



## THE ALMA MATER SOCIETY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Minutes of the AMS Advocacy Committee on the 13<sup>th</sup> November, 2020

[13<sup>th</sup> November, 2020] [5:00 PM PST] on Zoom

<https://zoom.us/j/96991215514?pwd=NmFHYk9QOWRoYUdwUllKSWNVd0cwUT09>

### **Attendance**

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

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

Regrets: Kalith

Recording Secretary:

### **Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 5:05 pm

### **Land Acknowledgement**

### **Approval of Agenda**

**BIRT the agenda of the AMS Advocacy Committee on the 13<sup>th</sup> November, 2020 be adopted as presented**

- Unanimously passed

### **Approval of Minutes**

**BIRT the Minutes of the AMS Advocacy Committee on the 30<sup>th</sup> October, 2020 be adopted as presented**

- Unanimously passed

### **Agenda Items**

## Chair Remarks

### 1. Introductions

## Discussion (30 mins total, 10 mins each)

### 1. Presentation on Just Recovery/Sustainability Symposium by the Admin Team (Questions and Themes) (Are we inviting the right people etc)

Georgia: The symposium will tie into a lot of areas such as solidarity, taking a stance against authoritarians, sustainability, with the main focus of the symposium is not just on being able to go back to normal before COVID, but to move forward to determine what a just recovery from COVID 19 is, particularly for those in need. The discussion hopes to provide background on what this is on, and a bit of consultation on what this means and what AMS continues to advocate on this issue. The Sustainability and Advocacy committee's goal is to use one of admin team's sustainability symposium on dec 4<sup>th</sup> from 4pm to 530pm and a way to gather feedback on how AMS can move forward and how it can shape future policy regarding AMS. This also relates to the external policy goals of AMS that were created years ago and are currently outdated, particularly in supporting immigrants, along with areas such as values and principles as well.

Currently, the AMS has received some questions and gathered feedback. If people are interested in what kinds of questions they would like to see asked, and if anyone would like to be a co-facilitator, please feel free to let Georgia know. The AMS would also be interested in inviting different stakeholder groups as well. An example of a topic considered so far have included energy transition: What will the process of transitioning out of it be, and whether and how we will advocate on that. How will it be implemented, and what kind of questions we would like to look at moving forward in developing a strategic plan that comes out of consultation talk? The AMS would like to hear from everyone from this symposium.

Mahmoud: Question on Recovery plan: Is there anything addressing the need for an increase of mental health resources? One of the biggest impacts is, after COVID, is long term mental health issues and maybe the AMS should address that. The resources we have are currently minimal, is not very effective. Secondly, mental health issues are also related to the teaching quality of professors. As professors aren't experts in giving help,

there may be a need to give training on the matter, rather than just giving a google link to some UBC resource, just his input.

Georgia: Acknowledging the issues, some of the areas that should also be considered is what the best ways of creating that infrastructure are, especially for BIPOC students. Currently, there are lots of counsellors at capacity, and there is a need to redo the ways of providing emotional support. As it is one of the resources for those students and for instructors as well, there is a need to figure out how these referrals should be made, and how to encourage instructors who can then might provide that support to this area.

Laura: Question: It seems very broad and I am unsure what the symposium is targeting, COVID-19 relief, environmentalism etc – what exactly are you looking for?

Georgia: The scope of the symposium is a green and just recovery. And this prompts and questions on how UBC should take action especially in regards to energy transition and worker rights, and how the AMS advocates on those issues. And make sure they are informed by the community. We hope to have a focus on making the campus sustainable, particularly on how UBC will continue to pushing after their declaration on the matter, and pushing provincial and UBC on making a just recovery.

(Laura: text : Idea about a guest speaker for the symposium: Autumn Peltier, an Indigenous youth climate change activist :)

Georgia: Will provide honorariums for people to speak, and it is especially to foreground the conversation with the voices of indigenous activists.

## **2. AES Survey Follow up**

Georgia: Now that people have looked at questions last week, if they want to give feedback on that, it is also ok, but I want to make sure committee has all the pieces in the policy regarding the academic experience survey.

Secondly, something which Jackson would be interested in, is on the combination of AES with GSS student experience survey. There's a need to factor ways of including graduate student experience. Especially since AES has been collecting similar experiences. There is an opportunity to see how goals from the two areas can be aligned. There was a discussion on this at GSS's version of the advocacy committee

Jackson: They still haven't met but will do so. The GSS currently has a survey from the student satisfaction survey on top of the AMS survey, along with other one time

surveys. With all this data, the questions are different and anonymized, so there no way of correlating one survey to another survey. This makes it a data analysis nightmare, as there is less power to look into intersectional issues, equity impacts and funding. There is a strong argument for consolidating all surveys under one umbrella. And one way is to do that with AMS, and increasing the length of AMS survey, and handle logistical issues like coordinating. That's where the discussion in the GSS is so far.

Georgia: In terms of the timeline, it's a bit late in the game to be starting to figure if there is room or opportunity for that framework for the next year. One of the big obstructions is that we have the policy I-12, which governs the academic experience survey, that gives guidance on what to keep in the survey for example, and what to ensure is surveyed on, and to provide continuity as well. It will take a sheer amount of effort, to consolidate the survey, when the AES is pretty much well a oiled machine already. So there's kind of an attitude of 'don't fix it if it ain't broke', and messing with the AES could break it further. There is more opportunity to collaborate with the GSS as well, but one of the biggest questions remains. If we want to support more Graduate student initiatives, how do we support that? Another area is figuring out how to ensure an appropriate length of the questions without tiring people out, or without having more students feeling fatigued and not filling out other parts of survey. So there is a need at the end of the day to have as many students to be surveyed as possible, but there are also other possible areas to explore.

Furthermore, I encourage to share the draft with your undergraduate societies, even though the information at the present is relatively closed loop.

### **3. Provincial Government Advocacy: Operational Funding Strategies**

Saad: Just got off a meeting with the ABCS, and we have fleshed out on what the strategy looks like, on top of meeting with other student societies and groups. Currently, ABCS and AMS are aligned on what they want to look for. We have agreed on drawing on what our talking points are, and what to communicate to other student unions in outreach. Our strategy on operational funding is not going to be a student centered approach, as we will try to include faculty, staff, and the university side into the discussion.

We have met with the VP Finance of UBC to get better understanding of financial situation. Currently, UBC as an institution, is an anomaly compared to others, as they have been able to recover from financial impacts of COVID, as compared to other

postsecondary institutions. This confirms a need for a sector wide approach other than a UBC approach. We will be proposing a white paper/ policy paper on an outline what this approach will look like and it will be part of the February round of lobbying. There will be a lot of asks, and we definitely do keep it under wraps. There is a lot of data behind this and most importantly it ties to the fact that the provincial government funds at least 50% in the past, compared to the 30 to 40 % currently.

As mentioned last meeting, the provincial working group currently that forms best practices is not something that AMS cares for, as we want enforceability measures that the provincial government can force on themselves. We want representation from the student side, administration, faculty and staff. These 4 groups need to have representation, the AMS wants to make sure that this would happen. A decrease in operational funding impacts intl students and marginalized communities, and there is a need to find out about these areas.

To update on post-election strategy, we have met with the indigenous committee and they will be giving feedback at end of the month. We also met with climate hub, and took a look as to what climate advocacy will look like going forward. One project with climate hub is the solution of continuity problem, and is related to establishing what the AMS's goals of external advocacy should look like in regards to climate action, and the AMS would like councilors in council and in this committee to look that

Furthermore, another area is mental health, which is a key part in operational funding strategies. The VP finance of UBC mentioned that mental health fees is currently covered by UBC, when it's technically not their jurisdiction, as it is part of the provincial government to do that, especially during the COVID 19 pandemic. UBC has funded 7.8 million dollars to mental health, but they want provincial govt to front that.

Jackson: Question: if the government funding goes up to 50%, what happens? Will tuition decrease, or stay the same?

Saad: The Federal govt only funds 10%, and the Provincial govt currently funds more at 36.4%. When you increase operational funding, it stabilizes tuition, and increases of tuition go down, which increases predictability for international students.

Another thing operational funding increase does is make sure services aren't being cut, from mental health to tutoring, including health and wellbeing. Therefore, in asking for operational funding increases, another ask it will be paired with will be regarding tuition policy. Whether it should be a tuition limit or an ask about international student

strategy that BC has is something to be determined. When we want to make recommendations of strategy, we can make budgetary asks, including tuition. However, it is tough to say what we want to do, and starting the conversation, and the need to keep it going, but that has been the challenge for at least 3 VP Externals. What data shows us is an operational funding increase will ensure that either tuition stays the same, increases, or be cohorted.

Mahmoud: Since Mental Health is not in UBC's jurisdiction, if the provincial government upfronts costs, will the 7.8 million dollars will be withdrawn, and is it against UBC's principles to lift their hands off on mental health of students

Saad: When the university is given money for mental health (not happening this year, as it is not like the provincial govt will do it immediately) there is a need to start conversations now to revolutionize the way mental health support is done. If UBC has 7.8 million dollars, and if the provincial govt matches it, the money would be redistributed. Georgia would be better to answer that on how it would look like, what the language is like. Bottom line is, the provincial government is responsible, as we are the future generation, and therefore they are responsible for our success and that of generations to come.

Georgia: Since the conversation is pushed back to Feb, we are likely to jointly sending asks on behalf of SUO, AMS and GSS in the push to Board. Since the tuition conversation usually happens in November and December cycle. It will be a boon if they are able to consider reducing tuition increase as much as possible, and we have had a lot of conversations with them. Although they are looking at an increase, we will be working to make sure that any increase is allocated towards students needs.

Laura: Question: Another interesting area I would like to ask is on the capping of professors' salaries.

Georgia: We are unsure around that area. This an interesting prompt, especially in regards to tenured faculty, but for contract faculty without security, this would affect them greatly. Conversations on imposing those restrictions will get into a lot of problem with faculty associations, but it is nonetheless an interesting question on considering what UBC can spend less on. At the end of the day, it will be about how you create those connections, particularly on international students needing help outside of community, the need to write to Board, and the need to collaborate with AMS VP External's Team

**Portfolio Updates (10 minutes, 5 mins per item)****1. AMS VP External**

Saad: We are finalizing our post-election strategy, what we want to do is publicize the post-election strategy to the public most likely at end of this month, to start of next month, to let students know what we are advocating for, and especially what the external affairs office is doing to achieve those goals.

In terms of equity-based grants, advocacy on the issue is on their way to graduate level course. We have met with the Graduate level studies rep on SEEDS, some 500 level courses will be analyzing research equity based grants, while a 3<sup>rd</sup> year psych class will be holding in class conversations on what it will be like for them and in the general public.

The Sexual violence discrepancies project (mentioned last meeting) is done, and is undergoing proofreading by our policy researcher. We are planning to publicize this to council sometime this month or next month, and we want people to understand the findings made in this project. To clarify, the project analyzes post-secondary institutions and the lack of minimum standards in provincial legislation in sexual violence policies and infrastructure.

Another area is in regards to developing a climate strategy, where we have sent over a brief for climate consultation. We would like to meet sometime again, and would want to know what the recommendations around that are going to look like. We are targeting MLAs in the NDP and green caucus to fight for the separation of BC govt from LNG. There is a need to see a non- fossil fuel and clean BC economy, and making a Clean BC initiative on readiness, and we will be fleshing out more and talking more about that in the next committee meeting.

Mahmoud: Comment: On publicizing a strategy that is open to student population, there is a need for some infographic or graphic on how AMS and UBC works. Which is different from UBC administration, and what societies are, especially given current low engagement. There has been hostility between students and AMS from these misunderstandings, and students need to know what's going on. Therefore, there is a need for modern way for infographics or ways to inform the student population.

Saad: one thought that comes to mind is potentially working with VPAUA office to make a campaign, and showing students what AMS is doing on provincial and university level. Will definitely look into potential collaborations.

Shivani: One suggestion is using the CSIC, and their Community building module to introduce students to leadership positions, land acknowledgement, and values of UBC, academic integrity, and collaborating to work on anti-racism. There is a potential in hoping to develop an AMS module, and sections for students to learn how they can get involved, and leverage social media, which can be a better form of information.

## 2. AMS VP AUA

Georgia: We are advocating for more funding for an intake coordinator for the Centre for accessibility, because it's hard for students to register for support there. We are also hoping to get more exam invigilators with training in invigilating students with disabilities. The Rick Hansen institute of UBC, which is different from the foundation, has been reconstituted, and works on spinal cord injury. The institution has been turned to Praxis, which is a trust fund, with the hope of transferring the institute into an accessibility Centre. We are hoping to push for creating a more holistic view for the institute as a function of the Centre for accessibility. We are excited to work on them. We are also working on looking for funding on anti-racism initiatives, and are looking for projects as well.

Another collaboration is on the climate emergency task force and hub, with the response fund being the 1.5 million mentioned in council earlier, that will be going towards these initiatives. To push for more money to be contributed, some things need to be highlighted, such as the possibility of a Climate institute, and some other things to foreground. If it's a research institute, or campus operations, there may be an opportunity hire students, and keeping that up and running next year.

We have also communicated with the Equity and inclusion office regarding the BC budget, and have been looking for cool initiatives as well, especially training, such as anti-racism. Other conversations have been on gender diversity, and other areas, such as ways of making more culturally appropriate resources.

The Proctorio conversation continues to go on, even though there is a very low chance that it will be returning in term 2. We are scoping for the different things we want to look for in a Proctorio alternative, and are pushing the university to use ethical and noninvasive tools. Some packages and letters about that are here, however an obstacle

has been the fact our meeting with the UBC senate has been pushed to December. Hopefully will be able to present more packages and information. Digital teach-in against surveillance is mentioned by an acquaintance of the letter, who is the UBC employee that is being sued. We would like to spread information across various communities if anyone wants more info on these remote invigilation software, and Proctorio.

Other than that, we are working on some chart on an intro to UBC. We are excited to support student activists that want to raise their voices, and how to navigate UBC and levers of the administration. We are also working on other areas such as BOG submissions on areas such as food security, and submitting on housing, and tuition as well. The Housing piece is mainly about the stadium road neighborhood development project, and urging UBC to get the ball rolling on campus vision 2050. Mental health resources could be something to be added to next week's agenda

**AOB (10 minutes)****1. Feedback****2. Introduction to External Policy issues, Code (5 mins)**

- (Was not discussed due to meeting adjournment. Will be moved to next week)

**Next Meeting**

The next scheduled meeting is 27<sup>th</sup> November, 2020 on Zoom

**Adjourn**

1. Moved Jackson, Seconded \_\_\_\_\_ saad \_\_\_\_\_

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 6:07 pm

**Action Items:**

1. Just Recovery/Sustainability Symposium Feedback
2. AES Survey Draft Feedback