**VUSAC Meeting Minutes**

March 3rd at 5:30 PM in the Goldring Student Center

MINUTES

**In Attendance**

**VUSAC**

**Judiciary**

CO-PRESIDENT: Rahul Christoffersen

VP INTERNAL: Golda Greenspoon

VP STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS: Hannah Brennen

**Assessor Members**

CHAIR: Saambavi Mano

CHIEF RETURNING OFFICER: Taylor Cenac

SECRETARY: Artimes Ghahremani

FINANCE: Peter Huycke

**Commissioners & Councillors**

SCARLET AND GOLD: Zahavah Kay

SUSTAINABILITY : Jamil Fiorino-Habib

ACADEMIC AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT : Nina Christianson

COMMUTER : Co-Chair Karen Indraatmadja

ARTS AND CULTURE : Olivia Klasios

EQUITY: Commissionner Yasmine Hassen

**COUNCILLORS**

Milliene Xu

Melinda Hector

Sharon Tan

Jayde Jones

Tyler Biswurm

Alexa Breininger

**LEVIES**

**GUESTS**

Campus Life Coordinator Bergita Petro

Watson Li

**REGRETS**

VP EXTERNAL: Stephen Warner

CO-PRESIDENT: Stuart Norton

COMMUTER: Commissionner Isaac Khouzam

**ABSENT**

Hamboluhle Moyo

COMMUNICATIONS: Shailee Koranne

EQUITY : Co-Chair Zoe Kwan

Land Recognition: Stuart

Motion: Zahavah moves to approve the minutes from last meeting. Jamil seconds. Motion passes.

* Favour: All
* Abstained:
* Opposed:

Motion: Hannah moves to approve the agenda as it stands. Olivia seconds. Motion passes.

* Favour: All
* Abstained:
* Opposed:

*\*Saambavi adds a Cat’s Eye update for 1 minute*

*\*Hannah adds a VPSO/VPE update for 1 minute*

**REPORTS AND UPDATES**

***CLC – Bergita***

Bergita mentions the Campus Reconciliation First Listening’s conference, which is being hosted by VUSAC and the Dean’s Office. It is free for students to register. They will discuss the university’s role in the TRC’s call to action. Jamil adds the blanket exercise hosted by the Sustainability commission a few weeks ago will be performed again at the reconciliation event, and that students should attend if haven’t already.

***Cat’s Eye - Saambavi***

The Cat’s Eye co-managers are hoping to plan a fundraising week for Syria, and are reaching out for participation. Each Vic group has been asked to host an event with the objective of raising as much money as possible. Any ideas can be sent to [manager@catseye.ca](mailto:manager@catseye.ca).

***Constitution - Saambavi***

Motion: Golda moves to approve the council policies document and the constitution. Jayde seconds. Motion passes unanimously.

***Academic and Professional Development - Nina***

Nina says that on March 15 there will be an event with the student newspaper ‘Synergy: The Journal of Contemporary Asian Studies’, in the Cat’s Eye. There will be speakers and food. The event is from 4-6. Here is the registration link which is also available on Facebook. <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/resettlement-of-north-korean-defectors-in-south-korea-what-do-we-know-tickets-32198477513>.

The Journal of Contemporary Asian Studies is an undergraduate academic journal with a regional focus on East, Southeast, and South Asia and is founded at the Asian Institute of the University of Toronto.

On March 22, they will be working with U of T’s Coalition for Autism Research (UTCAR) This is an event for all students at Vic, but especially those in life sciences to get exposure to research opportunities and researchers. This will be from 3-4:30 in the Wymilwood lounge (location not finalized).

This event is going to be the first  of the UTCAR lecture series, a project meant to make autism spectrum disorders a topic of discussion on campus and allow students to learn about the enigmatic condition from experts within the field. The goal of VUSAC and UTCAR is to increase autism awareness and debunk myths about the condition. Professor Szatmari, who will be presenting his investigative interest in sex differences in autism's phenotypic presentation is Chief of the Child and Youth Mental Health Collaborative between CAMH, the Hospital for Sick Children and the University of Toronto.

***Arts and Culture – Olivia***

The Vic Variety show will be on March 31, which is the last Friday of term. Auditions will be held once next week and twice the week after. They will be at different times in the evening. She asks for councillors to help out and watch people’s auditions. Besides that, she will be postering and putting up Facebook events. If you would like to participate and show off your talents, sign up. They will also be accepting video submissions if you cannot audition in person.

***Scarlet and Gold – Zahavah***

The following was submitted by Zahavah through email and read at the meeting:

I wanted to review with you all the process of planning Highball.  There are two reasons I want to do this: firstly, for transparency and to allow you all to ask questions, and secondly to hear your feedback and use your questions to improve the process for future years.

The process of planning Highball began in early December, after I had selected the Highball Committee.  The majority of the committee is outlined by the constitution, but I allowed three additional spots to be opened to members of the VCU.  After selecting three students to join the mandated committee, one had to drop out due to personal reasons, leaving us with a total committee of thirteen, including myself and Emily Gilbert, the Campus Life Coordinator.

As a committee, we began by choosing a venue.  I created an email template including all necessary questions and gave the committee two weeks to contact venues they were interested in.  When we reconvened there were a lot of suggestions brought to the table.  As a group we narrowed it down to three venues by looking at dates available, distance from campus, and price.  We ultimately decided to move forward with Arcadian Court after visiting the venues and meeting with the staff.

Next we chose theme and divided the committee into subcommittees.  On the advice of my predecessor Stuart, I divided the group into two subcommittees: décor and catering.  The catering subcommittee was in constant contact with the event coordinator at the venue and myself to find a financially feasible way to feed all our guests.  Our original food choices totaled over 40,000 dollars, but by rearranging the event to be much more of a cocktail reception we managed to cut that almost in half.

The food selection is completely done by now, but the décor subcommittee is still working to finish the decorations.  Due to changes in the food and last minute additional costs, the décor subcommittee has had to work with much less money than I originally indicated they would have.  Although this has been frustrating, they never showed any discontent and have managed to spend only half of the final money I allotted them without sacrificing the experience of Highball in the slightest. I allowed the subcommittees a great deal of freedom and I hope they all feel their own choices, creativity, and voices are expressed in the event.  As we head into the event, the largest event of the Scarlet and Gold portfolio, I wanted to say a quick word of thanks to the entire VUSAC team.  These last few weeks have been some of the busiest of my life, and I have found it easy to feel negatively about myself and my abilities when hitting a road-block.  The constant support of the entire VUSAC team; from reaching out with a kind message, the staggering number of you who offered to volunteer, the social media promotion and excitement I have felt from all of you, and the verbal support I have gotten along the way have made this an extremely rewarding experience for me.  Thank you all for that.  I invite you all to ask any questions you have about the process as a means of improving it for the future, and elucidating it for the VCU.

Tyler asks if 13 was a good size. Zahavah says yes – she sits on both subcommittees and Emily doesn’t, the even number works out. The application is not mandated, but it is a good idea. The mandated positions are often people who are already involved at Vic eg; dons, VUSAC. It was a good way to welcome others.

Hannah asks what other venue options were. Zahavah says they started optimistic – CN Tower, ROM, and she brought forth many unrealistic suggestions. There were not feasible. Others were hotels, and places Highball has been in the past.

Rahul initiates a round of applause for Zahavah.

Milliene asks if Highball is not allowed to be at a repeat location. Zahavah says it is, but she didn’t want people to re-attend. Olivia says they try to cycle it within 4 years to keep it fresh.

Milliene asks how the theme was selected. Zahavah says they started by looking for cool wedding themes, and started a group Pinterest. The theme was initially “Starry Night,” but it sounded like a prom, so she pushed for Van Gogh in general.

Jayde commends Zahavah for her work, and says the only thing that could be construed as negative is that financially a few people are concerned about ticket prices – going forward, it might be a good idea to consider available options for lowering ticket price, like offering discounted prices for a “dance-only” option. The price can put stress on people.

Zahavah responds that this is understandable, but there are several things at play – the more VUSAC subsidizes the price, the more people who aren’t attending Highball are paying for it. Half the money would come from VCU members who aren’t going. That would take away money from things that everyone can benefit from. With the ticket prices, right now, the cost of the ticket doesn’t even cover dinner. That is part of the nature of what Highball is, the external venue. In terms of pricing, they looked at internal memory of previous Highballs, last years were heavily subsidized. In addition, given the tendency that Highball can run over budget, she wanted to push in our amount of money – which is currently almost $900 under budget. Given the way the ticket price is, if we had met expected revenue, the ticket prices would be over $60. She understands and relates, but just wanted to explain how they came to that number – this wasn’t an arbitrary decision, but future commissioners should look at the structuring of Highball as a whole. The separate dinner and dance ticket option was not feasible at this venue.

Motion: Hannah moves to extend by 3 minutes. Olivia seconds. Motion passes unanimously.

Hannah says Trinity has a number of tickets subsidized by a separate fund. There might be other bodies at Vic that could contribute, subsidizing those under strain. Zahavah has talked to Trinity about that – who decides? Is it an application? Who deserves financial aid? These questions are tricky. The S&G commissioner is not in a position to be reading financial applications, this would be a misuse of power. The more people apply for subsidized tickets, the more difficult it is to decide.

Hannah agrees, and asks if Zahavah would be opposed to having a third party decide, like the registrar. Olivia says as a concept it is a good idea, but it is just difficult to hammer out a process that would determine who is deserving. We do not have the right to decide whether applicants qualify for financial assistance.

Milliene says Highball is a great experience for the Vic community, but it is an entertainment event - there are other things like tuition… Zahavah clarifies Milliene’s point - that as wonderful as Highball is, if we are subsidizing students, there are more important things to subsidize.

Jayde reiterates that she brought up the ticket price because wanted to get people thinking about structural changes we can make as a council. Zahavah has done an amazing job, and there’s no room in the Scarlet and Gold Commissioner role as it currently stands to make these changes alone.

***CRO – Taylor***

Taylor says that nominations for the Spring elections close on March 15. Anyone asking about where to pick up packages can find them outside the office and on the VUSAC website. She encourages everyone to get them in on time or before the end date. She asks council to advertise elections wherever and to whoever they can. Taylor wants to make advertising more personal, not just on social media, but also talking to people you see. We have influence on campus, know people on residence, at Vic, and in classes, and should encourage people (only if NOT running) by voting and going on the Facebook forum.

A new addition is the voting contest. Voters can submit a picture of the approval page with the hashtag (TBD) and win one of two $10 gift cards. This is a good incentive.

Rahul asks what the number is for the 15% mark. Taylor says it hasn’t changed from Fall very much. Saambavi says about 600.

Milliene asks if it will be an Instagram hashtag. Taylor says everywhere.

***Yasmine and Jayde – Equity***

Yasmine clarifies the diversity thing from last week. The idea is to have 3 aspects – elections, encouraging people to vote with equity and diversity in mind. Last meeting this came across as ‘vote for the marginalized’ – instead, they want people to pay attention to platforms, language, and the benefits of a diverse council. One of the things brought up in caucus was incorporating equity into VUSAC dialogue. The campaign will be postering with different facts and statistics about equity, starting on the 8th. This will be before nominations close, so it won’t be perceived as an endorsement. Also, they will be doing one larger video or clips from the same theme. They will also be putting up blog-style posts on their Facebook page. That is to clarify what was said last meeting.

Jayde adds that the emphasis is the factual reality of what diverse teams can do. The posters have facts on them. Eg; “Ethnically diverse teams are more likely to re-examine facts, remain objective, and work smarter (Harvard Business Review, 2016)” Secondly, it has been an especially tough year for trans, non-binary and gender non-conforming students on campus. We on VUSAC have failed to give these students the safety they deserve. The Equity Commission will be supporting the “No Big Deal” Campaign, which was created by Lee Airton with the Sexual and Gender Diversity Office. Lee has expressed interest in coming to speak, so the commission is considering hosting a button making or coffeehouse-style event. The campaign will not be affiliated with VUSAC - the reason not to be visibly affiliated with VUSAC is because it might read performative since we haven’t done anything concrete this year to support trans, non-binary, and gender-nonconforming students at Vic. A key strength of the campaign is that the posters make equity more accessible. They offer plain-language ways to respond to certain questions and provide accessible information. It makes it easier for students to be allies and shut down conversations that make spaces unsafe. They hope the campaign canmake a positive difference in at least one student’s experience, but will not be publicly associating it with VUSAC.

Yasmine adds that at Town Hall there will be a speech reminding people the same things the campaign will be saying. Diversity is good, equitable language is a good thing, vote wisely. Pay attention to platforms, and don’t just vote for people you like.

***VPSO – Hannah***

Stephen and Hannah had the first of three planned events, with donuts and timbits. It was successful, the food went quickly. They will plan the next ones and have advertising out for those too.

Motion: Golda moves to adjourn the meeting. Jayde seconds. Motion passes.

Meeting is adjourned.

* Favour: All
* Abstained:
* Opposed:
  + Absent: