

OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

This reflection will provide Council with a high-level understanding of the goals that were met, what goals were redirected, and what goals were not met. This year, the AMS Office of External Affairs completed almost all of its goals, with a few of its goals being redirected due to the evolving circumstances of government advocacy. The Office's goals focused on advocacy and operational advancements around affordability, transparency, accountability, accessibility, and EDI. The Office had ten (10) broad goals with specific action items guiding their completion. Feel free to contact me at vpexternal@ams.ubc.ca if you have any questions regarding these goals or if you need further clarification.

- 1. Transparency and Accountability (COMPLETED):** we released two (2) social media infographic updates throughout the year which detailed the operations and advocacy of the Office of External Affairs. We also held three (3) virtual townhalls through Instagram where responses were posted via video response by the Vice-President, External Affairs.
- 2. Housing Affordability and Tenancy Rights (COMPLETED AND REDIRECTED):** we completed our commitment to continuing work with the Leading Practices Subcommittee. The committee has published its first draft of leading practices for student housing providers. For reference, the Leading Practices Manual is a living document. Additionally, we were unable to commission a campaign conducting outreach and engagement for the AMS' co-op housing project due to clarity and redirection needed in the AMS' approach to the project along with its 125-page project feasibility study. In terms of housing recommendations in our provincial budget submission, it was determined after further consultation with the province that such funding was already in place.
- 3. Student Financial Aid (COMPLETED):** the Office went above and beyond on our student financial aid advocacy. We not only completed all of our action items in this category, but we also got the federal government to commit to historic student financial aid investments such as the permanent removal of interest rates on federal student loans, increasing repayment assistance so that no recent graduate has to begin loan repayment till they make \$50,000 per year, and starting the conversation around student debt removal. On the provincial side, we worked closely with the GSS as a part of our provincial lobby week.
- 4. International Student Support (COMPLETED):** the Office of External Affairs conducted meetings with the Ministry of Advanced Education along with several MLAs/Ministers to talk about the importance of strengthening the tuition limit policy while also working towards the creation of a new International Education Strategy with the last one being published in 2012. We also ensured that UCRU's annual priorities included the AMS' advocacy around providing international students with fast-tracked permanent residency
- 5. COVID-19 Recovery (MAJORITY COMPLETION):** our goals around recovery included advocacy to the federal government on increased support for student employment programs. As a part of UCRU's federal lobby week, we not only made recommendations for the federal government to increase support for student employment but to integrate

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international students into student employment programs like Canada Summer Jobs. We did scope the possibility of a province-wide student survey with student unions; however, the cost, logistics, and execution were not viable for student partners as there were many other urgent issues being addressed throughout the year. Moreover, we did push the provincial government to prioritize the post-secondary operating grant review and on March 31, 2022, the Ministry officially called the review.

- 6. Student Safety & Wellness (COMPLETED):** the Office included recommendations around amendments to the Sexual Violence and Misconduct Policy Act which would ensure that post-secondary institutions are creating survivor-centric, intersectional, and trauma-informed policies. To financially support this measure, we also recommended an allocation of \$5 million towards post-secondary sexual violence prevention initiatives. Furthermore, we also made recommendations on Here2Talk, specifically expanding the program to reduce wait times, increase cultural competency, and market the service more.
- 7. Climate Action (NOT COMPLETED):** throughout the year, we have been meeting with student unions across Canada including CASA, a federal advocacy organization, to redetermine the direction of climate action advocacy. What we have found to be the problem alongside other Canadian student associations is that in order for student advocacy on climate action to be successful, a unified stance must be established. As a result, we have been meeting with CASA and will be transitioning the incoming Office on establishing a Canada-wide student association-led climate action alliance. We will also be involving Climate Justice UBC in these conversations.
- 8. Transit Solutions (COMPLETED):** we had a very successful year when it came to advocacy on the SkyTrain-to-UBC. In May, the AMS, in coordination with UBC and TransLink, engaged UBC students on participating in TransLink's public engagement process on the SkyTrain-to-UBC. The results were quite successful as 92% of Metro Vancouver residents expressed strong support for the SkyTrain-to-UBC. Additionally, we also lobbied the provincial and federal governments to invest in the project and in July 2021, the provincial and federal governments committed 80% funding towards the project's business case. Towards the end of the year in April, we partnered with TransLink and UBC on pushing students to take part in Transport 2050's public engagement process which is the overarching regional transit strategy. As a note, the process is still ongoing and will conclude on May 1, 2022. We also had a successful year of U-Pass exemptions and subsidies. Although the overwhelming majority of students were returning to campus in September 2021, we recognized the need to provide students who are not residing in Metro Vancouver with options to be exempt. In coordination with the Vice-President, Finance, we also ensured that the U-Pass subsidy had increased funding to provide more students with subsidized transit.
- 9. Indigenous Student Support (PARTIALLY COMPLETED):** in July, the Office worked with Indigenous advocates across BC for several projects including the AMS' BC Budget 2022

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Consultation Submission where we made recommendations to establish standing funding for the revitalization of Indigenous language programs at BC post-secondary institutions. In terms of our work around establishing a formalized partnership process with the Indigenous Committee and including Indigenous student representatives in the AMS' lobby weeks, we were unable to make significant contact with the Indigenous Committee as we had tried to do throughout the year to make this possible. We will be transitioning the incoming Office on working with the First Nations Longhouse to establish such a process and outreach to include Indigenous students in the AMS' lobby weeks.

- 10. Equity-based Grants (MAJORITY COMPLETION):** the AMS renewed our partnership with SEEDS through the AMS-SEEDS Memorandum of Understanding in Summer 2021. A key focus of the MOU was to continue to explore the landscape of equity-based grants while ensuring that the relationship between the AMS and SEEDS is solidified. We also worked with SEEDS to establish research programs for the project's advancements. However, due to SEEDS' operational issues including irregular turnover, we were unable to commission the required amount of research needed for a policy paper. We are currently transitioning the incoming Office on the last area of research required before the policy paper can be written.