



THE ALMA MATER SOCIETY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Minutes of the AMS Advocacy Committee on the 27th November, 2020

[27th 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, Justin Zheng

Present: Georgia, Kalith, Laura, Joshua, Jackson, Mathew, Mahmoud, Saad, Morgan, Shivani, Justin

Regrets:

Recording Secretary: Joshua

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 5:06 pm

Land Acknowledgement

Approval of Agenda

BIRT the agenda of the AMS Advocacy Committee on the 27th November, 2020 be adopted as presented

Moved: Laura

Seconded: Kalith

Passed Unanimously

Approval of Minutes

BIRT the Minutes of the AMS Advocacy Committee on the 13th November, 2020 be adopted as presented

Moved: Joshua Seconded: Kalith

Passed Unanimously

Agenda Items

Chair Remarks

1. Introductions

a. Additional meeting before end of term to accommodate on final updates on provincial lobbying

Mathew: External portfolio still needs some time to provide updates on provincial lobbying so we will have our last advocomm meeting next Friday.

Georgia: Amendment to agenda? Budget consultation to next week's meeting. Motion to remove the budget consultation item to next week's agenda and then a motion to add the credit/D/fail and winter break extension to our today's agenda.

Motion to remove the budget consultation item to next week's agenda

Moved: Georgia Seconded: Jackson

Passed unanimously

Motion to add the Credit/D/Fail and winter break extension to today's agenda

Moved: Georgia Seconded: Jackson

Passed unanimously

b. (Suggested: BIRT the AMS Advocacy Committee meets on 4th December)

Discussion (50 mins, 10 mins each) [* Discussions with docket items]**1. External: UCRU Lobby Week 2 *****a. UCRU Policy Brief**

Kalith: Couple more meetings with MPs next week, but officially lobby week ended. Different representatives from UCRU split into smaller groups to have 30 min-1 hour discussions with MPs from all over the country. Saad will now provide his experience lobbying. Meetings held in Ottawa time. I was held with prez of USask Union and UOttawa Union and Western Uni Student Council. Some MPs from SK, ON, and BC and met with MPs from different parties. 4 main areas were discussed in the meetings: I focused on student financial support. Investment of 230 million dollars per year to implement a 2 year grace period on all federal student loans for new graduates. The average student accumulates \$28K in debt while pursuing an undergrad degree. Highlight financial stress. Very simple plain ask that made a lot of sense. Push the gov't to allow new graduates to settle down and accumulate some wealth and look to new investments to finally be ready to pay back the debts. Everything that we ask for, being an organization that is tailored for research-intensive unis, all our info is backed by stats. Helpful when advocating conservative MPs, we are not asking for free tuition or interest-free student loans, all we are asking for is a grace period for interest rates and give students time to pay the debts back. Invest \$1 bil to increase the 2019 Canada Student Grants by \$1200 dollars per student for the 2021 federal budget. Make sure we keep access to post-secondary as accessible as possible. Make #20 mil available to support Student Work Placement Program opportunities for both int'l and domestic students. MPs I spoke to did not resonate with this idea too much, most MPs I met were conservatives. We made our points, though, backed by stats. Autumn, USask prez, asked as an indigenous student to provide a stronger perspective. Prioritize international students (i missed it) Invest \$15 mil per year to expand the Undergrad Student Research Awards Program to 3.4K students annually in health, humanities, and social science research. Wanted to help our arts faculty regarding this research program. Prioritize projects that fulfill.... Expand funding for the Post-Secondary Student Support Program. Most MPs supported the student support program regarding student debts. Wished UCRU had a chance to advocate for mental health. Some MPs brought up mental health themselves and so UCRU discussed mental health advocacy strategies today. MPs agreed to send a letter regarding at least one of these asks (access for indigenous students, and support for student financial programs)... Minister for

Culture. We got support from conservative, liberal, and NDP MPs to write letters. A lot of MPs mentioned that letters don't do anything; they will talk to the Minister of Culture themselves. Lack of advocacy on mental health and climate change was brought up.

Saad: This week was absolutely a huge success for the AMS. AMS got to build relations with different MPs across Canada. Pragmatic asks to be continuously analyzed by federal MPs is our (UCRU) mission. A lot of meetings with conservative and liberal MPs, one meeting with an NDP MP. Conservative MPs surprisingly supported the support plans for int'l students. While these mental health asks are important on the federal level, it all trickles down to the provincial level. Climate change to be brought up on the provincial level as well.

Jackson: Sounds amazing and successful! For students coming out of UBC, a grad student-centric advocacy arm seems needed. Any thoughts on how we can address this?

Kalith: Fair question! Asked by other prominent grad students. First time in a very long time where the AMS and GSS have collaborated. Met with Alireza on provincial advocacy. On the federal level, we haven't collaborated much with the GSS, mostly through UCRU. I'm not sure if I should be mentioning this, but we have been supporting the GSS in creating a graduate arm of UCRU, GCRU. Doing our best to support the GSS, provided the model of UCRU to help them form the GCRU. Don't have any updates other than the fact that they're working on their bylaws.

Saad: Federal advocacy is an open ball field. 58K students is a really small fish in a big pond. It's a big win that we get to advocate with UCRU. That's why we are supporting the GSS in forming GCRU as it will be beneficial for them as well to have a federal advocacy group for grad students.

Jackson: Good to hear!

Laura: Are any politicians on any level perceptive to abolishing student debt?

Kalith: We haven't really gaged the interest from the politicians on this matter. Conservative MP on ask for a grace period for student loans: "Have you compared our great country to other countries that aren't doing so well? Germany or France?" I got heated up because he is wrong on this. Lack of awareness and care for post-secondary students on the federal level was a big takeaway from my experience. AMS can start working towards building that awareness for

politicians. It's definitely a good news that we have received positive receptions from a wide range of politicians.

Saad: We've met around 50 MPs.

2. External: Updates to Advocacy Strategy/ Provincial lobbying

Kalith: Post-election advocacy strategy: it's done pretty much waiting on the final recommendations from other student groups or things based on facts. Changes in the position of Minister of Education, etc. are the reason for the delays.

Saad: We just got our feedback from the indigenous committee with our indigenous asks. Create indigenous students support section. Budgetary allocations of \$150 mil(?) for the construction of homes for indigenous students and indigenous ppl at risk. 4 priorities: housing affordability and Covid-19, tuition (I've missed the rest) ... planning on hitting 50 MLAs (NDP and Green) It seems like the Mandate Letter looks great. Working with the GSS on this one. They're creating a section on BC grad scholarships (?)

Kalith: We will still be meeting up with some BC Liberal MLAs, but the main focus on BC NDP MLAs. We've run this by various student groups and the GSS will be attending all our meetings from now on, and meetings focused on specific asks will have the appropriate student group reps present at the meeting. Sneak peek of the document (our progress on the submission); credit to Saad for putting most of this together.

~~**3. AUA: UBC Budget Consultation**~~

4. AUA: Credit/D/Fail extension + Winter Break Extension

Georgia: Both of these are under the Senate's jurisdiction, not the AMS's jurisdiction. UBCO and other unis have put an extension on winter break to Jan. 11th. UBCV has yet to extend the winter break. Academic Policy Committee on Monday will be discussing this issue and the Senate will vote on this in December. (Presentation of Reddit Thread on this issue by the predecessor)

(https://www.reddit.com/r/UBC/comments/k1lm2p/ama_senate_winter_break_extension_proposals/) Julie addressed this in the reddit thread. Due to the number of accreditation days at UBC, it is difficult to change the length of breaks. Additional labour that may go into moving

around some other days; there may be some other sacrifices that may have to be made (i.e. having exams on Sundays, exam clashes, etc.) Should the AMS take a stance? Engg students may be more hesitant for an extension compared to other students who want an extension on the winter break (Mathew can you double-check this part? I may have heard her wrong regarding engg students) Should we instead redirect the feedbacks to student senators? How do we make ethical decisions based on limited consultations?

Mahmoud: They had a motion already about the Credit/D/Fail in the senate and it has been shot down already...

Georgia: One of the big concerns that we will try to separate. Due to senate bureaucracy, where a lack of preparatory materials for this discussion topic may have influenced the Senate's decision to shoot the motion down. Mental health issues, due to the pandemic, has affected students' academic performance and we have continuously witnessed requests for academic concessions get shot down. (I missed what she's said after this)

Mahmoud: Follow-up question: Will this affect the spring reading break?

Georgia: These are two separate issues.

Jackson: How exactly does the accreditation thing work and why is this a problem? and it is weird that we can't get exams done in a finite amount of time... in the US, we have finished final exams within 2 weeks.

Motion to exhaust the speaker's list with final additions

Moved: Georgia Seconded: Joshua

Passed unanimously

Motion to extend the meeting by 30 minutes

Moved: Kalith Seconded: Joshua

Passed unanimously

Georgia: With accreditation, various accreditation boards will assign a specific amount of education time for a degree. Professional degree issue (Mathew cover me for this)

Jackson and Georgia discussion on the accreditation time difference between UBC and OSU (Jackson's alma mater for his Bachelor's degree)

Georgia: I don't know why UBC can't adapt.

Laura: Did UBC do pass/credit/fail for spring? What is the difference now then, there are more COVID cases?

Georgia: They say that people know what they're getting into so there is no need for an extension. For UBC, for example, they've said we've made all these different adaptations so it's going to be different from the emergency triad(?) situation. One of the biggest points we're hoping to drive home is "Is gate-keeping credit/d/fail just ableist and further exacerbating the health care problems that some students might be going through?" (Mathew, please review this part)

Laura: they're confusing the part that students are capable of withstanding the pandemic with no problems.

Mahmoud: Speaking of COVID, are we ever going to have a testing centre on the UBC campus? The closest one is in downtown.

Georgia: This is one of the adhoc things that we are working on. We have talked to Santa about this a couple of times. UBC hospital has an urgent care centre and having a testing facility in the hospital might increase the risk of deaths for the urgent care centre.

Saad: We are currently in touch with the Coastal Health. It's being worked on, the response from them so far was a bit vague.

5. AUA: Tuition Consultation

Georgia: Current proposals are for 2% increase for undergrad domestic students, 3% for returning int'l students and 4% for new int'l students. Traditionally, tuition consultation occurs in the months of Oct/Nov. However, UBC has not brought the tuition consultation topic to the table till now. Tuition ask will be more solidified due to the delay, but UBC does not have a track record of showing what not having a tuition increase will look like. To best leverage the lack of funding from the province, we are able to redirect the funding that comes from tuition increase (18mil dollars) to immediate student needs. We can gain some information from you folks on

this issue and looking for a more cohort tuition model. It is possible the BoG shoots down the tuition increase proposal down. (Last Sept Tuition Consultation doc provided) What are the aspects that you want the tuition revenue to be redirected to? Cohort tuition “freeze” (fixed cohort tuition model) (Missed after this part)

6. AUA + External: Transparency Campaign

Saad: This was a joint initiative by the VPAUA team and the VPX team. Mahmoud brought this up. What we’ve come up with shown in the presentation. Stuff we’ve accomplished and stuff that we will be advocating for. For the VPX side of things: what we do and why students should care, what the contact info might be and what issues they might wanna discuss with us. Provincial election, skytrain to UBC, etc. Made it super concise and easy to read.

Kalith: shoutout to Erin. Wants to know if the slide contents look accessible for UBC students. What should be highlighted?

Georgia: Using some of that symbolism of building the bridge btwn uni and students. Key things to go over, what we’ve accomplished (i.e. COVID-related issues, proctorio, etc.) Things we will advocating for moving forward, issues that we are currently working on (i.e. future campaigns based on AES and COVID-19 survey)

Mahmoud: when designing these transparency plans, we need to be very considerate of the students. Need for conciseness; I want you guys to keep this in mind. Visual-friendly, interactive-infographics. There needs to be more engagement between the AMS and the students.

Motion to extend the meeting by 15 minutes

Moved: Joshua

Seconded: Mahmoud

Passed unanimously

7. Chair/Guests: External Policies Backgrounder*

- a. https://www.ams.ubc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/External-Policy-Manual_Aug-2018.pdf

b. Previous Email highlighting relevant section comments

Justin: Here to talk about the external policy manual. Will be sending the 10 recommendations for the external policy manual. Very long list of expired external policies. More so a collection of past external positions more than manual for policies. Up to advocomm to decide whether to accept these recommendations.

Kalith: What recommendations should we make, and should we wait for a policy advisor or not, since the manual was previously authored by a policy advisor when the policies made sense.

Justin: That is a good point, since we don't have a policy advisor since 2018. One other question I would put out is whether there is a need for the policy manual. Personally, I'm not a fan of it. Strategies change year over year, so having priorities like this one can be outdated very quickly. Therefore, it is not good practice from a governance standpoint. This is very tailored towards VPAUA and VP External. With advocacy priorities changing, it could be better addressed by executive' goals. However, since this is the first time for me to get a chance of hearing from other people. At the end of the day it is a advocacy committee document.

Saad: One other thing to point out is the ever changing nature of federal and provincial politics, as new policies are enacted after provincial elections, and advocacy priorities change.

Mahmoud: Need more time to look at that. Would really recommend having a policy advisor to look through this, and would be safe. Especially on policy E9 is not doing much favour for us on campus, as it expires on oct 25th 2020.

Justin: Agree. A lot of policies that sound nice but doesn't work. The policy itself hasn't expired. Issue with document. In favour of writing a set of positions that can guide VPAUA and external. Personally, this isn't something suitable for AMS right now. We would also need professionals such as Policy advisors.

(Kalith^ I do think a Policy Manual has its merits, especially considering that while advocacy is an ever-changing landscape, a LOT of what we work on are multi-year initiatives, and a document like this if done well and followed accordingly can be really valuable for continuity amongst executives - which is something the AMS needs to work on more.)

Laura: is there a more user friendly version? It is difficult reviewing the document

Justin: If you look at table of contents, p.1-43 are current policies and after p. 47 are expired. It's very not user friendly, I've tried converting to word document, but everything is out of order. I couldn't find a more accessible option, so what recommend is keeping this as a historical document and guide VPAUA and VP External execs overall, and write a new one to reflect today's landscape and priorities. It is better to start with a fresh slate.

Larua: I think there are also new stuff that would be important to look at, like the skateboard policy. It would be important to students, with UBC having barriers to accessibility.

Justin: I think it is also important, so feel free to take a look at it, or if you want to just review it, it is also an option. I'm here to support the committee any way I can, Another thing I recommend is to be rewrite the manual to include more practical policy, and not just motions that went to council and rewritten hastily, so there would be a need to rewrite that.

Georgia: It is important to have as it is a historical document to go back to. It is important that we're identifying the appropriate staff person, it would be good to have a working group to identify these are the different sections, if we can identify who can be the appropriate staff person to do this. It is essential we are able to embed the and be able to refer back to and refer back to advocacy and AMS Council which represents students across UBC Vancouver, students could give us more backing too.

Justin: Yes I would recommend that. Maybe we can have advocacy committee members team up in pairs, and come back later in the year with recommendations. Or you can make a working group made up of some committee members working on that.

Motion to establish a working group on the External Policy Manual

Moved: Georgia Seconded: Joshua

Passed unanimously

Mathew: Straw Poll for interested members in the committee: VPs, Laura, Jackson

Georgia: suggestion for support staff: Sheldon, Justin, AVPs

Justin: Terms of reference might be needed and maybe the committee should decide if someone would need to decide meetings and bring guests. This might consist of the committee, as assigned by council , and bring in guests who are outside of council as well.

Mahmoud: There would be a need to consult outside groups, especially on sexual assault policies, where we would reflect with SVPRO, and SASC, etc, since this is their expertise to revise policy. It especially matters that we do the consultation,

Kalith: A lot of time and effort will be needed in producing another document. In speaking about this, we may need another advisor in this capacity. The External portfolio is stretched as what we need to do is to talk about things such as Upass decisions, and our lobby week which is happening. Saad is passionate about his work, but would also be busy. If we would participate on this, we would need someone else from this team.

Motion to Adjourn

Moved: Mathew Seconded: Georgia

Passed unanimously

8. Policy I – 11 Review *

- a. https://www.ams.ubc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/I-11-Policy-Tuition-Consultation_August_30_2017.pdf

Moved to next meeting due to adjournment

Portfolio Updates (10 minutes, 5 mins per item)

1. AMS VP External

Moved to next week due to adjournment

2. AMS VP AUA

Moved to next week due to adjournment

AOB

Submissions:

From AUA: Board Submissions (Documents)

1. https://bog3.sites.olt.ubc.ca/files/2020/11/11_2020.11_Correspondence-from-AMS-re-Vancouver-Campus-Plan.pdf
2. https://bog3.sites.olt.ubc.ca/files/2020/11/10_2020.11_Submission-to-the-Board-of-Governors-Regarding-the-Report-on-Food-Insecurity-Update.pdf

Next Meeting

The next scheduled meeting is 4th December, 2020 on Zoom

Adjourn

1. Moved _____, Seconded _____

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at _____ pm

Action Items:

1. External Policy Manual reviews