



# THE ALMA MATER SOCIETY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Minutes of the AMS Advocacy Committee on the 8<sup>th</sup> February, 2021

[8<sup>th</sup> February, 2021] [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 Shoaib

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

Regrets:

Recording Secretary: Mathew, Joshua

## **Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 5:09 pm

## **Land Acknowledgement**

## **Approval of Agenda**

**BIRT the agenda of the AMS Advocacy Committee on the 8<sup>th</sup> February, 2021 be adopted as presented**

**Moved: Joshua**

**Seconded: Mahmoud**

## **Approval of Minutes**

**BIRT the Minutes of the AMS Advocacy Committee on the 25th January, 2021 be adopted as presented**

**Moved: Joshua**

**Seconded: Kalith**

**Agenda Items**

**Chair Remarks**

**Discussion (30 mins, 10 mins each)**

- 1. AUA: Hybrid / Online Learning Updates as requested by Laura**
  - a. We've been pushing for budget allocations of over \$500,000 in our budget presentation, which is in line with numbers from our previous asks for lecture recording requests, AV upgrades, and ensuring classrooms are outfitted with new learning technologies. One has been in place in Allard, but hopefully there will be additional funding for more.**
  - b. Hybrid teaching and learning grants have been made to test out some pilot programmes, in response to growing interest from faculties to approach hybrid teaching and learning, which will fund up to 5 proposals for \$18,000 per proposal. I can also provide more details on that, but currently that's something in the works in terms of hybrid learning. CTLT has worked on a paper around hybrid learning and how it is currently practiced in UBC and how it can be further implemented at UBC. This was not attached to docket but I've included it in the meeting for reference. UBC is shifting to continuing adult education, for a lot of students who are not just traditional undergraduates, or young adults, but those who have not necessarily completely finished high school etc, (an aspect where some aspects of programs for continuing education have already been used for hybrid learning at UBC). I'd also love to hear more on the future of UBC education, especially online learning and hybrid education, especially how it has improved access for a lot of**

students, which will be useful when we provide feedback on some of these proposals.

- i. **Laura:** I was thinking of the lack of rural indigenous students who are unable to attend classes at UBC, due to being unable to do so, or due to not wanting to leave their community. Being online through hybrid learning is way more accessible for folks like that who need to be at home.
- ii. **Georgia:** That's a good consideration to make which we will do so when we provide feedback on that. Indigenous students living in their communities. We will take note of that.
- iii. **Laura:** For rural communities, maybe providing subsidies for aspects such as internet bills in rural areas can be done.
- iv. **Georgia:** I think UBC is currently providing data cards but a temperature check is good, and I am unsure for how long that will be happening. We can also help to create landing pages for the technology bursary but that is currently very obscure.
- v. **Laura:** If support is just on Data cards and classes are held on zoom it could be a hindrance as zoom takes on a lot of data.
- vi. **Mathew:** What kind of hardware related support is being made? Especially for students in these circumstances?
- vii. **Georgia:** I've heard things about the Vancouver technology bursary, which provides one time funding, which depends on extent of their needs. Despite it being one time, you can use it to get a phone or computer, and I'm pretty sure it should cover a laptop for instance.

- viii. **Laura: I've heard the bursary only gave 100 bucks for laptops.**
- ix. **Georgia: Interesting. Maybe we should advocate more for the expansion of the technology bursary as well. I agree that this conversation is helpful, especially if they're only giving \$100 to students. It is clear people have more tech needs than what they're getting**
- x. **UBC might be keeping it obscure because they want to still sit on a pot of money Links:**
- xi. **(Related sources, on chat)**
  - 1. <https://www.reusetechbc.ca/>
  - 2. <https://www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/cfs-ope.nsf/eng/home>
  - 3. <https://it.ubc.ca/students/student-discounts-remote-learning>
  - 4. <https://students.ubc.ca/enrolment/finances/awards-scholarships-bursaries/ubc-vancouver-technology-bursary>
- xii. **Georgia: if Ubc is raising tuition even with COVID, we should try to push for more of these bursaries and grants in order to support tech bursaries and put money back in students' hands.**
- xiii. **Jackson: I am unsure if this is super relevant, but if we're talking about tech support. One thing Nicholas at GSS is working towards is providing technology for grad students with disabilities who would then be able to access tech. Have you talked to him about it?**
- xiv. **Georgia: No, I haven't talked with him yet. I have been talking with Janet for accessibility funding though, which**

is directly for funding to students with accessibilities. I'm pretty sure it's for students through the Centre for Accessibility, when they have medical documentation, but I will try and follow up on that.

- xv. Jackson: He's partnered with the non profit that helps build customizable devices for ppl with disabilities to access tech for their needs. In that program you don't need to give info the GSS, We could help connect you with this. Currently, we have low participation, so I think it is worth connecting with him, because I think we're only advertising to grad students only as well.
- xvi. Georgia: I will definitely connect to Nicholas about that. A lot of discussion about accessibility with a lot of different groups that are disability advocates is about how in a lot of courses, faculty would need to put in extra work. However, now with these assisted technologies for the students and faculty members, this is something we can look for.
- xvii. Jackson: One more thought. I think if we expand hybrid learning, it is likely that there will be increased demand on Tas, and therefore there should be increased funding for TAs, funding which should be accessible. There is still funding available for increased TAs, but a lot of administrative and bureaucratic barriers are still here preventing departments from getting funding, so easily accessible TA money is needed. The TA union and GSS is also on the radar.
- xviii. Georgia: I've been meaning to connect with CUPE 278 on increased TA funding as a result of increased contact hours. The funding is inaccessible for students, and everyone is overextended as well. It is also something that

we can include in some of the feedback we are giving to the hybrid learning grant in terms of faculty funding.

- xix. Laura: Thanks for bringing that up. In a lot of online classes, teachers have had to overextend because they feel they have to make more interactive resources. Profs should be better supported by UBC in this endeavor.
- xx. Georgia: can you elaborate on bureaucratic hurdles?
- xxi. Jackson: From what I heard, while we were talking about this in GSS version of academic committee, Jeanie mentioned that one issue of when you go to departments on Tas, there was a lot of can ringing. The money that is needed to pay administrators to do paperwork to get TAs money isn't worth the actual TA money currently.
- xxii. Georgia: I will follow up with Jeanie on it. This ties with Faculty budgets. While the central budget is transparent, when money dissipates to faculty pools at dean level, they are not as open, and that is something I want to inquire more about. In particular, how do you support faculty members, and how do you support TAs. I know that in the BOG Mark Mclean is digging into this as well. This is something we can also pivot into the Fall 2021 Academic delivery consultation.

- 2. AUA: Fall 2021 Consultation - Student Learning Space Priorities / Requirements + Other Concerns (reading attached - confidential)
  - a. The document gives guiding principles on prioritizing classes. What will be in person and what will be online. We are projecting that in Fall 2021 that 18% of student body will be on the ground learning, mainly prioritizing upper year students with lab courses conducted in person. There will be a whole bunch of guiding principles. One of big questions prompted right now is

how, and what, are student priorities on space? Safety, above all else is a given.

- b. Laura: we can't force people to get the vaccine, but I would feel more comfortable if that is done so when getting more people back in. I've seen partying on campus and I don't feel comfortable about that happening.
- c. Georgia: Maybe you can talk with the external team on what the vaccination rate that would be needed to allow fully in person classes is.
- d. Saad: It would be based on the provincial government's health guideline that would be implemented to all institutions on whether it would be safe for us to all get back to institutions. It refers to herd immunity but we don't know when's that going to happen, and getting info on vaccination rates for UBC doesn't necessarily help.
- e. Georgia: looking at the UC system, where they need states to be at a certain rate to allow for in person classes, maybe that can be something similar which we can see what we can do. Maybe we can talk with ministry of advanced education and other parts in provincial government
- f. (Laura: text: <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/covid-19-vaccine/bcs-plan-for-vaccine-distribution>)
- g. Laura: hand sanitizers are also needed. They are always empty. Opening up huge theatre rooms could be claustrophobic, as more people would gather which would create more risk.
- h. Jackson: I think there should be smaller classes from a public health perspective, and that should happen first before 500+ person chemistry classes. Otherwise I don't think the reopening is feasible

- i. Georgia: I think this is great feedback, I would compile this in a document and present it to the Associate Deans Academic, and note that these is some feedback. Maybe we can also start a twitter or reddit thread.**
- j. Mathew: Pointing out how there have been UBC Confessions / Reddit threads on people being unable to study at home.**
- k. Georgia: I agree, and there are issues in 1<sup>st</sup> year residences of people not acting responsibly, and we would need to push for rapid testing across UBC Residences to make sure the system is well supported. Looking at the conditions RAs are in, where they are in unsafe conditions due to breakout parties and other events, and discussions we have had with campus security and the RCMP in the past about what the best ways of doing harm reduction and techniques are around de-escalating some of these situations where there is consideration given to impacts of CODI on mental health, which has been why people are acting out. One other big focus is PR campaigns on a standpoint, on people socializing with other, where you don't invite friend of friend of friend when at wreck beach from outside the core group, on testing frequently and having like a safety checklist and a plan in advance, which would be a harm reduction focus. Some people are also saying people should stop doing this. Having taken note of some of those concerns one big thing I find concerning provincially is the lack of case data on campus, as people are not aware of how much COVID cases have started on campus which, for UBC, has prompted rapid testing to be started but this has not been done until very recently. Hopefully there will be more expansion.**
- l. Laura: (Text: Thanks for the rapid testing in residence, but why aren't you enforcing provincial health orders?)**



- m. Mahmoud: On the topic on class sizes and COVID, I want to bring up a side issue which has been brought up by many for many years, recorded lectures. Even when we go back to class, recorded lectures should be a permanent thing, because it is an accessibility issue and some people prefer having classes online and have been doing better there, whereas other people prefer to be in person, which is something we should talk about when talking about class sizes and accessibility. As VPAUA, are you planning to champion this given that many people have wanted this even before COVID, and now COVID has provided the opportunity to do so?
- n. Georgia: Yes this is an accessibility and equity need. I have heard from the provost office that have heard from students who prefer to go back and review their lectures. Something I ran on and noted in elections, was that there are a number of post-secondary institutions investing in recordings, using the hi-flex model (high flexibility). This is also something we're pushing in the hybrid teaching grant, if professors want to invest in lecture recording in their dept of faculty, that would be something we would try to prioritize. Accessibility should be one of the core tenets of the teaching grants. They've also started a program which is mobile recording carts where you can also bring that into the classroom and record your lectures from there. Notably before the pandemic there was a lot of opposition from faculty members mainly about intellectual property, privacy, and academic freedom, along with the duplication of labour, as they don't want to add more work on their plate, teaching both online work and in person courses as well. So that's something we have evaluated, and is something we want to lead the charge on. More TAs and more investment are certainly needed.

### 3. Old business: External Policies Manual Follow Up

- a. **Kalith: after speaking with Justin, there's nothing to talk about. We will be going to endless loops, so the first task is to find a policy advisor, and HR committee cannot handle this, so we need to talk with the union. For now, I don't think it makes sense for us to move it forward yet. One more thing, we should keep an eye on time out of respect for everyone.**
- b. **Item is postponed indefinitely**

### **Portfolio Updates (20 minutes, 10 mins per item)**

#### **1. AMS VP External**

- a. **Kalith: We will be meeting with minister Anne Kang, which unlike previous meetings, this will be informal. We will congratulate, and hopefully build a strong relationship between AMS and them. There are a few priorities, with tuition fees being one, with the consultation which is not a consultation currently happening, and seeing how government operational funding can trickle down to students. We are looking at operational funding and the trends of previous years, where it was 80% in 1970s and 36 % nowadays.**
- b. **Kalith: For UPass we will look at exemptions and subsidies, particularly for people for people whose immune systems are compromised.**
- c. **Kalith: We will work with Georgia to make statement on Hong Kong tomorrow. The UCRU board has passed a motion on the topic, where the U15 is supporting McMaster, and the University of Toronto to take measures**
- d. **Kalith: As for the Skytrain, there will be the making of a social media campaign on Skytrain to UBC so we 're building up public Relations and social pressure. It will provide more economic stimulus to create more jobs in the region, make education more**

accessible for those who are far away, such as Surrey, as UBC will be more easily reached.

- e. Kalith: Equity based grants: we have been talking with classes working on this issue, on future advocacy efforts, whether it is barriers to post-secondary education or research.
- f. Saad: That's basically it
- g. Kalith: we will stop by GSS council on lobby week. It has been a great year collaborating with GSS this year. UCRU bylaws have been sent to councilors and the UCRU chair will be attending council to answer questions. This will be reviewed by Sheldon, Keith and the execs. UCRU will run on a 1 school 1 vote system , and very it will be easy to leave the organization, requiring only the giving of a 30 day notice. For this package, there have been lessons from previous organizations like CASA. All schools are interested on the issues, especially since Kalith is chair of the governance committee and Saad is active in UCRU.

## 2. AMS VP AUA

- a. Georgia: Georgia has been appointed to provosts and VP Academic extension committee for Andrew Szeri, who is the current provost and VP academic, and if you have any community feedback on how the provosts office has been handling things and how he has handled things, I would like to hear from you as well. BOG meeting happened last week, with some awesome things that came to board, such as the climate emergency report which was worked hard on. There was also the Indigenous engagement group on all aspects making sure there is more work integrated to processes and not just being tacked on. We also sent submissions asking that the board support the recommendations which are quite actionable on how UBC should respond to the climate emergency so the report

should be found in the climate emergency engagement website. I will link it there, so there is no need to read through it, but if you are interested it would be interesting to see UBC handling these processes, and hopefully UBC will be following up on their promises.

- b. Georgia: (Text: [http://bm-climate-emergency-2020.sites.olt.ubc.ca/files/2021/02/4\\_2021.02\\_Climate-Emergency-Engagement.pdf](http://bm-climate-emergency-2020.sites.olt.ubc.ca/files/2021/02/4_2021.02_Climate-Emergency-Engagement.pdf) )
- c. Georgia: Budget submission: Regarding the budget submission in finance committee, student financial aid is another area we want a focus on, along with supporting enrolment services. Other than that, we will be rolling out more materials on things such as making budget more transparent as well, and encoding some of these priorities we have discussed in the budget report. There has been a lot of interesting stuff especially from the board regarding the enrolment report, and UBC has also overenrolled this year. They were expecting under enrollment and it might be something they want to keep an eye on. They're continuing to raise tuition, while space is an issue on UBC campus. Meanwhile, the lack of faculty resources available to support faculty members to deal with overenrollment is also a concern as well. So this is something we need to continue investigating.
- d. Georgia: Another thing we have worked on is Cross campus engagement on sexual assault awareness and response. If you have time don't forget to stop by the event 'educate and activate', that aims to improve access to education on sexual assault awareness. Feel free to stop by and support the workshop and if you attend you have the chance to win 1 of 25 dollar cards for BIPOC owned businesses.

- e. **Laura (over-enrollment also says to me that online is more accessible)**

**AOB**

**Submissions:**

**Next Meeting**

The next scheduled meeting is 22<sup>nd</sup> February on Zoom

**Adjourn**

- 1. Moved \_\_\_\_\_ Joshua \_\_\_\_\_, Seconded \_\_\_\_\_ laura \_\_\_\_\_

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 6:06 pm

**Action Items:**

- 1. External Policy Manual reviews