STUDENT COUNCIL MINUTES

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Guests: Ubussey News, Ben Du (AMS Operations Committee), Keith Hester (Managing Director), Sheldon Goldfarb (Clerk of Council), Joanne Pickford (Admin Assistant)

A) Call to order:

The meeting was called to order at 6:07 pm with Cole Evans in the chair.

B) Territorial Acknowledgement:

The Chair:

- We are on the traditional, ancestral, unceded territory of the hən̓q̓əmin̓əm- speaking Musqueam people.
- It’s important we acknowledge the lands we’re on and the role we can play as student leaders in meaningful consultation on reconciliation.
- Learning took place here long before any of us or our ancestors arrived here.

C) Adoption of the agenda:

1. MOVED SEBASTIAN COOPER, SECONDED KATHERINE FENG:

“That the agenda be adopted as presented.”

... No objections

D) Speaker’s Business (5 minutes):

The Chair:

- Fill out the Councillor of the Year survey if you haven’t yet:
  - We have 25 responses so far.
- Overwhelmingly, people prefer the 28th for the next regular meeting.
- That will be this Council’s last meeting: if you have anything for the agenda, let us know. It’s going to be a packed agenda.

E) Discussion Period

Ethics & Accountability Report re the VP External [SCD471-21], [SCD472-21]

Katherine Feng:

- The committee looked into the conflict of interest issue concerning the VP External.
- We determined that he was in an apparent conflict but not a real conflict of interest.
- Our recommendations are as follows:
  - The VP External should issue an apology.
  - Council should examine:
How to ensure that incoming Directors, including Executives, are provided with sufficient information about their obligations regarding conflicts of interest.

- Whether to establish a system whereby incoming Directors, including Executives, publicly declare any conflicts of interest.
- Whether the AMS has sufficient internal procedures (such as conflict of interest screens) to ensure that Directors, including Executives, are able to avoid conflicts of interest.
- Whether a member of AMS staff should be designated with responsibility for being a point of contact on issues regarding conflicts of interest.

- The VP External was co-operative throughout the process.
- We don’t think it’s necessary to pass a motion asking him to apologize.

Kalith Nanayakkara:
- I want to thank the committee for taking the time to carry our such a comprehensive investigation.
- I fully accept the findings and recommendations.
- I hope Council is aware that I’ve long regretted my actions.
- I have apologized. I will apologize again. I apologize here.
- This has been a learning experience. I’ve learned a lot, especially about due diligence.
- I truly am sorry, and I appreciate your support.

Katherine Feng:
- Since the VP External has been cooperative and has made an apology, I don’t think a motion is needed asking him to apologize.
- As to the other recommendations, I think it would be a good idea to refer them to Governance Committee.

2. MOVED KATHERINE FENG, SECONDED SEBASTIAN COOPER:

“That the agenda be amended to add a motion to refer the Council recommendations to the Governance Committee.”

... No objections

3. MOVED KATHERINE FENG, SECONDED SEBASTIAN COOPER:

“That the Council recommendations in the report be referred to the Governance Committee.”

Katherine Feng:
- On the first recommendation, we need to ensure that we’re providing sufficient information and resources for Directors.
  - The VP External mostly received informal warnings in passing.
  - Better information is needed to prevent this problem in the future.
- Public declarations of conflict of interest may be a way to deal with the situation.
- We need internal procedures.
• For the staff member designated to look into this, student staff and Directors turn over; perhaps it could be a member of the permanent staff who could be turned to for advice.

4. MOVED KATHERINE FENG, SECONDED SEBASTIAN COOPER:

“That the Council recommendations in the report be referred to the Governance Committee.”

... Carried


Further Discussion
Nevena Rebic:
• I am concerned about the last line of the report, which states that AMS members, that is, ordinary students, should engage with the AMS in a more “collaborative and collegial manner.”
• This puts responsibility on the students.
• I would like to remove any suggestion of that.
• It would send a better message.

Sebastian Cooper:
• It’s not that AMS members are being asked to take action.
• It’s just that we wanted emphasis on a collaborative approach rather than an aggressive approach.
• Being respectful goes both ways.
• I have seen some of the comments online and they were not respectful.

Nevena Rebic:
• We need to consider the dynamics of power in this scenario.
• It’s the Society – the Executives and Councillors – with power.
• It’s up to them to create trust.
• It’s like the relationship with minorities in the medical system; the onus should never be on those who mistrust the system.
• The responsibility is on the system to explore the history of mistrust.
• It’s not the responsibility of those on the lower end of the power scale to create trust.
• It’s on those who hold these positions in the Society.
• It’s our responsibility to go above and beyond in dealing with those who treat us with mistrust.
Sebastian Cooper:
- I think Reddit members have power over public perceptions.
- Their posts remain online and can affect individuals’ futures.

Cole Evans:
- There were comments saying Kalith was corrupt.
- There has been an increase in hate online.
- Someone said I have a punchable face.
- I think the responsibility lies with the AMS to mend this by communicating more and being more transparent so people don’t come up with crazy theories.
- But the onus is on everyone to be respectful.
- It’s okay to disagree with your representatives and to question them, but it’s not okay to make personal attacks and erroneous assumptions.
- These things have an impact on the well-being of people in leadership positions.
- And this is in the context of us wanting to get more people to run for such positions.
- If they see that leaders get slandered on Reddit and UBC Confessions, they may think, I don’t want to do it (run for office).
- Maybe there’s a way to balance the two.

Nevena Rebic:
- Thanks for the context.
- We do need something about harassment.
- Social media is our cultural context, and maybe we need to talk more about that rather than about what AMS members should or shouldn’t do.
- This is a report on the ethics of an Executive; it doesn’t seem the place for a statement about what AMS members should do.
- We need a conversation about transparency and accountability.

Cole Evans:
- Maybe we should be aiming at quelling tensions: is that the approach?
- Maybe Council should look at making a statement beyond this report, addressing the general increase of rhetoric.
- These comments affect our reputation.
- A survey two years ago showed that people get more of their information about the AMS from Reddit than from the Ubyssey.
- It’s a risk to have misinformation being circulated.
- Councillors may wish to look into this further.

Mathew Ho:
- This seems like we’re trying to control people.
- We need to figure out how to engage students.

Nevena Rebic:
- Maybe we can find a way to find the roots of mistrust.
There’s no way I want to condone online hate, but some comments are more nuanced.
We need to think about how we as a Society engage in online space.
The Equity Plan may help.
There’s a lot more to talk about, to discuss with the Communications team.
We’re in a new era.
Public reputation does depend on what’s being said online.

Cole Evans:
- Good point about the Equity Plan.
- Going to present on it next Council.
- We did a Town Hall on it last week, and one of the big things, one really big barrier, is a communications piece: people don’t feel they’re being kept up to date.
- Should we be doing more Town Halls?
- We got good feedback from our online AGM: it was a fun way to engage our students.
- What are we doing to be not just the student leaders on the top floor of the Nest without connecting to our members?
- Probably good to create some actionables.
- We could vote to accept the report and make changes to it.
- Or we could work on a community statement.

5. MOVED SEBASTIAN COOPER, SECONDED MATHEW HO:

“That Council accept the report of the Ethics and Accountability Committee on the VP External’s apparent conflict of interest.”

… No objections

Katherine Feng:
- I think it would be useful to give the VP External a date to have an apology done by.

Cole Evans:
- The committee could do that.

Katherine Feng:
- I suggest by next Council, April 28.

*There was consensus on this.*

F) Next Meeting:
Next Meeting: April 28, 2021

G) Adjournment:
There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 6:54 pm.

H) Social Activity:
## Council April 14, 2021
### Votes & Attendance

<table>
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<th>Name</th>
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<th>Attendance</th>
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