Council Submission

Review of the AMS’ University Neighborhoods Association Campaign on Promoting Student Involvement and Candidacy

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Prepared by: Saad Shoaib - Vice-President, External Affairs.
Introduction & Context

On February 2, 2022, AMS Council directed the Vice-President, External Affairs through a motion to compile a report on the AMS’ efforts to highlight student candidates running in the 2021 University Neighbourhood Association’s (UNA) Board election. Subsequently, this report will provide AMS Council with details on the campaign’s timeline along with the barriers to success that arose, a detailed budget of the campaign along with a specific focus on campaigning materials.

In understanding that UNA's Board elections occur on a tri-annual basis, this report, while it will provide recommendations on campaigning tactics, budgeting, and general strategy, the context and timing of the election should be taken into account. It is essential that students continue to be involved in the UNA - whether through partnerships or through the successful election of a student candidate to the UNA Board of Directors.

To contextualize the UNA's importance for AMS Council, the UNA represents the residents of the following UBC neighborhoods: Chancellor Place, East Campus, Hampton Place, Hawthorn Place, Wesbrook Place, and other designated buildings. As the representative organization for select residents, the UNA has a unique ability to provide the university with consultation and advice on land use development, sustainability, and community safety.

It is also important when contextualizing this campaign, to understand that UBC's Vancouver campus is not governed by the City of Vancouver; rather, it is governed by the provincial government who delegates governing authority to UBC's Board of Governors and the University Endowment Lands. The UNA, as the representative organization for select UBC neighborhoods which include a large portion of student residents, similar to the AMS, can provide UBC with recommendations and consultation keeping the best interests of UNA residents in mind.

As a result and due to the importance of the UNA as a consultant to the university and as a representative of residents, student voices needed to be amplified on the Board of Directors. In 2020, students lost a voice on the Board when the UNA converted our voting seat into a non-voting seat in understanding that the UNA wanted to move to a fully-elected Board of Directors. Moreover, this resulted in the AMS supporting student candidates who wished to make a run for the Board of Directors within the context of the MOU between the AMS and the UNA which provided the ability for the AMS to reappoint
any elected student director's replacement. The AMS was intended to provide them with entry aid on policy development, marketing & promotion, and financial support (similar to AMS elections).

This campaign would be the first time in AMS history that such support has been provided to student candidates running in the UNA election. In understanding that this was the first time in the organization’s history, there were several areas which were completely new in terms of strategy, marketing, the voting process, and outreach.

**Expenses and Personnel**

**Note:** The AMS initial budget for this campaign was $3,000 as reflected in the VP External’s budget request for the Campaigns and Research. The budget was then extended in anticipation of additional expenses and a harder push needed for the campaign.

At the November 24th meeting of AMS Council, a budget extension to $7,400 was requested. **This extension would be pulled from the 2021 Student Union Development Summit (SUDS) budget surplus as reflected in the meeting minutes.** For reference, the SUDS surplus, at the time, totalled over $10,000. To this day, the SUDS budget is still in a surplus of approximately $5,600.

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**Initial Budget (June - Regular Budgeting Process):** $3,000.00  
**Extended Budget (November - Post extension):** $7,400.00

**SUDS Surplus (Pre-Extension):** $10,000.00+  
**SUDS Surplus (Post-Extension):** $5,600.00+

**Total Expenses:** $4,250.92

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Throughout September, October, and November, the AMS spent a good amount of time preparing for the campaign, canvassing with student candidates, and working with candidates on debate preparation. However, there were many projects going on during the UNA campaign as well such as work on the Skytrain-to-UBC file, developing advocacy priorities for UCRU federal lobby week, and working on the development of
advocacy priorities for provincial lobby week in coordination with the UBC Graduate Student Society.

The VP External Affairs also put his free time into the campaign and its preparation as well. This included coming in on the weekends, staying after hours at the office (beyond insurable work hours), and working after hours on this at home. For this reason, the report will categorize work hours spent on the campaign into two: insurable work hours and free work hours. The insurable work hours come from the calendar blocks that were put into the office’s emails for working sessions/meetings. Free work hours were any calendar blocks put into the office’s emails for working sessions.

Insurable work hours include hours put in by the VP External Affairs and/or members of their office. For reference, there were four staff members in the office collectively working on this campaign at times.

The graphic designer working on the UNA Campaign dedicated approximately 2-3 hours on developing campaign materials, logos, and candidate campaigning materials.

**Insurable Work Hours:** 77 hours

**Free Work Hours (VP External):** 19 hours

**Total AMS Insurable Work Hours:** 79-80 hours.

**Detailed Budget Breakdown (post-extension)**

- **Social Media Advertisements - Budget:** $3,000.00 | **Expense:** $1,704.71
  - Underspending as advertisement spending was split throughout the campaign. Certain portions were allocated to candidates; however, certain candidates did not want to run advertisements.

- **Physical Materials - Budget:** $1,500.00 | **Expense:** $1,846.21
  - Physical materials were also used to campaign. This included mostly informational materials such as fliers and leaflets. This also included promotional materials such as bottle cap openers and lanyards. These
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materials were all deployed during in-person campaigning in the neighborhoods. Within the campaign, candidates had the option of creating individual lawn signs which were all distributed throughout UBC alongside with lawn signs designated to the campaign itself. These lawn signs designated to the campaign itself were not fully deployed in understanding the limitations of staff capacity and a lack of volunteer commitment.

● Promotions & Marketing - Budget: $1,000.00 | Expense: $700.00
  ○ In order to develop the campaign materials, we provided student candidates with the opportunity to get their headshots taken. Each candidate had their headshots taken and online campaigning materials were produced accordingly.

Campaign Timeline & Strategy

● Early October - Candidate Search
  ○ The AMS began searching for candidates interested in running. Three candidates were identified as interested in the AMS and one student resident reached out to the AMS and flagged that they were interested. In total, the AMS supported 4 student candidates throughout the UNA Board of Directors elections.

● Mid-to-Late October - Informing Students
  ○ In understanding that the UNA’s voting process requires residents to register their membership in order to be considered eligible to vote, the AMS put out newsletters, social media posts, and advertisements encouraging students to sign up for their memberships if eligible. Advertisements and social media posts along with the newsletter provided students with clear, brief, and concise instructions on how to vote and where to register their membership.

● November - Candidate Campaigning
The AMS helped in advertising and promoting the candidates on its social media platforms. The AMS also helped with campaign strategy by joining candidates on in-person campaigning events, emailing students to take part in the election, and helping the student candidates prepare for debates.

Conclusion

While the UNA campaign’s main focus was to ensure the successful election of student candidates to the UNA Board, another key goal was to ensure that the AMS was increasing awareness of the UNA and how the UNA impacts student residents. Many key student priorities such as affordable housing, sustainable development, and the Skytrain-to-UBC were constantly highlighted and are student-centric issues that the UNA is aware of due the campaigning efforts of students. After the election, the relationship between the AMS and the UNA has continued to improve as we work towards the establishment of an all-new Liaison Committee and the appointment of students to the UNA's land use development and community engagement committees. This advocacy is especially important as we approach CampusVision 2050 (UBC’s land use renewal plan).

Next Steps & Recommendations

- **RECOMMENDATION:** The AMS should push the UNA to move their voting process online as it is quite inaccessible for student residents to have to vote via mail-in ballot.

  - **CONTEXT:** The current voting system requires students to first register as members, have their membership approved, await an empty ballot in the mail, complete ballot, return ballot via mail or by dropping the ballot off to a nearby polling station. In understanding the busy schedules that students have, the voting process has several large barriers which disincentivize students from voting.

- **RECOMMENDATION:** The AMS should not over-involve itself in the campaigns of student candidates. Rather, the AMS should provide funding to candidates and support in terms of context along with policy development; however, it should not
be marketing them as AMS candidates (albeit this was not done purposely this year; however, it was perceived as a slate).

- **RECOMMENDATION:** The AMS should begin messaging to students around UNA elections well in advance (4-5 months prior) in order to ensure that students have adequate enough time to sign up for their membership and receive ballots in the mail on time without error.

END OF REPORT