VP Finance

Goal 1: Mental Health Subsidy

This year, the AMS Finance Office recognized the large reserve of the AMS/GSS Health and Dental Fund as an area to focus our efforts on. In preliminary brainstorming and student consultation from previous years, it was observed that mental health support was an area increasingly important to students. With an ongoing pandemic, students were more in need of counselling and mental health services than ever before. An initial proposal was a Mental Health subsidy, where students would be able to apply and receive funding in order to pay for mental health support services that go beyond the current total coverage of $1,000 per policy year. We are currently restructuring our goals for the mental health subsidy, as well as the overall improvement of the AMS/GSS Health and Dental Plan and the benefits it offers to students. After discussion amongst the Office, we concluded that implementing a subsidy asking for sensitive information, with limited funding would be difficult to adjudicate- especially if adjudicated by student staff. We identified difficulties such as objectively determining which applicants would be able to receive the subsidy, and being able to distribute subsidies quickly and efficiently with the current accounting system. As a result, we are currently exploring other plan improvements for students- such as virtual healthcare (incl. Mental health assessments), legal protection programs, and increasing the current existing $1,000 coverage to a higher amount. We are also consulting students on the feedback that they have for the Plan and improvements they want to see, through the AMS SES Survey. Upon the end of the survey deadline, we will be implementing changes to the H&D Plan based on student feedback.

Goal 2: Mental Health Support Provider Network

In further efforts to increase affordability of mental health services for students, we reached out to Studentcare regarding expanding their Psychology Network, in which they currently collaborate with PsyVitaliti to offer psychology services. Our Office determined that Studentcare is best suited for carrying out this goal, and we will continue to advocate for Studentcare to expand their Psychology Network to offer more resources for students.


Goal 3: Canvas Learning Hub for AMS Treasurers

In May 2021, the AMS Finance Office was able to establish a Canvas course for all AMS Treasurers- a place where treasurers can undergo authorization (all online and can be completed at any time), communicate with the AMS Finance Office through the Discussion board, and locate treasurer resources. A Treasurer Orientation video was made, outlining AMS financial tools and the AMS financial system. Treasurer Authorization was further refined to include not only an orientation video, but a knowledge testing quiz (with a minimum 75% or higher grade required) to ensure that club treasurers were well-versed on the AMS Financial
System before they handle club finances. Furthermore, the Canvas course allowed the AMS Finance Office to easily collect and organize treasurer authorization forms, respond to queries, and keep communication between the treasurers and the AMS Finance Office strong. Through Announcements, the AMS Finance Office is able to notify treasurers of new updates with ease. We are continuing to explore how we can improve the Canvas course and produce more content to increase understanding of the AMS Financial system.

As well, with the new AMS accounting system upgrade that was recently approved in the November AMS Council, we will heavily utilize the Canvas course to ensure that treasurers are well transitioned into the new accounting system.

**Goal 4: Improved Transparency of AMS Finances**

As the student union representing over 50,000 students at UBC with several student fee levies, it’s important that students know how fees are allocated amongst fee-receiving groups and AMS operations. However, it is often challenging at first glance to understand a complex AMS Budget in Excel. Progress is being made on the first AMS Financial Summary report for the AMS Budget 2021-22, and is projected to be released following the January Budget reforecast. The Financial Summary report would allow students to read through the budget in a simpler format and identify the goals of the budget. The initial release of the Financial Summary report was slated for September 2021. However, due to ongoing budget amendments made in Finance Committee and AMS Council throughout the summer and term 1, the Financial Summary report would be most accurately displayed following the reforecast in January. Upon the reforecast, the AMS Finance Office projects to work with the AMS Communications department to promote the AMS Budget through infographics on social media.

**Goal 5: Assessment of AMS Fees**

An important goal this year is to assess the impact, usage, and affordability of all AMS fees with a goal of eliminating or reducing fees where possible. In term 1, the VP Finance Office and the Finance Committee were able to discuss a fee restructure in time for the spring referendum. The VP Finance Office was able to consult AMS fee-receiving groups on fee reductions/pauses, and will continue doing so in order to prepare for the fee-restructure. The AMS Finance Office will continue to assess the necessity of fees that are referendum and code bound, and determine potential new fee values in anticipation of spring election. As well, the Executives are continuing to devise spending plans for large AMS fund reserves.

**Goal 6: Increase Funds, Subsidies, Opt-in/Opt-out, Health and Dental Plan Awareness and Usage**

While the AMS has extensive funds, grants, and subsidies for students to take advantage of, many are not aware of all of these resources. The AMS also provides opportunities for fee opt-in and opt-out for those who choose to do so. In order to bring more awareness to the extensive
financial aid that the AMS offers, the AMS Finance Office has utilized the AMS website as well as social media to promote.

We ensured that AMS Funds and Grants were placed in the spotlight through the AMS website’s front page carousel. Many Funds, such as the Clubs Benefit Fund, have large reserves and are able to be applied to to alleviate financial strain of students and clubs. In term 1, the AMS Finance Office worked with AMS Communications to create graphics promoting the Health and Dental Change of Coverage period- and distributed it on social media such as Instagram. Furthermore, we continued to work with Communications to create graphics promoting summer u-Pass subsidies and AMS Fee/SUB Renewal Fee subsidies. The AMS VP Administration portfolio was able to promote the Sustainability Projects Fund through promotional videos, to be released soon. Studentcare and the AMS has worked together to finalize the H&D Plan promotions through organized email blasts. The AMS Finance Office plans to reach out to constituencies and the AMS VP Administration in term 2 to collaboratively promote AMS club and student grants to students.