VUSAC Meeting Agenda

**Call to order:** 5:30 pm EST, October 1st, 2021

**Land Acknowledgement:**

*Sooyeon*

*As most of you National Day of Truth and Reconciliation was yesterday on September 30th. I hope everyone had a chance to reflect on Canada’s colonial history and the ongoing treatment of indigenous people. Because we attend the University of Toronto, we learn and benefit from the land of the Huron-Wendat, the first nation Seneca and the Mississaugas of the Credit River. It is really important to understand why we do a land acknowledgement and ask ourselves how we plan to take action to support the indigenous community. Some ways are donating your money or time to indigenous organizations, supporting indigenous-led change movements, and so much more. I have been taking time to reflect on being an immigrant person who wasn’t born in Canada. We all benefit from the land that is designed to oppress indigenous people. I sincerely urge you all to think about how you can support indigenous folks in your everyday lives and in meaningful ways.*

**Official Regrets:**

*Fatima Rana, Kate Haberl (Proxied by Sooyeon Lee)*

**Absent:**

**Approval of minutes:**

*Motion by Sooyeon Lee to approve the minutes for July 30th and September 17th, Seconded by Kayla Man*

*All in favour. None opposed. None abstaining. Motion passes.*

**Additions to the agenda:**

*Fatima Rana, Kate Haber UTSU Update by Halit Erdogan*

**Approval of the agenda:**

EX-OFFICIO REPORTS:

*Motion: Sooyeon Lee motions to give Ali Kehl speaking rights, seconded by Kayla Man.*

*All in favour. None opposed. None abstaining. Motion passes.*

*Campus Life Coordinator, put forth by Ali Kehl (3 minutes)*

Ali: Hi everyone, my name is Ali, and I am the new CLC at Victoria College. I want to start by explaining my relationship with Vic. I did my undergrad at Vic and was very involved with orientation, VUSAC, and I was a Levy head. I then went on to do my masters at OISE, where I was a Don, and have been working at Rotman Commerce as the Student Life Coordinator for the past year and a half. I am now back at Vic and super excited to be back. I am here to relay information on behalf of the Office of the Dean of Students. With election season over, please take time to be kind to yourself and congratulations on a successful election period. Thank you for everything, and I look forward to working with you for the rest of the year.

*USTU Update, put forth by Halit Erdogan (3 minutes)*

Halit: Hi everyone, my name is Halit. I wanted to take this opportunity to update you all on my platform and my plans for this year. Some of my responsibilities are to represent Vic at the UTSU Board of Directors meetings and share any updates with you all. Over the past few months, I have been elected to the Executive Review Comminute and the Clubs committee. As members, we hold the executives accountable for their actions and discuss the UTSU’s policies surrounding the different groups and clubs. I was thinking of sharing bi-weekly updates on VUSAC’s Instagram story or creating a separate page to share updates. My last update is that on October 8th at 5 PM, the USTU will be holding its annual general meeting, and I encourage you all to attend. It is an opportunity for you to hold your executives accountable for the promises made while campaigning and directly engaging with the Student Union on important matters.

Jerico: I will add that if you do want to do engagement, we can connect you with the Communications Coordinator

ACTION ITEMS:

*Motion: Jericho Raguindin motions to ratify Mary Cortiñas as the VUSAC Commuter Commissioner 2021-2022, seconded by Sooyeon Lee (3 minutes)*

Jerico: There was no Commuter Commissioner candidate in the fall elections; therefore, we have a vacant position that reopened after the previous commissioner resigned. Since no one ran, the executive of VUSAC is allowed to appoint a candidate for the role. We hired mary as the Commuter Co-chair this past spring. She has been running the Commuter Commission since hired early in the summer and by herself since the commissioner resigned in August. She has been doing great work upholding the standards of VOCA. We felt the only move would be to appoint Mary and hire a new VOCA co-chair.

Mary: I was the previous co-chair for a few months. I have been handling VOCA on my own since August with the help of the fantastic team. I feel like I can succeed in this role with the help of a new co-chair.

*All in favour. None opposed. None abstaining. Motion passes.*

*Motion: Jerico Raguindin motions to VUSAC Fall 2021 Election results, seconded by Kayla Man (5 minutes)*

Jerico: It is standard procedure for the council to ratify the election results, essentially meaning we accept the election results. After this, if you are not an ex-officio, you will be given full voting rights. I commend everyone for running a successful campaign.

*All in favour. None opposed. None abstaining. Motion passes.*

*Motion: Jerico Raguindin motions to ratify Alyssa Nurse as the VUSAC Arts & Culture Commissioner 2021-2022, seconded by Sooyeon Lee (3 minutes)*

Jerico: The Arts and Culture position has been vacant for the past two elections. We had to look for a candidate since no one ran, so I started looking at the candidates that ran this past fall election. We believe Alyssa to be a great candidate as she ran for the international councillor. We believe that the commission would benefit from her ideas and the platform that she used to campaign.

Alyssa: I just wanted to thank the council for considering me for this position. I am excited to learn more about this position and do the best that I can.

*All in favour. None opposed. None abstaining. Motion passes.*

*Motion: Jerico Raguindin motions to ratify Victoria Environmental Fashion Show as a VUSAC-recognized club for the 2021-2022 school year, seconded by Sooyeon Lee (2 minutes)*

Jerico: They are a longstanding club at Vic and host a fashion show every year. They get students to model and create designs while focusing on sustainability and environmentalism. They sent their application to Kate, and it was her recommendation to ratify them as a club.

*All in favour. None opposed. None abstaining. Motion passes.*

DISCUSSION ITEMS:

*VUSAC Strategizing, put forth by Jerico Raguindin (15 minutes)*

Jerico: I would like to specifically ask the new members of the council what exactly they want from the council and what they envision VUSAC to be doing over the next year.

Tabina: Hi everyone. One thing I had put in my campaigning is to make more in-person events. Vic is slowly opening up, and I would like to see VUSAC implement more in-person events. It will take some time to build that up, but I think it is a likely possibility towards the second semester.

Cam: Hi everyone, it’s lovely to meet you all and very excited to be working with you all. I am excited to be working to make Vic a more equitable place as the Equity Commissioner. Please send me a message if you ever want to talk, and I would love to get to know you.

Tazneen: Hi everyone, I am the newly elected International Councillor. I put in my campaign that I would like to improve international students’ financial/mental support. Especially in times of COVID, things are unpredictable, and some students may need financial support. Any way that we can help them would be greatly appreciated.

Rebecca: Hi everyone, there were two main points that I wanted to bring up. Many people don’t understand the available academic resources, and centralizing that information would benefit all incoming first years. Secondly, looking at the environmental impact. I live in residence, get my food at Burwash, and I see the piles of trash that accumulate. I hope to get rid of, or at least minimize the waste that we produce. It would be better for everyone if we made less of an environmental impact by increasing recycling signage or even creating a compost system.

Alexander: For Tabina, are there events that happened pre-pandemic that you would like to prioritize in the first phase of reopening? Are there any new events that you would like to pursue?

Tabina: One thing that I really wanted to bring back, in relation to the commuter commission, was home for the holidays. Over the pandemic, it was moved to an online event. While it was extremely successful and awesomely done, I want to bring it back as an in-person event, especially since it is not until the end of the semester. I haven’t thought of that in terms of new events, but I am always open to suggestions.

David: I wanted to address what Rebecca brought up earlier. I think something we could aim for is for the dining hall to be reopened. I think it would solve a lot of the waste issues and provide a warm place to have a meal as we approach the colder months.

Jerico: Regarding events, feel free to say them out here. For new members of VUSAC, don’t hesitate to ask about the bounds of what VUSAC does or can do. One of the benefits of having new members is that we can use your drive to generate new ideas that best support the students.

Cam: One of the things I wanted to get started on is the Doc ‘n Talks. As someone who has not been to previous Vic equity events, I gather that they have been very exciting, so I hope to get started on organizing that again as soon as possible.

Tazneen: I was thinking about having a cultural fashion show/food for students who want to represent their culture. It will also expose the students to new cultures, which would be a great opportunity.

Jerico: As the president, I want to iterate that the council does want to support you and your portfolios and facilitate overall collaboration.

Rebecca: At my old school, we had an eco-friendly gift wrapping table that would be set up around the holidays. People would bring in gifts, and we would have newspapers and other recyclable materials. I think overall it would be a really great and fun idea.

Jocelyn: I really want to do something for Halloween, like haunted houses in the quad or Halloween-themed options for people to partake in.

Bright: I wanted to start by saying that I am glad to be here and work with you all. Going off of Jocelyn’s comment, we could do a Halloween funfair and do Halloween activities. Activities like pumpkin carving would be a great way to have fun while still adhering to covid regulations. Any Halloween-themed events would be great to see this upcoming month.

*VUSAC Retreat, put forth by Jerico Raguindin (8 minutes)*

Jerico: The VUSAC retreat is a weekend where we get to meet each other, get to know each other and receive training. That weekend we will get equity training, conflict/team-building training. The sustainability commission last year did sustainable events and sustainable office policy. I wanted to open a discussion to determine what all members would like to see out of a retreat.

Jocelyn: Would this be in person?

Jerico: That is still currently up in the air. The retreat is tentatively scheduled for the weekend of the 16th and the 17th. Whether or not we can facilitate it in person, or postpone it for another week, has not been determined.

Cam: I would certainly advocate for an in-person retreat.

Soo: Out of curiosity, will we be able to order meals and get them reimbursed by VUSAC for the retreat?

Jerico: For context, last year’s retreat was online, and the food was reimbursed. If the event is in person, we will facilitate free food.

Elsa: If we are elected as ex-officio members, will we also have the opportunity to attend the event?

Jerico: Typically, ex-officio members have not attended the retreat, but I don’t see why other student leaders adjacent to VUSAC wouldn’t be able to participate.

Ali: I also wanted to promo that there will be a student leader day coming within the next month. That will be open for all student leaders, and it is an excellent way for you to meet other students interested in bringing more to the Vic community. Many opportunities are coming up for you to have equity training and to build on your pre-existing skills.

*VUSAC Merch, put forth by Jerico Raguindin (8 minutes)*

Jerico: An idea has been jumping around between Kayla and myself, where we wanted to use one of the Cat’s Eye’s ideas. They let out some great merch and pins, and we were thinking of creating collectible pins/stickers for the commissions and VUSAC itself. We just wanted to see what everyone thought.

Tabina: I love that idea because I thought the same thing when they released the merch, even for the collectibles. I also thought it would be a great idea if everyone got customized pins with their name or an emoji or their position on the council.

Cam: Pronoun pins with maybe some student art would also be great.

Alexander: How would it be funded?

Jerico: I wanted to put it up to the council to discuss whether or not we want it to be an incentive for our events or if it would be more generally available. If the latter, we would be selling it as merchandise to add to the rest of our items. I am open to all ideas on how we would want to distribute the items.

Alexander: Will you try student projects?

Jerico: I would think Student Projects would be an option, especially if for a larger mass. If it were something the commissions wanted to do as an incentive, that would be part of the commission budget. For context, Student Projects Fund is a levy group that provides funding for students proposing different projects.

Julie: From a commission standpoint, it doesn’t feel super cohesive, so I think general members would really appreciate it if they were considered as well. I would be thrilled to help you with the design of all this.

Jerico: I think it’s a great idea because commission members are also very important.

Jocelyn: Do we have an online store for placing orders?

Jerico: We do not.

Alexander: Would you consider doing proceeds for charitable organizations? Is this possible within our policies?

Jerico: I would have to look into it, but I believe it would be. For context, there are a bunch of rules on what VUSAC can and can’t fund. I will have to check to be sure.

*Motion: Sooeyon Lee motions to extend the discussion by 3 minutes, seconded by Tabina Ahmed*

*All in favour. None opposed. None abstaining. Motion passes.*

Soo: I just wanted to say that it’s really nice to have new faces on council. If you’re on council for some time or have been around for a bit, you tend to fall back on the same grooves of what we can and can’t do. It gets hard to come up with new ideas, so having you guys on here is great. Please keep sharing your thoughts, and let us know if you need any help connecting to resources.

Jerico: Please don’t be afraid to act in this space. This is a space for all Vic students’ benefit.

Cam: Thank you, everybody!

STAFF REPORTS:

*Fall Elections, put forth by Malhaar Moharir (10 minutes)*

Malhaar: Hi everyone, my name is Malhaar, and I am the Chief Returning Officer for this year’s elections. I will be publishing a comprehensive report for the elections. I wanted to give a quick update and ask for some feedback on the process. In this cycle, we had 20 people running for 23 positions. On a good note, we had a very clean campaigning period. Moreover, Town Hall also went well. The candidates were very engaged, and so were some students based on the questions we received. For what can be improved, we had a very disappointing turnout. The spoil rate averaged around 11%, which is pretty standard. Going into the Spring Elections, we need to discuss what can be done about voter turnout. The second thing is improving the Elections and Referenda Code. There were a lot of grey areas where I couldn’t provide a definitive answer. I think the ERC needs to be updated to accommodate better for a variety of scenarios. On a lighter note, I wanted to thank Jerico and Anne for all their help and support throughout this process, and I could not have done it without you guys. Lastly, I wanted to thank all of the new VUSAC members for running and a big congratulations on winning.

Alexander: Why do you think fewer folks were running for positions than positions offered, and how could that be improved next year? How, in general, can VUSAC incentivize students to run for VUSAC?

Malhaar: In all honesty, I am not sure why. It might’ve been people getting settled into classes or may be feeling overwhelmed with the process. One thing that I do want to change going forward is improving accommodation and accessibility. It is a relatively short election period, and creating more comprehensive guidelines would better inform the students about the positions. I have no concrete responses, but I would like to discuss them as we approach the spring elections.

Fatima academic: I have been talking to Learning Strategists and other students, and one notable thing this year has been very early burnout. I am not surprised by the low turnout because of the different transition period that we are in.

Tabina: Being a CRO when things are so uncertain is hard, and I understand that. For sure, when you see an extended package and need 5-10 nominations, it can be pretty overwhelming. When I was CRO, one thing that I received was to make the nominations process online. You did do a fantastic job, but I think we can constantly improve on the advertisement. We should be doing Q&A sessions for every position instead of for only some, and it would help maximize the outreach.

*Motion: Jerico Raguindin motions to extend the discussion by 20 minutes, seconded by Mary Cortiñas*

*All in favour. None opposed. None abstaining. Motion passes.*

Malhaar: We did lower the nomination requirements for numerous positions. We could have done that before the nominations period had begun. We did make adjustments during the period, which may have also led to some confusion. I think we could ramp up advertising before.

Tazneen: A lot of first-year students don’t even know about VUSAC. Considering online situations, we definitely need to increase online advertisement, which could help alleviate the low voter turnout.

Derek: I will say as a candidate, the advertisement was a major issue. I first heard about VUSAC 3 days before nominations were due. Another thing would be to possibly do mandatory voting for Vic students. Having some sort of mandatoriness would increase turnout.

Jerico: I agree; the turnout was extremely low. In terms of mandatory voting, it is an interesting idea and something to consider.

Malhaar: It did come across my mind, but the biggest thing was how we would accomplish this. Jerico and I did talk about maybe rewarding students for voting through a raffle system. The issue with that is the voting system itself is very finicky and would make it difficult to prove that people voted. If there is a better way, we can definitely discuss it over the next few months.

Rebecca: I think the timing and the fact that it’s all online made it difficult for a lot of people to advertise. With social media being the only way to campaign, it was very restrictive for many students and difficult to promote it to people outside of specific groups they know. If we could get other Vic groups involved and encourage students to vote would be extremely helpful.

Jerico: Since a lot of this revolves around advertising, I wanted to ask how you initially found out about all of this? Was it through the VUSAC Instagram, and how did you originally come across the account? How do we get more people to follow the Instagram account?

Rebecca: One of the ways that I found out about it was through one of the emails that I made a note of, but I understand for most people, that could get lost in all the other emails we receive.

Tabina: I had found out about it all through the Instagram account, specifically the stories. The Vic community is pretty strong, so I personally feel like social media is a great way to find out about it. The stories are especially helpful because they’ll have a lot of club opportunities and hiring.

Derek: I heard it through a friend of mine in MAT137, who told me that they were thinking of running. I then went rummaging through my junk folder and found the email 3 days before it was due.

Alyssa: I first heard about VUSAC in my first year when I saw all the campaign flyers in the Vuc quad. It wasn’t until I saw Fatima run for Academic Commissioner that I started taking more of an interest in getting more involved. That’s how I found out about the website and the constitution etc.

Jerico: While Instagram is used by many, it isn’t the most inclusive. A great resource is everyone’s UofT email, but, understandably, many people don’t read them. I never thought that classes would be something VUSAC would permeate through, but that’s great to hear.

Soo: I first heard about VUSAC in my first year by my don, and I saw her as such a big influence. In the future, we should ask Residence Dons, Commuter Dons, Transition Mentors and other student leaders to help get the word out. Many first-years ran this year, and I think most upper years are burnt out by this point, especially after a covid year. It’ll help with the turnout rate when things begin to reopen because it’s so much harder to promote things online.

Jackson: Advertising to as many people as possible is the best way to boost voter turnout. Last year my first-year math professor would post weekly announcement updates that included a lot of resources for students. Maybe initially sending an email to the Dons, Mentors, and even the professors could help with engagement. Yes, they might not want to, but you never.

Jerico: All of the student societies across UofT run elections around the same time, so maybe it could be a joint collaboration.

Tazneen: We have seminar courses and the VicOne program. We could ask the different professors and TAs to help promote and build up engagement.

Rebecca: I know that VicOne sends out a weekly newsletter listing all of the opportunities. I think it would be feasible to ask them to include some of our advertisements as well.

Tabina: Reaching out to VicOne or any academic program offered at Vic and asking them to advertise for/with us would be great. I know that a message is sent out to neutral parties, informing them on how to remain neutral. We could maybe have them promote voting while still remaining neutral.

Jerico: We could actually mandate it. VUSAC governs Levy head, clubs, but not Dons. We could put it in their responsibilities for them to promote the elections. Thank you, everyone, for speaking and engaging. It’s been very thrilling.

*Motion: Tabina Ahmed motions to adjourn the meeting, seconded Rebecca Muscant*

*All in favour. None opposed. None abstaining. Motion passes.*

*Meeting adjourned at 7:12 PM.*