and advise those in financial need to seek general financial aid, though people may not qualify for that.
- Cole:
  - A subsidy program would be hard to manage; it's a lot more blurry than the U-Pass (which simply depends on establishing if someone is in the Lower Mainland).
  - For this, if you're in Surrey, do you have access or not?
  - It's an unpopular fee: lots may apply.
  - Are we going to administer a subsidy program for a University fee?
  - Maybe ask the University to put more funding into financial aid.
- Georgia:
  - In a regular year, that could function well.

- This year students are bringing up the issue of gaps: who can qualify for aid or get enough aid?
- UBC is using very old data without considering the emergency situation: hope to see some improvement on that.
- There are students who need financial relief despite not being in traditional categories of receiving aid.
- Cole:
  - I don't think the AMS should be in the situation of providing subsidies for University fees.
  - I'd be in favour of putting pressure on the administration.
- Georgia:
  - We were exploring the possibility of UBC reducing the fee, but the Student Services Centre old programming makes that difficult.
  - The biggest thing would be to give refunds.
  - UBC said students should pursue financial aid.
  - Could ask UBC to handle the subsidy.
  - It would be good to put out a statement.

[Keith left.]

### **Indigenous Coordination Focus Group**

- Sylvester:
  - All the Executives have been invited to a focus group hosted by the UBC Indigenous Plan Manager.
  - Purpose of it is for us to assess and reflect, to analyze the organization and understand gaps in services.
  - Have also invited Keith. Will invite Ian.

[Kalith leaves.]

### **Council**

- Cole:
  - I'll chair the meeting tonight.
  - Kareem is still Speaker, but can't attend.
  - He is still going to host an Ethics and Accountability meeting.
  - There's an issue with the old referendum that created some of our fees, especially the Clubs Benefit fee.
  - Asking Sheldon to look into the documentation for that fee.

### **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 1:01 pm.