



Minutes of the AMS Advisory Board

July 19th, 2021

Attendance

Present: Lauren Benson (AMS VP Administration), Eshana Bhangu (AMS VP Academic and University Affairs), Cole Evans (AMS President), Mary Gan (AMS VP Finance), Keith Hester (AMS Managing Director), Jerry Jim (Professional), Mitchell Prost (AMS Student Services Manager), Louis Retief (Professional), Alessia Rodriguez (Student), Ron Gorodetsky (Professional), Saad Shoaib (AMS VP External), Samantha So (Professional)

Regrets: Dana Turdy (AMS Strategy and Governance Lead)

Recording Secretary: Emily Covell (Executive Assistant to the AMS President)

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:07pm.

2. Territorial Acknowledgement

3. Approval of Previous Minutes

Moved: Cole

Seconded: Lauren

“BE IT RESOLVED THAT the minutes from the June 24th meeting be approved and sent to AMS Council”

4. Additional Executive Goal Feedback

Alessia: If all of the executives could look at my notes and then get back to me, there are just some comments in terms of policies/guidelines to review and some suggestions for actions. Please let me know if you have any particular questions.

5. Face Coverings in the Nest

Cole: Just wanted to speak about what to do about our mask requirement in the building.

- We had decided to probably keep the requirement in place for the summer, then with BC Phase 4, we will remove it.

- UBC is taking a different approach and they are looking for us to do the same thing (masks recommended not required). UBC came in and took down all of our signage about the requirement.
- We can still require masks in the building, but nobody wants to go up to people and enforce the rule, and it's not people's job to do that.
- The executives and I had decided that we will just keep the requirement in place, but passively -- but then the question is, is this even worth it? Will bring this to council on Wednesday.
- We are taking an advocacy stance towards UBC about covid prevention and safety, but it's difficult, because the PHO guidelines are different. What do you guys think a good direction would be?

Jerry: I think it's tricky for the AMS, because on one hand, students see the AMS and UBC as one, you know they're both right on campus -- so the inconsistency might be difficult.

Ron: It's important to consider that it is not the role of the team to go and enforce that. It might give you a better stance to move to the recommendation for masks, and then advocate why it is so important to wear masks.

Alessia: In the executive goals notes that I have made, I have provided some links -- the province is also informing about the importance of masks, and you could make advocacy efforts around that, like Ron said, help guide students to these resources.

Louis: Second what Ron said, I think it might be difficult to enforce. Ron's recommended approach is good.

Saad in the chat: Fully agree with Ron and Alessia. We're also not going to be able to request medical information from students to prove that they're fully vaccinated (more complications around enforcement).

Cole: Good points.

Ron: You could also have some marketing work on it (for those visual learners). It might be helpful to say that this is not by any means a failure of the mask requirement, it is an evolution, and the message is that we want to keep people safe.

6. Strategic Plan Timeline Presentation

Cole: Please note that this is still really a draft. We are looking for feedback about the planning components and steps that we are taking.

- We have divided this up into 5 different parts, from now up until the end of the fiscal year. Right now we are in the initial planning stage -- looking for feedback right now and looking into possible marketing.
- Stage 2: We are sort of talking about values, the mission statement, overarching goal categories, and framework categories (equity and inclusion, strong business performance, sustainability).
- Continue with internal surveys (among staff and councillors). We will be looking for feedback and narrowing down our focus. Then, briefing with council and at the same time looking for some working groups.
- Once we gather all that data then we can start looking at moving into focus groups, where we will see if what internally resonates with us, also resonates with the students at large. We want to make sure that the values are compatible externally. Then we present to the Executive Committee and Advisory Board.
- Next we start drafting strategies and objectives for each core theme and touch base with relevant resources (Equity team, Lauren's team, Keith, etc.). Also start looking forward, in the year 2050 where do we want the AMS to be (looking for a bit of an end goal that guides the language of the document).
- Next we will draft a second internal survey, see what people like, and present to council again. Then review and draft up a second round of focus group compatible topics. Then again, present to Executive Committee and Advisory Board.
- Phase 4: Around October will be the mass consultation phase. A lot of these points getting finalized, consultation with specific groups, and more review to see which data trends we are seeing.
- Then upon final approval, generate a preliminary report and a draft that will go to council. Finally, we will take all that and work it into a final document then take that to council for final approval (most likely March 2022).

Some more background: Part of this is taken from Chris (my predecessor), and some pieces from there we had turned into our own thing. We are aiming for it to be about 10-15 years in advance, but we want to keep it very high level. When you have an Executive that turns over every year it can be hard to keep the direction going, so we want to stop it from becoming obsolete by making it pretty universally agreeable.

Louis: Four things I see:

- 1) I don't think it makes sense to make a strategic plan for that length of time (I think it should be 3-5 years). Most strategic plans in businesses are not that long, as you never know what could happen between now and then.
- 2) Based on research, surveys are difficult to get the right data, I'd rather see more time spent on things like the focus groups rather than surveys.
- 3) I would love to see who is doing what (would also love to see help from Keith and those on the other side).
- 4) A key component that you are missing from your plan -- there isn't a point about the new Executive transition. Who is responsible for training the new Executives to help continue implementing this?

Alessia: I agree, I think 5 years should be the maximum. You need to really break it down so that it can be actionable -- that's why they can't be too long. See this resource: <https://sds.ubc.ca/> (they help you put together strategic plans and focus groups, and they're free). I also don't think surveys are great, and I would suggest a working group of 15-20 (you can decide who will be in it -- people who are key members of societies for example). Try to find a lot of feedback from different services.

Jerry: I haven't been involved in a strategic plan longer than 5 years either. I have found that businesses that have plans 5 years long, often revisit it after the first couple years anyway. About a transition, in my view, after it has been approved, it usually takes a couple months to really get it ingrained in the organization, so maybe a point to have in the timeline is for some time for that. Under that strategic framework drafting, is that where you basically have your scope defined at a high level (everybody knows where it is going/what's in the scope)?

Cole: Yes that would be the goal.

Jerry: Okay, then that looks like a good timeline for that point. I was very curious about how you were going to get the external groups (how would you select them)? The finalization is the longest bit?

Cole: I think I might have misspoke, it's not the longest. The longest looks like it is the strategic actions portion -- right now we are showing about 10 weeks for that.

Jerry: Once it is approved, is it binding to future Executive teams?

Cole: So, we have our bylaws, and our Code of Procedures, and under our Code we have policy types -- internal and external ones that are binding. We also have a part that is for strategic policies and framework (for example, the Sustainable Action Plan and soon the Equity Plan). These are not binding but you are expected to follow them, and there are guidelines to ensure that they are being upheld.

Keith: I think that it should be more of a strategic direction, because the successive executives can get on board with that. I am here over that time and I can make sure that the new executives' goals align with it (I would be responsible for showing the new team the Strategic Plan).

Cole: The unfortunate reality of these roles (compared to other organizations) is that there is a new Executive every year, and you don't want to tell them what to do. So how do we make it, you know, 3, 4, 5 years long, in a way that people can naturally follow it? We need to make it high level enough that it doesn't need to be updated by the Executive annually and not just scrapped all together. The other issue, where we differ from other organizations is, our goals are based every year on campaign promises, rather than the actual organization's needs. So what really should be happening is, the Executive should be coming into office and having a Strategic Plan to follow -- but then the catch 22 is that the political obligation to the students is to be accountable to the campaign promises. I expect that there will be a degree of evolution about this, we don't have to come up with a strict process right now.

Louis: One more comment... Just because of the nature of the AMS, consider how you can make this planning procedure as repeatable as possible (I'd like to see that whatever the end result is, the next Executive doesn't just restart it). How can it be repeatable?

Cole: Okay. A question I have for you guys... we will face some challenges from a PR perspective if we can't open it up to the community at large -- what do you think would be some good resources to use to get more perspectives from the UBC students at large?

Ron: I think you guys have a good method, in terms of segmenting the students into groups, and definitely put the councillors to work. Focus on identifying under-represented groups that may not be on council, and don't forget that you have a lot of services and students that are directly affected by the AMS (for example, via services) -- There could be a collective or group of students who

actually rely on the AMS. Getting all of this done in this amount of time might not happen, and you could even come up with a strategic plan framework that the next Executive could follow up on.

Cole: The more I look at it, the more I see that it is a lot of in-house work. Maybe we should focus on a framework first as a Phase One, and as a Phase Two, maybe working on those pillars -- It is only Dana and I who are really pushing it, and I think this would require additional capacity.

Louis: Have you considered bringing on a masters student to help with it?

Cole: After this meeting I am thinking about it.

Jerry: You could maybe assign people to some of these tasks -- if you get some parts to parallel you can get it done quicker. But, if the entire council changes and the Executive changes, it could get half done, and then again, and again, each year.

Samantha in the chat: I think it would be important to ensure that you don't end up consulting the same group through focus groups and mass consultation. As currently if they're both advertised through newsletters, you'll generally get the same people over and over. What was the extent of the involvement from council that you were looking for? I think they have a big variety of reach, and some stay on more than one year -- you could have someone have a role that is longer than just the normal term.

Cole: Council isn't very good at getting hands on with things, and the involvement from council would be more high level. I do like the idea of leveraging councilors for focus groups. I think too much council involvement could extend our timeline (this is not the fault of council, it is just how it goes).

Alessia: I do think the Strategic Plan is a great idea. You can start by focussing on the AMS as an institution (it's guiding principles), and once you get to the Executive interaction you might have to take a more flexible approach, but there are other aspects that you can still definitely work on. I think once you start you will be able to tell which parts you can focus on. I think it's a good idea to start bigger, and then work your way to the Executive part.

Cole: Me and Dana will think about it and report back.

7. Advisory Board Commitments and Compensations

Louis: Expectations of the Advisory Board have changed this year -- I think it's awesome that we are meeting monthly now. The last time the compensation was reviewed was when I was VP, and that was for about a 12-hour/year commitment. I think, though it might be about the same amount of time in these meetings, but also with those one-on-one pairings (that are great), it might be more time now. I just think that if expectations are changing, down the road, we might want to revisit this.

Cole: Yes I agree. Moving forward if people want to keep track of their hours, down the road we can definitely revisit the compensations and maybe bring in Finance Committee.

Ron: It's good advice from Louis. It's not about compensation for us, but for building and retaining a strong Advisory Board for the future.

Next Meeting

The next scheduled meeting will be on Monday, August 16th, at 6:00pm.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:11pm.