



VUSAC Meeting Minutes

Call to order: 5:30 PM, October 30th 2020

Land Acknowledgement: Veronica Chiang

Veronica: We wish to acknowledge this land on which the University of Toronto operates. For thousands of years it has been the traditional land of the Huron-Wendat, the Seneca, and most recently, the Mississaugas of the Credit River. Today, this meeting place is still the home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island and we are grateful to have the opportunity to work on this land.

Official Regrets: Leila Tjiang

Approval of minutes: *Motion by Kate to approve last meeting's minutes, seconded by Nathan. Motion passes.*

- Favour: all
- Opposed: none
- Abstained: none

Additions to the agenda:

1. Alexander Bogatch with a Cat's Eye update for 3 minutes
2. Jay Muoio with a VPSO for 3 minutes
3. Ikran Jama with an ASSU update for 3 minutes
4. Fatima Rana with a Scarlet and Gold update for 1 minute

Approval of the agenda: *Motion by Jay to approve the agenda, seconded by Max. Motion passes.*

- Favour: all
- Opposed: none
- Abstained: none

EX-OFFICIO REPORTS

Campus Life Coordinator (Alero): 7 minutes

Alero: Hopefully you've all got the email from the Vic at Home newsletter about the new book club. If you don't have a copy of the book we are reading, they will buy you a copy so don't worry and we're having a speaker come in next week to talk about the book. We also have an anti-racism conference coming up in the week after reading week. A lot of bursary applications are due this weekend so be aware of those deadlines. There's been a temporary bursary increase to six thousand this year so please apply! Also, we finally have a Goldring access plan! We have been working with the Goldring staff to develop this but it's subject to change based on COVID and where it's heading. Because we are back in stage two in Toronto, we had to rethink our process which is why it took so long to develop this plan. We will be sending out a form by next Wednesday that will

ask what room you need access to and then you'll be able to go to the front desk after your request is approved and you can access to the space you need. You'll need to wear a mask and socially distance as well as fill out a U-Check form before you arrive.

President of Victoria University:

Dean's Office:

Board of Regents:

Victoria College Council:

Victoria University Senate:

ACTION ITEMS:

Motion by Jay Muoio to ratify the proposed amendments to Council Policies, Chapter 11 [Appendix A], seconded by Vedika (5 minutes). Motion passes.

- Favour: all
- Opposed: none
- Abstained: none

Jay: We talked about this last meeting, so hopefully everything that needed to be brought up was discussed then. If this motion passes, then in 14 days from now it will be implemented into council policies!

Motion by Dorian DiTommaso to ratify the Mental Wellness Commission Co-Chair constitutional and council policies amendments [Appendix B], seconded by Alexandra (5 minutes). Motion passes.

- Favour: all
- Opposed: none
- Abstained: none

Dorian: The constitutional and council policy changes were put forth last week and there were no requested changes to that.

Mehr: Are you able to consider delegation of tasks to the executive team? Not really related to the co-chair but just in general

Nerija: Related to what Mehr said, did you think about how the co-chair will be incorporated into your team this year?

Dorian: In regard to delegation, I want to address the fact that delegating tasks to four different portfolios is essentially impossible for one person. I have to focus entirely on the advocacy part because I am the only one in charge of my email account. With a co-chair, I can focus on advocacy and event planning.

Nerija: When I ask my commissioners to send emails to people, they CC me and I usually get responses from the person they send the email to.

Dorian: I don't think it's as legitimate if I don't send emails using my official email account.

Motion by Mehr to extend the discussion by 10 minutes, seconded by Dorian. Motion passes.

- Favour: all
- Opposed: none
- Abstained: none

Michelle: On the topic of having your team members working on projects, I found it really helpful to send a preliminary email introducing the person who you are trying to connect to a specific organization. If you're worried about not responding or taking your execs seriously, there are other ways to do that.

Dorian: This is something that I have done so far. Even then, I still get emails directed to me.

Alero: If you are frustrated by working with people on campus, please hit me up and I can help you navigate that.

Tran: For connecting to external groups at U of T, you can connect with Mehr because that's her job!

Dorian: There's a difference between getting help from the exec and getting help from someone on my commission. An email correspondence with me and the executive might not be as effective as a correspondence with me and someone on my commission.

Motion by Michelle Zhao to endorse ASSU CR/NCR deadline proposal, seconded by Mehr Mukhtar [Appendix C] (3 minutes). Motion passes.

- Favour: all
- Opposed: none
- Abstained: none

Michelle: We have the president of the ASSU with us so I'm going to pass this discussion off to her.

Ikran: I'm here on behalf of ASSU and at the moment we are trying to create a proposal change for CR/NCR to a date that falls after final grades have been released. It's similar to what happened in the Winter 2020 semester but we want to make this a permanent change going forward post-pandemic. The reasons why we are pushing for this is that it alleviates academic pressure and that improves students' mental health. It also gives students the confidence to commit to courses that are outside of their majors and academic comfort zones. It would also make it simpler to track the date of when students can receive CR/NCR. We also believe that it would help with enrolment numbers. Firstly, before we started this process, we wanted to get students' responses on this, and we got over 1,300 responses from students. The overwhelming majority of students—around 1,200 students—agree with this proposal. The next step is to get the support from course unions and colleges to make this change at an administrative level. The next step is to take this to our Special Committee of Undergraduate Policy and if they approve it, they'll take it to the Faculty Council. We are trying to get this proposal passed at the next levels of discussion in these places.

Motion by Tran to extend discussion for 10 minutes, seconded by Alexandra. Motion passes.

- Favour: all
- Opposed: none
- Abstained: none

Alero: Is there a deadline that you are hoping to have this approved by?

Ikran: We want to have everything done by the end of the semester. We are waiting to hear back from the Special Committee of Undergraduate Academic Policy to hear when we can approve this at their next meeting. Immediate changes likely won't happen this semester in the broader U of T community, but it could be reasonable at the faculty level

Michelle: I just wanted to read this out so that you know what we are agreeing to here

Mehr: I just wanted to say thank you to Ikran. Have you been able to have any preliminary discussions with professors to see if they agree with these changes or not?

Ikran: We have not had any discussions with individual profs. This isn't something that we've spontaneously created though, it's actually something that we've been working on for years. The difference is now there's an immediate way to push it through to the policy level using the Special Committee. We are anticipating the greatest push-back from registrars but at the moment, they are largely in favour of this proposal.

Jay: Just to clarify, when you say the Dean's Office, you mean the Faculty of Arts and Science Dean's Office, not the Victoria College Dean's Office, right?

Ikran: Yes, sorry that is what I am referring to.

DISCUSSION ITEMS:

Winter 2021 fee, put forth by Michelle (10 minutes)

Michelle: The Office of the Vice Provost has reached out to all student organizations asking us to reconsider our Winter 2020-2021 fee temporarily. They also asked us to do this in the fall and we ended up reducing our fall fees by 35%. We've reached out to levies to ask them to reduce their fees, but we need to reconsider our fees too. As it stands, the Winter 2020-2021 fee is \$12.46 for full time students and \$7.43 for part time students. In total, full-time students paid \$29.49 and part-time \$16.27. This discussion item is to hear how you feel about reducing the fee for Winter 2020-2021!

Ralph: I'm just going to give you a run-down of where we're currently standing regarding our finances. We deposited a cheque today from the registrar today for \$110,00 and that includes the levy fees that we still have to pay out. In total, the VUSAC fees that we collected from the VCU is around \$48, 797 and this represents the total amount that we are bringing in for the fall semester alone—the fall fee accounts for around 60% of our yearly fees. The balance before the deposit was around \$65,000 and this was carry-over from last year and this summer. The balance after payments—since we owed Victoria College around \$5,000 for invoices throughout the summer—

left us with around \$59,400. After depositing the most recent cheque we got from the registrar, our account stands at around \$170,000 and after paying out the fall levy fees, we're going to be left with around \$108,000 to cover the budgets for the clubs and VUSAC internal for the fall semester. After theoretically paying out our fall club and internal expenses—which is around \$53,952—we would have a balance of around \$54,000 by the end of the fall semester. However, because of the cancellation of High Ball and outstanding payments and refunds, we have around \$2,800 in outstanding expenses that we need to deal with currently. This ultimately leaves us with a balance of \$51,337. In terms of the reduction in fees for the winter, historically VUSAC did not have financial statements done by the finance chair but my initiative for the coming semester is to—after reconciliation—develop a solid financial statement because that will help us forecast for the coming semester how much of our revenue is gone as well as the costs we are going to have. This is going to be a project that I'll be working on throughout November. I wouldn't judge the reduction in the Winter Fee based on the fact that we have a surplus. Essentially, we have around \$108,000 in surplus after we pay our levy fees and around \$51,000 after we pay out the club and internal budgets.

Jay: You mentioned that you've taken out the fall levy cheques that are to be paid out, did you also take out the out-standing fall-winter 2020 fees?

Ralph: I tried to factor them in using a spreadsheet. We assumed that the cheques we mailed out have already been deposited. Assuming this, we have around \$3,000 from last summer.

Tran: Based on the likelihood of Winter 2021 being online, I do think we should reduce the VUSAC fee since we aren't operating at full capacity. I don't know how much we should reduce it by exactly.

Ralph: Yes, we are going to have fewer expenses, but we've already reduced the fees for the fall. Our revenues are also going to be reduced, however. We've been suggested to make a 30% reduction but I'm not fully comfortable with this before the statement.

Motion by Jay to extend the discussion for 10 minutes, seconded by Nathan. Motion passes.

- Favour: all
- Opposed: none
- Abstained: none

Michelle: I wanted to hear how council members who submitted budgets might feel about the reduction of the fees since we didn't really have a chance to consult with council members last semester about this.

Jay: I agree with you Ralph about not feeling comfortable about approving the reduction without the statement, but I don't think we're going to have time. I would really to have some kind of consensus coming out of this discussion before the end of the meeting because I think this should be a bigger council decision.

Tran: For context, the first thing to understand is that we operate at a loss for many of our events and services. We rarely make revenue. Secondly, council members all pay this fee in the winter, so we want to hear your thoughts based on how you feel paying this.

Jenny: I think Tran just made the point that I wanted to make. When I budget for the Winter semester, I don't have to budget for a lot of things that the commission would be using money in the past. I think now it's a question about how to come up with creative ways to use the money that we have. I would be more than happy to see a reduction in the VUSAC fees. About the High Ball refunds from last year, I was wondering what was going on with that.

Michelle: High Ball refunds have been wild. We've never had to deal with refunds on this scale before. For the most part, we are still waiting on a lot of people to send in their addresses and information so that we can send them the cheque. We don't have a way of issuing direct deposits, so it's been very confusing. We understand that it's been a long time and I'm sorry but if you're still waiting, please email us and we can sort something out.

Dorian: I heard that we had \$108,000 in surplus? Is that true?

Ralph: That's what's left in the bank account right now but that isn't considering the most recent VUSAC budget for this fall. It'll likely be more like \$50,000.

Max: I feel like a lot of my resentment towards this cut is because I'm losing events. Now that I'm thinking about it, I think that it's a good thing to reduce the fees because it shows to students that we care about their finances, however small it might be. I think we have a lot of room in the budget for making wiggle room and coming up with creative ways to use the money that we have.

Dorian: In spending the money that we have, when I made my budget in the fall, I wasn't too clear on the amount of money that we had so I didn't ask for a lot. It would've been helpful to understand the amount of money that we had before the whole budgeting process.

Joy: Because I'm new, I'm not super involved in the budgeting process, but just as a student and talking to other international students, I think one of the consistent complaints is the disconnect between the money that they pay and the experience that they get. I would say that the notion of reducing fees is always welcomed by students.

Motion by Mehr to extend the discussion by 15 minutes, seconded by Nathan. Motion passes.

- Favour: all
- Opposed: none
- Abstained: none

Nerija: I wanted to agree with Joy. I think that we should reduce the fee by as much as we can to maintain our current level of functioning. At the end of the day, I think we should reduce the fees by as much as possible.

Jay: I wanted to say that considering that \$108,000 existed before the fall budgeting period, that's still more money in our account than double the fall budget. When VUSAC makes budgets, we

usually don't spend more money than we budget for, so I think we have the ability to reduce the fee by a large amount.

Jenny: The main point that I wanted to bring up was that VUSAC does a bad job at using the student funds that are collected in a given year. I agree with Ralph's original point that we would like to see statements for the amount of money that we actually have. I think it's important to take into consideration that whatever we collect is the amount that we spend.

Max: I didn't know that we carried over a large amount of money and I think that we should be doing our best to avoid that to show that we are doing as much as we can for the students.

Dorian: Why is it that we can't spend the surplus? It seems to just sit there year after year.

Ralph: We need to keep a certain amount of money in the account for emergency fees. Typically, having a surplus allows you to hedge against risks posed against the council.

Dorian: Is there a constitutionally mandated amount that we have to stay at for our surplus? We have a lot of money left over year after year. I don't think that venue booking, and that sort of thing would cost as much as the remaining budget that we have.

Jay: Generally, VUSAC has had a healthier surplus in years past but it's gotten worse in the last couple years with the SCI and COVID. I think that having a little bit of surplus is good, but I don't think that the \$50,000 that we currently have is an extreme amount.

Mehr: Usually we don't have such a big carry over from the previous year but because of High Ball, we had a much bigger surplus last year than we have in years past.

Tran: A lot of money goes into events like High Ball before the event. Obviously, we do have the revenue that we have to return but we've still got a lot left over from that event

Michelle: I got a lot of good notes from this discussion. It looks like people are in favour of decreasing the fee. I think the discussion around the surplus is especially interesting because of COVID and the SCI. I would say that we shouldn't judge the VUSAC surplus based on last year's surplus because it was so extraordinary. I am meeting up with the Office of the Vice Provost to talk about more specific fee reduction in the future.

Dorian: Do we give public access to the VUSAC finances over the last 10-20 years?

Michelle: As far as I know, all of our information is on the website.

Ralph: Everything we have that can be made public is on VUSAC. The budgets from previous years is in a physical copy in the office. If you are looking for budgets and statements from the past, you can try and check out the website.

Dorian: Access to those budgets would be nice. I can only see budgets dating back to 2017 on the website.

Michelle: I think might be a better conversation for outside the VUSAC meeting because we're on a time crunch at the moment.

Nathan: I feel like by the end of the conversation we were hitting a dead end on the surplus, but I think everyone agrees that we should reduce the fees. I think our conversation should have been more focused on the magnitude of the reduction.

Michelle: I just wanted to clarify that this discussion wasn't really about how much we are going to reduce our fees. That's really more of a conversation with the executive and finance chair that will be communicated to the Dean's Office to be passed to Student Accounts. Today was mainly focused on people's feelings about reducing the fees.

Motion by Tran to recess for 5 minutes, seconded by Elaine. Motion passes.

- Favour: all
- Opposed: none
- Abstained: none

Amendments to the VCDS Constitution, put forth by Alexis Ballis [Appendix D] (10 minutes)

Alexa: VCDS introduced our Equity Director position in the spring elections. The Equity Director needs an assistant because they've got a lot of work on their shoulders including sitting on every casting panel and conducting equity training. We've included this position in our new constitution update, so the wording and responsibilities of the role are written in there. We have also introduced mandatory equity training for VCDS members that will be delivered by the Equity Director via our constitutional guidelines. Lastly, we're going to be hiring our Assistant Equity Directors via application in the fall alongside our Technical Directors.

Mehr: For the theatre-specific equity training, is it being administered by someone in your team or externally? Also, do you have to do broader U of T equity training in addition to this?

Alexa: Massoma, who was VUSAC's Equity Commissioner last year, created equity training specifically for The Bob and Angelli, VCDS' current Equity Director, is working off that same framework this year.

Jay: VUSAC's mandate on equity training is that is just has to be some kind of relevant training. I think this is more beneficial to VCDS than U of T equity training would be for them because it's tailored to what they're doing. As long as their training is monitored by the VPSO, I think it's alright for their equity director to conduct training.

ASSESSOR MEMBER REPORTS:

Vic UTSU Directors (Ava & Radhika):

Orientation Co-Chairs:

Victoria College Dons:

Constituent Organizations:

Acta Victoriana: no report

Caffiends: no report

Cat's Eye:

Alexander Bogatch: I wanted to bring up the fact that we submitted our budget request which was larger than we had ever requested due to some difficulties from the last 2 years. If you go through our budget list, you'll see that much of it is going towards renovations. We have been doing our best to increase student engagement with the space. We've been in the space for almost 7 years now and we are not having the kind of engagement that we wanted. We've painted, got new couches and chairs, new games, changed our pool tables, in the process of replacing our DVR machine, and improved study stations. We just submitted a request to the student projects committee to increase our instrument collection. We are one of the only student spaces at Vic that provides spaces for musicians to rent out instruments. I am hoping to keep all of you more updated on what's happening in the Cat's Eye this year! I also wanted to say a big thank you to Dorian who works incredibly hard.

Motion by Dorian to extend the discussion by two minutes, seconded by Vedika. Motion passes.

- Favour: all
- Opposed: none
- Abstained: none

Mehr: Has Physical Plant been consulted about the changes and renovations to the space?

Alexander: Our relationship with phys-plant hasn't been great in the past but I have been working hard to improve that relationship this year. They know everything that we are up to at the moment. Also, Cedric and Regina have been working really hard to get art from BIPOC artists.

Student Projects: no report

The Strand: no report

VicXposure: no report

VicPride!: no report

VISA: no report

VCAA: no report

VCDS: no report

WUSC: no report

STAFF REPORTS:

Chief Returning Officer (Vibhuti):

Communications (Veronica):

Finance (Ralph):

Office Manager (Holly):

Chair (Zoe): 5 minutes

Zoe: For future meetings in the Winter semester, I wanted to ask your opinion on what dates would work best for you. The meetings in the Winter are currently scheduled to be on the 15th and 29th of

January, the 12th and 26th of February, and the 12th and 26th of March. There aren't any meetings in April because that's when the academic year ends.

Tran: Everyone is expected to be at these meetings so please be aware of these dates!

COMMISSION REPORTS:

Academic (Nerija & Cathy): 5 minutes

Nerija: We had giveaways all week and we had so many participants — around 200 people. We are doing the last draw tonight. We also have study spaces going on and we have lots of events coming up so keep an eye out for those!

Arts & Culture (Jenny):

Commuter (Rheannon & Aya): 5 minutes

Rheannon: For our grocery gift-card giveaways, we are halfway through our budget. The form will continue to be open every Wednesday at 12pm and 5pm until December 2nd. This week, we had three events: a collab with Med-Diversity, a collab with the Scarlet and Gold Commission, and a Fall Photo Contest which is open until tomorrow at midnight. Next week, on November 2nd, we have a public speaking event from 4-6 pm and all the info for that can be found is online. We are having our November monthly giveaway coming up and we are going to have 2-3 other events coming up during that month so please stay tuned!

Equity (Lulu & Sooyeon): 10 minutes

Lulu: We had our general meeting and there are 15 of us this year. We discussed the various goals we have for the semester and we mainly ended up discussing how to work with other clubs to promote equity-related issues. We had a meeting with the Dean's Office to discuss how to support BIPOC students. Also, we created an instagram account to showcase the equity-related clubs and groups around campus. We're planning on engaging with students online since everything is digital this year. This year we're also hoping to partner with a Vic publication to promote BIPOC writers on campus as well as an upcoming partnership with the Mental Wellness Commission.

Mental Wellness (Dorian):

Scarlet & Gold (Fatima):

Sustainability (Leila & Jerico):

EXECUTIVE REPORTS:

VP External (Mehr): 5 minutes

Mehr: Race and Racism conferences are happening weekly and biweekly and there's going to be a free book club for anyone who wants to join. I encourage you to be a part of this since Kelley Castle is giving out the books to student leaders for free. Try to carve out a space in your timetable to attend some of these events since they are very valuable for student leaders. We've also been working to establish a BIPOC counsellor which should be implemented soon in their one-year pilot test. The DSC meeting has been set for the end of November so reach out to me with any

questions or agenda items for that meeting. Also, caucus is coming up soon so start writing down points to bring up in your semi-annual report this semester. In terms of the re-naming Ryerson project, I am in the process of reaching out to Indigenous student groups on campus to discuss ways that we can make reconciliation a more tangible thing. VUSAC has a disturbing lack of support for Indigenous students on Vic camps and that's definitely something that needs to be talked about. UTERN is having some issues collaborating with the food boxes project this year, which is why it hasn't rolled out yet, but I am hoping to roll it out by December or late November. I also met with my counsellors to talk about some of their ideas and how to implement them into the VPE portfolio. In addition to those meetings, I also met with the international counsellor, Stuti, and I hope that in the future, she will be able to give updates about the work that she has been doing. Lastly, I've been working with Michelle on the BIPOC scholarship which I'm sure she'll talk about later.

Kate: Could you remind me what the caucus date is?

Mehr: Fall Caucus is on November 27th, but I haven't settled on what day the Winter Caucus will be held yet.

Tran: Just a quick reminder that Caucus is mandatory, and you all need to be there!

Kate: Is Caucus an all-day thing?

Mehr: It usually lasts around 3 hours in the evening, so no it's not all day but be prepared to stay longer if needed.

VP Internal (Tran):

VP Student Organizations (Jay): 5 minutes

Jay: Last week on Friday night, I held the all clubs meeting that was a closed meeting meant for club heads to discuss what the year is looking like and special topics that they are considering this year. I got a lot of really good feedback from clubs that I am currently working to summarize and see what needs to be followed up on. I recently created a handbook for levy heads and prospective levy heads that consolidates VUSAC policies on levies and their general responsibilities and potions in relations to VUSAC. Additionally, Student Projects is finishing up hiring but otherwise the committee is up and running so submit your funding requests! Equity training is still going on and I've been following up with clubs and levies to make sure that they get that done. For reference, 50% of all clubs' execs are required to attend equity training to receive winter funding and 75% of all levy executives—which has to include the levy heads—are required to attend or else they could get disbanded the following year. I reached out to clubs and levies to help them get CCR validation for their clubs and levies. This year I think it was a bit more accessible which was awesome.

President (Michelle): 7 minutes

Michelle: I wanted to congratulate Fatima for the event that she hosted last week! It was super successful! As Mehr mentioned, we've been working on the BIPOC student award. This is an

award that is based on student leader participation that will go towards a BIPOC student. We currently drafting up our explanation for it and we are sending it over to Alumni Affairs and the Registrar so that they can start asking for donations to the award. Essentially, they are helping us establish the funding for this award. Our goal is \$25,000, so share with whoever you know and donate yourself if you are able to! Additionally, I am working on getting CCR recognition for VUSAC and hopefully we will know if we are approved for CCR recognition by January. In terms of a possible fee reduction for Winter 2020-2021, I am working with Ralph to determine how much we should reduce our fees and we'll incorporate the feedback we received from you all today. If you have more questions about this process, please email me! Our cheque requisition forms are open and have been for the last two weeks and it's up on our website!

Rheannon: I was wondering how long the turnover rate was for reimbursements?

Michelle: Once the request is put in, Ralph has to double check it with our approved budget and then I write the cheque and I wait until I have around 10 of those until I send them out. If you want to expedite the process, just make sure you're providing all the information necessary.

Mehr: Michelle did an awesome job summarizing the BIPOC award, but I wanted to encourage you all to donate to this fund even if it's just \$5, that helps a lot!

Motion by Michelle to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Kate. Motion passes.

- Favour: all
- Opposed: none
- Abstained: none

Meeting adjourned at 7:43 PM.