



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

**AMS EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

Minutes of February 3, 2021

### **Attendance**

Present: Cole Evans (President), Georgia Yee (VP Academic & University Affairs), Lucia Liang (VP Finance), Sylvester Mensah Jr. (VP Administration, left 1:10), Kalith Nanayakkara (VP External), Ian Stone (Student Services Manager), Keith Hester (Managing Director), Lorris Leung (Senior Student Services Manager), Sheldon Goldfarb (Archivist & Clerk of Council)

Guests: Bahareh Jokar (Studentcare), Lilly Callender ((AMS Equity & Inclusion Associate)

Recording Secretary: Sheldon Goldfarb

### **Call to Order**

- The meeting was called to order at 12:07 pm and took place by videoconference.

### **Agenda**

- The agenda was adopted (Sylvester, Georgia).

### **Minutes**

- The minutes of January 27 and the revised minutes of January 20 were approved (Lucia, Sylvester).

### **Black History Month**

- Lilly:
  - The Black Student Union is doing meaningful events.
  - With COVID, it makes more sense for us to support those rather than do our own.
  - We are seeking to put stories on the website about Black student leaders and Black student businesses.
  - Will put material in the newsletter and also planning an Educate and Activate workshop.

### **Intersectionality Workshops**

- Lilly:
  - Adeline, our equity consultant, does workshops.
  - We could do some during Reading Week.
  - Not sure what people think about making them mandatory.

- It would be great to have a professional facilitator like Adeline do them for us.
- Sylvester:
  - Would these be for AMS Executives, staff, the student body?
- Lilly:
  - Specifically for Executives, but it would be great if student staff could attend.
- Georgia:
  - There are three audiences:
    - Executives and their staff.
    - Internal staff generally.
    - Council members.
- Lilly:
  - Adeline can only do a certain number of people.
  - The main focus would be on student staff.
- Sylvester:
  - We should encourage all staff to attend.
  - Permanent staff too: look at the audience we got for the AMS staff meetings.
- Lilly:
  - Adeline said she can do two workshops.
  - Can extend to others, but a limit to the number in a workshop.
- Keith:
  - Can you share the points she will go over?
  - In a document to go out to those who can't attend?
- Lilly:
  - Can send out a pdf, but the workshops are interactive; it's not as effective just sending a document.
- Cole:
  - Interesting to talk about longer-range plans.
  - It's the end of the year now, but we could look to annual training for each year's new Council, new Executive.
  - As to permanent staff, do you want to focus on the management level? We have lots of staff.

## Legal Service

- Bahareh:
  - Talk of doing a survey.
  - Legwork done at the Health & Dental Committee; the GSS has provided feedback.
  - Does the AMS feel comfortable conducting the survey? Or you could have the GSS or Studentcare do it.
  - Studentcare would target 5-7,000 students rather than the full population.
  - Results would then get presented to the committee.

- Lucia:
  - Lots of surveys happening now.
  - Don't want to bombard students.
  - Maybe a more targeted one like past Studentcare ones rather than a blast to the whole student body.
  - Last time we did a survey sent to the whole student body it led to anxiety about fee increases. People wondered what was happening.
  - A more targeted one would be more controlled.
  - It would be nice to get it out this year.
- Ian:
  - How is this different from UBC's Student Assistance Program (SAP)?
- Bahareh:
  - This would be different.
  - It would give students support and legal representation over housing, academics, employment. There would also be a legal hotline.
  - If we find an appetite in the survey, we will look at options.
  - This is just taking the temperature.
- Lucia:
  - If there is interest, we'd do an RFP.
  - The legal service would not come under the Health & Dental Plan Committee.
  - It would be of a different nature, with a different fee from the Health & Dental Plan.
  - At this stage we want to gather information.
- Bahareh:
  - There's been some revision to the question we originally provided.
  - Originally we said this would be for unlimited legal support.
  - Now it says unlimited or limited; can't really be both, so I'd recommend saying one or the other.
  - If you want to add demographic questions, that would be fine.
  - Essentially we're asking: Do you have need? What are you open to?
- Cole:
  - Could potentially turn this into an expanded survey of the Health & Dental Plan.
  - I'm hesitant to launch a survey specific to a proposed service, especially if it's including a fee increase.
  - If we're not careful, it will look like we're barreling towards a new \$30 fee, which might not be a good idea, especially now.
  - I'd like to keep it as high level as possible because I don't think we're close to implementing anything.
  - I don't think the survey will tell us anything: everyone will say it's important to have good access to lawyers.
  - It might seem set up to validate the need for a service, as if designed to get a certain response.

- Could put it at end of another survey and say we're looking into a legal service: would you pay \$30 for it?
- Bahareh:
  - Open to feedback on questions.
  - I encourage you to do your own research: our suggestion is \$29.50 with an option to opt out.
  - We want to see if students are interested before going to referendum.
  - It's possible to tag it on to a Health & Dental survey, but the Health & Dental Committee was reluctant: it's a different service.
- Cole:
  - My concern climate-wise is with cost-benefit. Will students think paying an extra \$30 is worth it?
  - As to making it opt-outable, lots of students don't bother to opt out.
  - I'm worried it will be viewed poorly to have the AMS doing consultation over a relatively expensive fee.
  - It may seem tone deaf.
  - Affordability is an issue now; we're against raising tuition, but we're going to present a new fee?
  - Contradictory messages.
- Bahareh:
  - We're reviewing this on a national level.
  - We understand the impact of COVID-19.
  - Would it be helpful if the survey said: This is a preliminary temperature check.
  - Would ultimately have to go to referendum.
  - Is there ever a good time to introduce a new service with a cost?
  - There are so many instances of students being affected: the academic misconduct issues in that one class; rental issues; employment hours being cut.
  - That's where we see the connection to COVID.
  - How can we make it more palatable?
- Cole:
  - Maybe it would make sense to do something less broad than a survey.
  - A focus group, looking for anecdotal feedback. A couple of hundred people.
  - We did something similar for the proposal of a cannabis dispensary. A focus group of 50 people.
  - Start with a small group, then ramp up.
- Bahareh:
  - We have a similar approach: we choose a small pool, but large enough for statistical relevance.
  - The problem with anecdotal data is whether it's representative.
  - But I defer to the Executive Committee.
  - Can go back to the Studentcare communications team to ask them about focus groups.

- Or perhaps a smaller survey? 2,000 instead of 5,000?
  - At first we wanted something larger, but I can understand the effect.
- Sylvester:
  - I agree with the focus group approach, a discussion setting.
- Bahareh:
  - No one in BC is doing anything similar to this proposed service.
  - This would be changing the narrative about support in legal matters, legal representation.
  - Georgia asked about the Student Legal Fund Society.
    - I think the nature of their work is a little bit different.
    - Potentially combining with that fund could be useful, but the work is different.
  - I'm assuming you're not proceeding with the proposed survey. I can discuss this further with Lucia offline.
- Cole:
  - If we're talking about a separate service, the Executive should discuss further.

## UCRU

- Kalith:
  - The Bylaws have been finalized.
  - Now is our chance to give feedback.
  - I think they're fine, but this is your chance.
  - There's also an agreement on joining UCRU, with easy out provisions.
  - The system will be one-school, one-vote.
    - All the schools are in the U-15, so they're similar in size and nature.
  - No fee for this year.
  - Will we have to go to referendum?
- Sheldon:
  - Unless you want to create a new fee for our members to pay, no referendum is required.
  - Code allows Council to decide on joining organizations: it's a regular resolution (simple majority) if no charge is involved.
    - If we have to pay, then a two-thirds resolution is required.
- Kalith:
  - Should this go to the Governance Committee?
- Cole:
  - The Governance Committee is just internal.
  - But a committee should look this over: the Executive probably.
- Kalith:
  - Would like to go to the next Council meeting.

- Cole:
  - What are the expectations of us as a member?
  - If UCRU is in legal trouble, is there any liability for us?
- Kalith:
  - No, liability is with UCRU: it's incorporated now.
- Keith:
  - There will be an annual audit, which will have to be paid for.
  - If there's no funding, how will that expense be paid?
- Kalith:
  - We all pooled \$10,000 to create a legal fund to pay the lawyers.
  - Usually the chair covers costs.
  - This year that's been Western.
  - Before that it was us, and before that, Manitoba.
- Cole:
  - We want no exposure to risk or liability.
- Kalith:
  - We could send this to our lawyers.
  - But it's been vetted by Western's lawyers; it might be redundant.
- Keith:
  - Could you provide us with the legal opinion from the Western lawyers?
- Kalith:
  - The bylaws were drawn up by the lawyers.
  - Their opinions are in the bylaws.
  - There was no separate legal opinion.
- Cole:
  - Timeline?
- Kalith:
  - I would like to give this to Council and get their feedback next week.
  - Then the Executive Committee can bring it back to Council for approval later.
  - We have a guest from UCRU attending the next Council meeting.

### **Childcare Bursary**

- Lucia:
  - The lawyers said we can't use the current childcare bursary fund for the Food Bank project (for food, diapers, etc. for parents).
  - Right now we're just collecting the childcare fee and not planning to use it.
  - Childcare needs on campus have changed.
  - We helped the University finance childcare and contributed to the program in the Nest.

- Now the government is providing money for childcare, so our money could better be used for other expenses, but we're not allowed to do that under the terms of the old referendum.
- It would be good to run a new referendum to expand the wording of the fund.
- Do people want to have a referendum on this issue this year?
- Cole:
  - I don't think there's an appetite for that this year, especially since we're close to the deadline for calling a referendum.
  - But definitely in the future.
  - Are there ways we can use the money for traditional childcare? Can we contact the GSS?
- Lucia:
  - The GSS is aware of this funding, but setting up a new bursary is difficult.
  - We always funnelled our bursaries through the University instead of evaluating individuals' needs ourselves.
  - There needs to be a plan.
  - It doesn't make sense to charge a fee that there's no use for.

[Sylvester leaves.]

- Keith:
  - There's \$300,000 in the fund now.
- Lucia:
  - Do we want to assess the fee next year?
  - If there's no need, I'll cut it out.
- Georgia:
  - Students are not aware of this bursary.
- Lucia:
  - There was never a fund set up for students to apply to.
  - We would need to create a service: who's going to deliver the service?
- Cole:
  - I think this year we're too late. Have to wait till a later time.
  - We still want to keep the fee, but broaden it out.
- Ian:
  - Couldn't we run a referendum even if we don't have a referendum coordinator?
- Cole:
  - I'm not worried about that; it's more that there's no time to develop the vision for this fee.
  - There's just five days till the Council meeting.
- Ian:
  - It's just a small tweak in wording.

- Lucia:
  - There's a clear vision: supporting the Food Hub, which is in need of support.
  - This would be for that purpose.
  - We just have to specify what childcare is.
- Cole:
  - If you want to take it to the Finance Committee, you can do that.
  - It's just that at the last Council meeting we had a discussion and the decision was not to pursue a referendum.
  - This will seem rushed.
- Lucia:
  - We've been discussing this since October.
  - Not publicly, but internally.
- Cole:
  - If you want to bring it, the Finance Committee can bring it.
  - Might be a tough sell.
  - And what's the plan for passing the referendum?
  - It may be difficult to hit quorum.
  - It can be added to the ballot, but I'm skeptical about it passing.
- Ian:
  - I'm keen to get this passed. I don't think it's a hard sell.
  - If we don't meet quorum, such is life.
  - I don't think it hurts to try. It's for a good cause.
- Cole:
  - Go for it.
  - But I don't want it dished off to someone to coordinate the campaign.
  - And you'll need to consult Governance Committee about adjusting Code.
- Ian:
  - Happy to consult with whoever it's necessary to consult.
- Cole:
  - Will have to explain what the fee's been used for up to now.
  - Council will ask.
  - Challenging to do that in this timeframe.

**New Senior Manager of Student Services**

- Keith welcomed Lorris Leung.

**Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 1:27 pm.