Minutes of the AMS Steering Committee  
November 19th, 2021

Attendance
Present: Eshana Bhangu (Chair of Advocacy Committee), Cole Evans (AMS President), Mary Gan (Chair of Finance Committee), Sheldon Goldfarb (Archivist), Romina Hajizadeh (Chair of HR Committee), Kamil Kanji (Chair of Governance Committee), Aryan Mishra (Chair of Student Life Committee), Joanne Pickford (Administrative Assistant), Nicolas Romualdi (Guest)

Regrets: Lauren Benson (Chair of Operations Committee)

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

1. Call to Order
The meeting was called to order at 12:06pm.

2. Territorial Acknowledgement

3. Approval of the Agenda
Moved: Mary  
Seconded: Kamil

“BE IT RESOLVED THAT the agenda be adopted as presented.”

4. Approval of Previous Minutes
Moved: Romina  
Seconded: Aryan

“BE IT RESOLVED THAT the minutes from the November 5th Committee meeting be approved and sent to AMS Council”

5. Strategic Plan
Nicolas: I will just go over the slides quickly.
- There are non-public values that the society has, that Sheldon was kind enough to share with me, so this is not just a word but there is a statement accompanying the words.
- We should really make the effort of writing exactly what we mean.
• We have since redrafted: we are taking a shift from “quality education” to “affordable education”, and shifting to every aspect of wellbeing. We have also changed to say that we advocate for student interests.

Cole: I have two thoughts,

• I would really like to see the phrase “post secondary” or “university” experience included in this statement, to say that we are here to really support their entire experience here.
• I don’t think it’s necessary to have anything that speaks about supporting the entire post secondary collective as a whole. I think it’s great but I don’t think it needs to be in our mission statement, and that it will just align when it fits.

Romina: I do agree, but the only things that made me feel a bit weird is the high quality and affordable part. I worry about how that will be perceived, because they are both very relative terms (ie. while we do reject tuition increases every year, it still happens) – I just worry how people will perceive that.

Eshana: I think that is a good point that Romina brings up. At the end of the day, when it comes to tuition increases, all I can do is oppose them (and tuition is not the only part). Maybe we do need to reconsider how we are saying that.

Nicolas: So we need to make sure that it translates well with the wording?

Eshana: Yes.

Nicolas: I didn’t know how to qualify this part from the old mission statement [referring to draft version 2 on AMS mission slide], thoughts?

Cole: I think ‘events’ seem a bit weird to throw in there, maybe ‘services’ or ‘social experiments’. I feel like ‘events’ makes it sound like we just throw events.

Nicolas: I would agree, right now events would be contained in university experiences.

Cole: I think we need to elaborate when we say ‘open and transparent’. To me it means that ‘our leadership is open and transparent’.
Eshana:
  ● All our communication is open and transparent, decision making, etc. I agree with Cole.

Cole: The shorter and more concise the mission statement the better. Very high level and as short as possible is ideal.

What we do is: we make sure that students have exceptional university experience, we represent the interests of students to the university and government, and we also provide service to our students in a number of ways (whether it means insurance, our services, administering clubs, etc.). To me those are like the core pillars of the organization, and as far as our mission goes, I think that can be represented in like 3 lines.

Nicolas: I agree, it has to be very clear.

Nicolas: One thing I noticed is that we don't say anything about providing research opportunities to its members at all levels, we only speak about 'high quality education'.

Cole: But do we promote research opportunities?

Nicolas: No you don't, but do you want to? You are at a top research university and you don't promote research opportunities for students.

Eshana: So I want to clarify that this is not advocating for it, it is providing it?

Nicolas: It is advocacy.

Cole: I think it's more of a question of if we want to do it. Maybe we have to elaborate on what we mean by 'quality education experience'. I don't think the AMS promotes 'high quality education', we are a university that promotes high quality education, but we at the AMS advocate for student interests relating to education.

Eshana:
  ● I know in advocacy I certainly do though. I think that high quality education is something that we do.
  ● With the research opportunities, Nicolas, I think that is more for graduate students, and I think we mostly serve undergraduates.
Nicolas: Okay. This is just my personal view – there is a missed opportunity in the research university, for undergraduates to participate more in research. I agree with Cole that it doesn't have to be called out in the mission statement, but it should be included in the higher education section.

Sheldon: I know we made changes in one part, as Saad pointed out, about how we have students in the affiliate colleges too – so do we provide exceptional university experiences to those students too?

Cole: I think we just need to change the language to ‘post-secondary’, or even ‘University of British Columbia and its affiliate colleges’. Further, ‘the society will advocate student interests and rights to the University of British Columbia, its affiliated institutions, and all levels of government’.

Nicolas: How do we like this [referring to a third draft]?

Eshana: Looks good.

Cole: I think it's a good starting point for this new draft, for more workshopping.

Nicolas: We have come up with these two values, and three other half baked drafts – let's first look at these two.

Cole: I think the first one makes sense, but the second one is a bit too much. It makes us seem a bit corrupt.

Nicolas: So the reason why this came up, is because accountability keeps coming up – so then the question we ask is, accountable to what?

Cole:
- I think it's more that you are accountable to what's in the best interest of your membership. It's more about holding people accountable so that they listen to the needs and interests of the student body.
- The organization needs to hold itself accountable to the students' values.

Nicolas: I think you are leaving out the business aspect of it.
I think I am trying to say that you are accountable to the mission of the organization, and that is that you are to serve the best interests of the students, because sometimes what is in the best interest of the students, is not in the best interest of the organization. That's what we need to reconcile.

When we establish these core pillars, we need to be coming up with very short statements. For example, if we have a value of ‘transparency and accountability’ as a pillar, then under that pillar we have 4/5/6 value statements under it.

Eshana: I think oftentimes if a student is reading this, they will only read one sentence -- so I would have a preference for this current model.

Nicolas: We could prepare both and then consult within the organization.

Kamil:
- In regards to the structure, I'm more of a fan of the simple statements. Just because I don't know a lot of people who would go beyond reading a couple sentences.
- For this ethical standards piece: yes, as a student organization we are accountable to student interests, but there is also accountability within the organization to ethical standards as well – so I think that if we are able to express that in these statements that would be ideal.

Cole: I think that if we had a complete list in front of us, then we could start narrowing down from there.

Nicolas: We didn't get as far as we had wanted to – we will need to come back to this. Any big values that are missing here?

Cole: I think we are missing a piece on advocacy.

Eshana: I would appreciate some clarity on what you mean by values.

Nicolas: My sense would be that advocacy is in your mission statement, and values would be what embody anything that you do. I mean it's a valuable question: are we really more concerned about ethical standards than we are to our students' interests? These are the decisions that we need to make. I think the
idea is that you are always trying to capture what the members think. I will work on that.

Kamil: Why not just make a committee for people who are interested in helping out with this?

Cole: My thought was that people on this committee are those who are interested? I would say that a working group model would be more effective.

Eshana: It's low stakes, and it's more chill – I think people are interested.

Joanne: Maybe a committee would include more than just Arts voices.

6. Committee Updates

Kamil: Governance committee updates,
- Some stuff with Advisory Board went to council.
- We will be discussing the whole non-voting members of council sitting on committees, as well as there are more conversations on some aspects of the agenda for council, cleaning up code, more streamlining, making more external policy guideline rules in code, and the making of an elections appeal committee.

Sheldon: There's also the contract with UBC over running senate elections.

Romina: HR committee updates,
- Just finished hiring a CEO, still has to be appointed in council.
- Trying to hire an ombudsperson – we have to appoint this person as soon as possible.
- Please email me your transition reports from your predecessor.

Mary: Finance committee updates,
- Been going through a lot of SPF applications, some code amendments (will be brought to council next time), and some budget amendments.

7. Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 1:00pm.