VUSAC Meeting Agenda

**Call to order:** 5:35 pm EST, November 4, 2022

**Land Acknowledgement:**

*Tariq*

*Let us take a moment of silence to acknowledge the land.*

**Official Regrets:** Juhyung Yun (Proxy: Kate), Amy Mann, Diana Vink (Proxy: Jackson), Dhir Shah, Zoe Lazaris (Proxy: Sooyeon), Vincent Espenida

**Absent:**

**Additions to the agenda:**

*Dean of Students Update by Shane Joy (3 minutes)*

*Instagram Takeovers by Sooyeon Lee (3 minutes)*

**Approval of the agenda:**

*Motion by Michael Elsaesser to approve the agenda for November 4, Seconded by Tariq Harney*

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

EX-OFFICIO REPORTS:

*Motion by Sooyeon Lee to give Kelley Castle speaking rights, Seconded by Dhir Shah*

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

Kelley: This is just an update on the issue around the proposed early start date. I brought it up in our meeting and have been told that it is going ahead. They aaid that other institutions do this, and I brought up mental health issues, orientation, working students who will have to cut their work short, commuter students, and international students. I brought up how orientation shouldn’t be simplified to a social item when it’s important for students to be able to navigate UofT. People who move here will have to get an apartment that would start in August, etc.

Shane: Is this something that is going to be publicized?

Kelley: The registrar of UofT will be announcing it. But, I’d like you to think if there are constructive things coming out of this? My issue is that people don’t have that same understanding of orientation and its importance as an event.

Tariq: It’s pretty much a done deal, but is there something we can do as student government?

Kelley: That’s up to you.

Shane: Could we publicize the issue?

Kelley: Sure.

Sooyeon: So The Varsity released an article on the dates changing but there’s no actual information publicized on what the dates would be.

Kelley: We will for sure be ending by April 30th, and the two Reading Weeks will remain the same, but aside from that I don’t know what else is implied by the whole situation. The whole thing to me is the implications on Orientation–I’m worried about what this means for the mental health of the students. Apparently Trinity Students didn’t react angrily, they were just devastated. Orientation is really important, majority of students go through it, so talk amongst yourselves, reach out to Trinity and St. Mikes and the UTSU.

Luca: Did they ever mention the impacts on orientation at all?

Kelley: I did. There’s issues with crisis intervention, food services, and staffing it, but it’s possible to work around it, but the question is if the loss will be substantial. We can pivot easily but it’s something we need to think about it.

Cameron: When it comes to what contingencies Vic has planned, have we looked into reorientation in the middle of the year?

Kelley: We’ve tried reorientation, but when students start class they get in the zone, and based on my experience students just become occupied with school. Orientation is really integral as it intertwines with mental health, and a student’s development happens in a context like a social experience. What I don’t want to happen is have this go down with no conversation with students.

Shane: It doesn’t seem like a student-centred approach though.

Kelley: They’re saying that the misalignment of dates is extremely frustrating to students, but I don’t hear that. So, it begs the question of at what cost and to what benefit they’re actually doing this.

*Motion: Sooyeon Lee motions to grant Ali Kehl speaking rights, seconded by Jackson Leslie*

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

Ali: Most of my updates are similar to the one you heard during our previous meeting, I’ve been working on VUSAC projects mostly. And just to remind everyone, if you’d like to be a rosebearer as a part of the memorial, we do need ten folks, it’s just putting a rose on the table and it’s very simple. We had a good meeting for Home for the Holidays, same with Semi and Gardiner Gala. There are tickets left for our TM trip to the Royal Ontario Fair, so go check that out. Co-Chair applications are open for orientation as well. We’ve also been responding to a lot of high crisis things, so please take care of yourself this reading week.

ACTION ITEMS:

*Motion: Charlie Sun to reallocate $40 from material expenses to food cost for the mental health workshop, seconded by Jackson Leslie (7 minutes)*

Thomas: Quick question, when you mean reallocating from material to food costs, then it’s already budgeted, it just needs to be moved, right? So we actually can just have a friendly amendment and don’t need to motion to change this.

*Motion: Jackson Leslie to reallocate money within the equity commission budget, seconded by Shane Joy (3 minutes)*

Cam: So what happened is we had our field tris planned, but the second one had unforeseen fees, while the first had unforeseen savings, so we’re just transferring the amount of money to the second field trip to cover those fees.

Thomas: Which lines are those?

Cam: Lines 359 to 360.

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

DISCUSSION ITEMS:

*Collecting student feedback, put forth by Sooyeon Lee (5 minutes)*

Sooyeon: So I’ve talked to a couple of different members on council about this. Right now, on the VUSAC website, we have an anonymous feedback form that rarely gets used. So if anyone has any thoughts as to how we can collect feedback, that would be great.

Jackie: For some context, the anonymous feedback form is not really used, people dont submit stuff, they just ask questions, so there’s no feedback coming in.

Lara: I was setting up a feedback box but after talking to Shane he recommended a QR code instead, so I was thinking if we had the QR code link them to the same survey on the website so that the collection is still streamlined in one form?

Emilie: VOCA has a Fall and Winter programming survey, where we ask students specific questions on events they’d like to go to, and then we have a raffle at the end for incentive for people to give feedback.

Shane: Yeah, I think QR codes should be used instead of a box, because I think if someone has something critical to say, most people would be more inclined to scan the code and answer it privately than right in front of the office where there’s a VUSAC member watching them.

Pooja: What if we put the box at the front of the building?

Shane: I think it should be closer to VUSAC which is more visible, than in the front of the building where people are more likely to walk right past it.

Luca: I think that we should do short surveys weekly or biweekly. Honestly, most people can’t be bothered to scan a QR code, so I think something quick like on Instagram would be better. I think more people are likely to tap through stories and we should use that channel more extensively.

Cam: I agree with Luca. I will say though, a purely anonymous form might be risky and won’t be very constructive if it invites really bad stuff.

*Motion by Sooyeon Lee to extend the discussion of collecting student feedback, seconded by Luca Carnegie.*

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

Dhir: I think we need to work on engagement as well as outreach, that’s what the Academic Commission needs to work on too. Instead of answering surveys, we should increase in-person engagement with students, that way we can also make people more aware of what VUSAC does.

Julie: I think there’s different tiers here. On one hand, people might have actual complaints about their professor or Vic and think they can go to us. There are multiple ways to reach students, so how can we get all this information and streamline it efficiently? We need to treat VUSAC feedback and Vic feedback as separate things.

Shane: I agree, and if we’re talking about the format of the feedback too, if we did a monthly thing and promote it on socials and outside the VUSAC office, as well as keeping it anonymous, that would be good. When students have criticisms it’s important that we hear those things, and with bad stuff, I think that’s a given when dealing with an anonymous form. I don’t want to impede people from giving feedback because we don’t make it anonymous. Last year, VUSAC messed up with Ramadan, so for things like that I think it’s really crucial that we let students feel safe and that we don’t judge them.

Caitriona: If we’re looking into student engagement, I think we should look into Instagram polls and make it as easy as possible for them to submit. So things like multiple choice is easier, and when asking for specific feedback they’re more likely to leave actual suggestions other than what they answered.

Dhir: I agree with that. I also feel that although it’s important to have surveys, we should also complement it with in-person conversations. Through that, we can learn what people really feel about VUSAC.

Luca: Are you trying to say we should have VUSAC members actively listening for feedback?

Dhir: I’m saying we should increase engagement with people–strike random conversation.

Luca: But there needs to be some way that information can be recorded, there definitely should be some sort of feedback system. Striking conversation like that can be inorganic.

*Motion by Shane Joy to extend the discussion of collecting student feedback, seconded by Maarib Haseeb.*

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

Dhir: I think we should have a monthly event with members like the Execs to listen to people and have people drop in. The in-person touch will really make a difference.

Shane: VUSAC has office hours though, so if they feel comfortable talking to us then they can use that time.

Luca: That’s assuming they have the confidence to come and approach us though. My first year, I was shy to approach VUSAC, so I’d be surprised if they had that confidence. I think we should have VUSAC members during events like Souper Soup to discuss, and just have that active channel of feedback.

Shane: I don’t see how that channel of conversation would be managed though.

Luca: You can just converse, but it would take time to implement.

Shane: This should be something we consider in addition to a survey.

Dhir: Yeah, I intended for it to be complemented with the survey.

*Bi-weekly newsletter, put forth by Jackson Leslie (10 minutes)*

Jackson: I had my check-in with Jackie, and we discussed how responses are with the newsletter. Something I was discussing with Jackie was to have more frequent updates, and I was wondering why people haven’t been submitting. My thought is that if we bring it down to biweekly instead of monthly, we can have more submissions. Knowing events a month in advance might be difficult, so bi-weekly might be better.

Jackie: The number of submissions are decreasing, but bi-weekly might be different, but the content might not be changing that much. If you think it’s because of the time frame, then bi-weekly would be the better choice.

Maarib: That was pretty much the reason for us, because space bookings take time, so we don’t always known a month in advance, and the smaller events planning happens within two weeks. I would also suggest that the same newsletter isn’t sent out twice if the information hasn’t changed.

Lara: For me personally, I wanted to put what’s going on with the VUSAC office, but I don’t plan that until the month begins, and then it’s too late for me to send that for the newsletter.

Tariq: I wasn’t actually aware we had a newsletter. Do you want written content or just dates for events?

Jackie: The number of people reading is 150 and the recipients are about 300. The information can be either advertisements or recruitments, which is what people mostly send. If it’s just informative and not an event, then that’s perfectly fine. People usually submit only for an event but it’s okay otherwise.

Julie: I would be cautious about more emails right now. Social media is a good avenue to promote that doesn’t clog your inbox.

Sooyeon: I know we have our calendar on the office door too. Something we could do is direct people to that calendar on our Instagram. It’s just something we can try out if you’re curious about redirecting people too.

Dhir: I think outreach is important. Not many people, not even half of the student body reads or subscribes to the newsletter.

Luca: I think we need to expand the reach we have. In addition to what Soo suggested, we should have a wall with the initiatives of each commission in addition to the events happening around the college.

Lara: I think that’s a great idea. As a side note, part of the initiatives I wanted to start was creating summaries of our meeting minutes that are easy to read available at the office so people know what we’re discussing for them.

Shane: What’s the process for signing up? Is there any way to have all Vic students get the newsletter, because we are a student union, so I think everyone who votes should get our newsletter.

Anne: So there is a way to send an email to every Vic student, and we only use that for elections, and it was used for the newsletter before. But what happened was that people kept unsubscribing.

Pooja: I think that people are less likely to unsubscribe because they’re lazy to unsubscribe.

Jackie: The subscribing process is just the signup form on our website.

*Motion by Dhir Shah to extend the discussion of collecting student feedback by five minutes, seconded by Luca Carnegie.*

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

Shane: I think if you were to give all the students a newsletter, then you’d still be getting a net increase in views. And if a student is willing to go out of their way to unsubscribe, then that’s fine.

Jackson: I think that the two weeks is better for everyone, so that would be a good idea. Lara made a Google Calendar for VUSAC, I think people can upload your events there. And then we also have a separate VUSAC calendar on the website. But yeah, I think we can do biweekly and then people can just unsubscribe if they’re not interested.

Dhir: We should also keep data on how many people unsubscribe, and we can figure out how better to promote VUSAC.

Carolyn: I think the newsletter would help Vic students be more aware of what’s going on, since students aren’t typically in the loop of the events.

Jackie: If we did a biweekly newsletter, I think this would be possible starting from January, because the November Newsletter is already out, and to publish one right after, and then in December there’s exam season.

Shane: January is fine, cause there’s only a week in December anyways.

Maarib: I think we could also do Instagram stories with what’s happening this week in VUSAC.

*Victoria College Helpers – website budget addition, put forth by Thomas Keough (20 minutes)*

Thomas: So let me just refresh you all, Victoria College helpers wants a website for a little under $500. So the representative sent us a video, which we will play now.

Rebecca: Hi VUSAC committee, I’m Rebecca Rafael, I’m the student leader at Victoria College Helpers. Thank you for giving me the space to share my concerns and kind of explain some of the background with our website at Wix. In my communication with Thomas he was telling me that some of the biggest concerns that the committee had was the cost of Wix and why we have to use such a comparatively expensive service when there are other services out there. So one of the options that the committee suggested in terms of reducing the cost is using a free service for our booking system like Calendly or Doodle Poll. I just I want to kind of give some background, so Victoria College Helpers, even though it's new at Victoria College, is a chapter of an organization that I've been running for the past five years called the Halifax Helpers. And because that organization is kind of student run, it started on my own funding out of my own pocket at the beginning. I was very much like, okay what is the lowest cost option that we can do, so I am very aware of the three alternatives that are out there and the downsides to that, So there are problems with using a free booking service like Calendly and the main one being that there is no centralized back end so when you make a Calendly or when you're using calendly for bookings, each tutor has to have their own, so if students can look through or they're having difficulty contacting the tutor or they said they missed the session, or they said their tutor missed a session, I can't check any of that because I don't have access to the back end of Calendly. So that means that there's really no accountability there, and I'm also not able to support the students as well when they have issues with the bookings. Another problem with using kind of a non-centralized service where I can't keep track of what's happening is that it leaves a lot at the whims of the tutors and that's a huge safety concern, especially when we're working with young kids. If I can't track what's happening within the organization and something does happen I have no way of being able to kind of see where this action is taking place, if it happened, who the tutor or who the student was working with, and that's a really big liability for our organization. And just because again, it is a non-profit, we are accountable to other donors. This is just isn't something that can happen, I have to be able to track everything on a centralized platform. One more thing with having a non-centralized platform like Doodle Poll, it makes it a lot more difficult to do our recording. This has a few impacts–the first is, students that want uses for volunteer hours also applying for CCR so people who need to actually track their hours, they're not able to do so accurately. Being able to have essentially a system, I can see how many hours of people done, so by not having that it's a detriment to students. Another thing is that because we can't trust the hours we have then we've offered tutoring sessions for the amount of students that we've heard it's a really difficult to apply for other sources of funding and to report to donors. And because when you're growing organization like this having hours is so important to show the work that you've done and if we're not able to show numbers accurately. I tried other ways when using these three services to collect them right, I'm looking at a Google form and it doesn't work and you don't get the numbers accurately because people forget to report things and then we can't give those numbers to donors constantly because we don't know if they're the right numbers. So just in terms of student reporting and in terms of us growing as an organization it's really important that you have tracked everything properly. Again, just on the line of safety, I'm fully aware of all of the safety because we’ve done an in-depth analysis of the safety and privacy around with booking so I'm fully aware and legally know that that is okay for our services to use.

Thomas: What I would like to mention is that she did mention that she’s willing to reallocate $200, bringing their request expense to $300. But the only thing there is the ethics of that choice because that would be the criminal record checks to make sure the students are safe.

Shane: I think we should definitely keep the criminal record checks. I think business basic is something that’s good for the first year.

Thomas: It’s $28/month, and $379 for a year, which is about $100 less.

Shane: I think that’s better.

Michael: The $200 makes it more accessible for students, but I would recommend not dipping in that fund as well. I think switching to the more basic plan would be the better option.

Shane: I definitely think it’s good to have background checks, so we should keep that.

Jackson: They mentioned that they’d be working with students in Halifax, I was wondering if Thomas or Michael know, are they planning to get Vic students to be tutors? At the end of the day we’re funding this club, given everything they said. They’re willing to drop down to basic plan, and hopefully next year’s council can upgrade that for them. Are they serving the Vic community by providing tutoring opportunities?

Michael: Halifax Helpers is a nonprofit, and Rebecca wanted to start a branch here. The tutoring is by Vic students and they want it to be as big as the Halifax Chapter, but growing it in Toronto through Vic.

Jackson: Are there any stipulations on Vic students being a tutor? I think that if we’re funding this club then students should be able to benefit like it being a job opportunity?

Michael: It does operate differently from the Halifax Chapter, but I can bring that up next time.

Cam: I was watching the video and it kind of felt like what other commissions lost money from the budget that was passed, I know equity lost like $400-500. And you know, this is a not a substantial act from an organization that wasn't here the first time, and wasn't here the second time, and now they sent a video. My question is the money that is going to be benefitting students who are not at Vic. And I feel that a better use for that, is for the commissions, for example, if you gave the Equity Commission another $400 we could do $400 of gender gear. We were told to budget in a conservative way, so between the work of our commission and the other commissions, I’d like to see that money go to commissions that directly serve the Vic community. I can’t vote but I encourage people to vote against it.

Rebecca: I’m not sure what level of criminal record check that’s intended for, because $200 will only cover three people, based on my knowledge. So I don’t think that’s sufficient, there’s probably better uses of that money.

Thomas: $200 is allocated for the level of criminal record checks that are cheaper, they’re for the non-vulnerable sector.

Ninon: It’s $20 if you’re a volunteer. For the non-vulnerable sector they try to make it free for volunteers.

Sooyeon: I think that student projects is a levy that’s good for this. On top of our regular clubs and commissions, I would be opposed to funding this and we can direct them there instead.

Thomas: She did say that she was looking to alternative sources of funding as well, so directing them to student projects might be best.

*Motion by Jackson Leslie to extend the discussion of collecting student feedback by five minutes, seconded by Shane Joy.*

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

Jackson: Moving forward, Michael can have a meeting to see how they can serve the Vic community, and propose student projects to fund the website plan they want.

Shane: I think not being able to attend the meeting shouldn’t be something we look down upon to get funding. Rebecca works on Fridays, and that’s why they couldn’t attend. VC Helpers gives the Vic students that tutoring opportunity. Commissions don’t technically lose the money, and I think it’s wrong to say that, because it’s just that commissions aren’t granted that money. We shouldn’t be favoring commissions over clubs.

Rebecca: So some context on Vic tutoring is that it’s open to anyone. I have limited experience going to tutoring, but every time I’ve been, there’s never been more than three or four people there, and I don’t think Victoria College Helpers will get more than that amount.

Michael: They only tutor younger students and it’s not for Vic students, but it does give Vic students the opportunity to tutor.

Cam: I totally agree with what Shane said, I don’t mean to say that they should be denied funding just because they didn’t come. But when we talk about the best use of money, it’s a matter of semantics whether we lost money or got it back anyways. That $300 going to Vic Helpers isn’t going to a commission that could be spending it directly on Vic students. So I think the question is, do we want money that will 100% going to benefit the students of our college who deserve it, because they pay Vic fees, or do we want to put that money to, what I think will provide a big amount of help to students tutoring, but also provide free tutoring to kids who do not pay VUSAC fees. The suggestion to redirect them to Student Projects will make sense cause they have a ton of money, whereas we have tighter circumstances.

*Motion by Shane Joy to extend the discussion of collecting student feedback, seconded by Dhir Shah.*

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

Maarib: I think that would be alleging that the club doesn’t contribute to students, and that’s not fair. They’re a Vic club, that’s why they went through the process. Just because they’re targeting a group outside of Vic that doesn’t necessarily mean they don’t contribute to Vic.

Dhir: I think if we had more figures, that would be good.

Michael: The Halifax branch has 80 volunteer tutors and 300 students, and they hope to grow to that.

Jackson: Yeah, I assumed it was tutoring students lower than the level we are. It’s a good opportunity for Vic students. It also sets a bad precedent if we say no to them, it shows that we favor Vic commissions over others, and we want to encourage students to get involved through clubs and their own initiatives. I think they should get their funding through student projects, and just because the money isn’t going to get granted they will be redirected back into clubs and commissions after our very expensive events in the winter.

Shane: I don’t think we should be funding based on where we think the money is the best place, because who’s to say that VUSAC’s interests and needs are more important. We should be funding not because we want to, but because it’s in the best interest of student needs.

*Home for the Holidays, put forth by Maarib Kirmani Haseeb (5 minutes)*

Maarib: So earlier this week we sent out an email to different clubs and levies. The email has a list of different ideas for booths you can run for Home for the Holidays, and it’s in the Fall 2022 ratified budget. Please read through the email and fill out the sign up form. If you have hesitation of running a booth, Emilie and I are here to support you. Home for the Holidays will not run without all of our participation. We’ve booked out the main floor of Old Vic and Alumni Hall. We’d love to have you, and I’d like to open up the floor to any questions you might have.

Luca: When does the form close?

Maarib: It doesn’t really close but let us know as soon as possible.

Lara: Did VUSAC already agree to running a booth?

Maarib: Yes.

STAFF REPORTS:

*Communication: Jackie (5 minutes)*

Jackie: So the commission website pages are up, and each commission has one page allocated. The sustainability, commuter, and academic commissions have their pages up and running. I sent out a reminder. This is not a choice, you have to put your page on there. Just send me an email, you can put an introduction of what you do, your events, and your members. You can look at the other commissions for reference, and just contact me if you have any questions. Also, the semi-annual report for council needs to be published before caucus, that’s the latest deadline, and I can’t grant any extensions. I’ll send out multiple reminders over reading week.

*Office Manager: Lara*

Lara: So for November I wanted to do a new month’s decor. I was thinking Thanksgiving and turkeys, but I don’t think we should be aligning with what Thanksgiving stands for historically. So, does anyone have any recommendations?

Julie: What about coffee?

Luca: Or warm beverages in general?

Jackson: Cold drinks please.

Lara: Okay so we’ll have it be beverage-themed.

Luca: We can have everyone’s favorite drink and then their face on it.

COMMISSION REPORTS:

*Academic: Dhir & Amanda (3 minutes)*

Amanda: We had our anti-procrastination night, which was successful despite late social media promotion. We had 25 plus attendees and it was four hours long. The doughnuts were popular, so we’re gonna keep that in mind for future events. We’re also going to change out logo through our logo design competition, and students can submit up to two designs and there will be prizes for the winners.

Dhir: Right now I’m working on the survey and we’re going to present a report to VUSAC.

*Scarlet & Gold: Ninon (3 minutes)*

Ninon: We have our Halloween giveaway, and we’re going to internally figure out who got the best costume. Semiformal is on Jan 20th, and we’re going to need volunteers. Given that there are two big events, it would be nice if you volunteered at least once. But you can’t drink, so choose which one you’d like to volunteer for. We’re also going to start planning themes, and we’ll probably be having weekly meetings soon, so if you have an idea for a theme you can just message me.

*Sustainability:*

Rebecca: We have four main projects going on. Our thrift was a couple of days ago and we got $700, and that goes into the Diva Cup fund. We have the Gideon Foreman lecture tonight, which is where Amy is. Tariq is running a blog project so we’re calling for submissions. And, we have a policy review for sustainability policy.

EXECUTIVE REPORTS:

*VPI: Jackson (5 minutes)*

Jackson: I’ve started check-ins this week, and everyone is keeping up with their duties. I’ve gotten a lot of positive feedback. Councillors, you’ll be next and we’re going to do check-ins next. Regarding office hours, some of you might not be showing up to time. So you do need to be there for the full two hours. You shouldn’t be more than fifteen minutes late, not leaving more than five minutes early, so do try to stick to the full two hours. For Home for the Holidays, it’s important that we put ourselves out there. Some of us might not be commuters but we want to foster that Vic community and encourage the commissions to do a booth. The exec and staff will do something on their own. Additionally, the VUSAC calendar is really good to keep everyone in the loop, so I strongly encourage you to update the calendar. For retreat, I think it went pretty well, I’m just waiting for one more presentation to be sent. In terms of CPR certification, we’re certified! I think it was a lot of fun. It also gives me some insight that I think we should have smaller and less frequent workshops instead of having everyone block off an entire weekend. Reading week is coming up, so take the time to take a break, enjoy your hobbies, stay safe, and we’ll see everyone soon.

ADDITIONAL ITEMS

*Instagram Takeovers by Sooyeon Lee*

Sooyeon: So something that the dons do is weekly takeovers. I think it would be fun if we did one council member a day, you can have fun facts about yourself, and how you can get involved, and increase engagement. Would people be interested in that? We can do the week of the 14th, and the week of the 21st, Jackie and I will coordinate and send out an email.

Jackie: You can have your name, program, position. And then choose things like study spaces, your role, tips on getting involved, services and resources, Q&A so people can ask questions, etc.

Julie: Is member mondays going to make a return? It was when a different member of council was introduced before.

*Motion: Shane Joy motions to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Michael Elsaesser*

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

*Meeting adjourned at 7:23PM.*