



**SUO**

**Students' Union**  
UBC Okanagan

# **Building on our Strength**

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SUO Strategic Goals for 2020/21

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## INTRODUCTION

### Background

The Students' Union's bylaws provide for the creation of a strategic plan that identifies goals for the organization and creates a navigable path to their achievement. In recent years, the lack of strategic planning has resulted in a series of year-over-year decision-making models that have led to a disjointed, and at times unclear, set of organizational objectives. This instability contributed to strained internal relationships between board members and staff, and a series of governance lapses.

On May 28, 2018, the Executive Committee and full-time Students' Union staff participated in what was to become the first annual day-long planning retreat and began addressing these issues. The retreat considered the Students' Union's strengths and weaknesses, along with the possible opportunities and threats facing the organization. The mission and priority activities of the Students' Union were identified at that first planning session, and these continue to guide our actions.

The second annual planning retreat took place on May 28, 2019 with the newly elected Executive Committee and full-time Students' Union staff looking to build upon the strengths identified in the previous year's strategic plan. The importance of finding a balance between continuing with work begun but not completed, while also providing space for current year priorities was recognized by the team as they looked to adopt a 3-year rolling Strategic Plan. This improved plan format allowed for outstanding plans to be carried over and planned for along with current year priorities, allowing the Students' Union to take a longer-term view to planning, increasing both stability and consistency of activity.

As the SUO continues to grow and evolve, so does the strategic planning process. The 2020/21 iteration of the process was improved by breaking the activity into two stakeholder group sessions. The first session was an opportunity for the Executive Team to begin crafting a longer-term vision for the Students' Union, and to support this vision with the annual priorities and goals each established for their term. These broad goals were then brought to an Executive / Staff session, where underlying opportunities and challenges were discussed, goals were fleshed out in broader detail, and specific action items were established. This iteration of the planning process further supports the transition to long-term planning as all of our four key pillars of activity were viewed through this future vision lens. One of the specific goals to be addressed this year is to officially undertake the establishment of a long-term plan – one that will enable us to keep pace with the UBC Okanagan 2040 plan, and provide a roadmap for our subsequent annual planning sessions.

## Students' Union Mission Statement

The Students' Union's mission is to:

- Provide accessible, high-quality services;
- Facilitate events, activities and student clubs to enhance campus life;
- Undertake advocacy to ensure students' rights are respected, and concerns are heard by decision-makers; and,
- Practice good governance in the operations of the Students' Union.

We achieve our mission by ensuring that all of our priorities fall into one of three areas of activity: Service, Advocacy, and Campus Life; all guided by strong governance practices.

## Plan Organization

As noted above, the individual goals and action items listed herein arise from two separate stakeholder planning sessions. The Plan contains many objectives, organized into four broad categories:

- Section A    Services**
- Section B    Campus Life**
- Section C    Advocacy**
- Section D    Governance**

To continue efforts to transition to longer term planning each of the following sections will address:

- Priority initiatives carried forward from the 2019/20 year
- Priority initiatives and action plans for the current 2020/21 year
- Current year priorities that are anticipated to have delayed, longer-term or multi-year implementation in whole or in part

## SECTION A – SERVICES

Students' Union services are a key strength of the UBCSUO, and a vital way that we can have a positive impact for our student members. The 2019/20 academic year saw the Students' Union make great strides in strengthening our existing service provision as well as addressing gaps where opportunities for growth were present, and we continue this trend in the 2020/21 year. We envision a future where we are progressive in our structures and spaces, and are consultative and service oriented in meeting the needs of our diverse membership.

### 1 Student Union Spaces

It is quickly becoming obvious that in order to keep pace with existing and proposed campus growth, the SUO is going to need more space in order to provide students with the services and amenities that a campus of UBCO's size deserves and demands.

#### 1.1 New Building Referendum

One of the goals from 2019/20 was to work with UBCO on a proposal for increasing Student Union space in the UNC building, as the scheduled opening of Nechako in fall 2021 may result in additional space available within the building. As a result of conversations with UBCO, it was apparent that any additional space that the SUO could secure in the building would not be sufficient for any meaningful long-term growth or expansion.

In 2020/21 the Students' Union will:

- Present a building proposal for board approval;
- Consult with and engage Student Associations in the planning process;
- Lay the ground-work for a referendum to the membership;
- Initiate the consultative process with University Executives in the preliminary approval process, site selection, and planning process.

#### 1.2 Resource Centre Restructure

Lack of communication, oversight, and regulations for the Resource Centres over many years has resulted in an inequitable and disorganized model. This has led to a disproportionate burden of responsibility on coordinators to deliver resources. A restructure of our Resource Centres will aim to reimagine how resources can be provided to the membership.

In 2020/21 the Students' Union will:

- Re-evaluate the Resource Centre space and structures;
- Consult with the Equity and Inclusion Office on the space and needs of our members;
- Create a working group to make recommendations on creation of a new Resource Center Structure;
- Conduct an environmental scan of the current processes and consultation feedback to demonstrate areas of improvement etc;
- Ensure the working group is comprised of four SUO Directors and is open to:

- One representative from each of the four current Resource Centres;
- One representative from the Equity and Inclusion Office;
- One student-at-large member;
- One non-voting, SUO full-time staff member;
- Review working group recommendations and make changes to SUO Regulations, Bylaws, and budget where applicable.

## **2 Improve Student Association Support and Resources**

Our Student Associations are our most valuable resource. These groups help us keep a pulse on student needs, activities, and challenges, and provide a valuable two-way communication vehicle between us and our membership. As we continue to grow, we must continually seek new and improved ways to support these student groups.

In 2020/21 the Students' Union will:

- Work with Course Unions to improve transparency and accountability;
- Provide Election support and resources to the Course Unions;
- Create an interactive Student Association online handbook.

## **SECTION B – CAMPUS LIFE**

Campus life is a multi-dimensional concept designed to summarize the unique set of experiences, social interactions and lifestyles made possible by the various events, activities, groups and environments of a university or college. Campus life covers all non-academic activities and creates valuable relationships and memories that travel with students for the remainder of their lives. The UBCSUO has a strong history of engaging in campus life through the hosting of hallmark events and the provision of a campus pub; however, elements of campus life facilitation have been undervalued and lacked necessary investment. We envision a future where students are engaged and involved with the SUO, and we are respected and valued by our members for our inclusive and wide-ranging contributions to campus life.

### **1 Enhance the SUO's Current Student Leadership/Volunteer Program**

A volunteer program will help to engage members across the campus and provide opportunities to be active in the campus community. Volunteers can be engaged to host information tables, work on advocacy campaigns, participate in university consultations, undertake classroom speaking and other memberships engagement functions. This is a carry forward from 2019/20, where research into other campus volunteer programs helped provide the framework and foundation for an SUO program.

In 2020/21 the Students' Union will:

- Ensure partnership on this initiative between Campus Life and Campaign/Advocacy individuals and committees;
- Continue to solidify the structure and management of this program;
- Determine accountability and benchmarks for 2020/21;
- Offer students diverse volunteer opportunities that assist them in getting involved on campus as well as providing valuable work experience;
- Investigate opportunities to partner with Faculties on student capstone projects, whereby students may be able to assist the advancement of SUO goals while completing their course requirements.

### **2 Better Define Events and Seek to Fill Gaps in Event Offerings**

The past two years have seen the Students' Union successfully bring event costs under control, which was a driving priority for the both the 2018/19 and 2019/20 terms. In these same two terms, the Students' Union has worked hard to grow and evolve its events offerings to be more in line with the values of both UBC and the SUO, and be more inclusive for its members. A wider variety of events have been offered, including speakers, constituency events, professional development and academic events, and this is an area that will continue to be a focus in the current year. The challenge for this year will be offering engaging events that are well attended in an online environment.

In the 2020/21 year, the Students' Union will:

- Continue to collaborate with campus partners on event planning, marketing, and execution;
- Continue to investigate new and unique event offerings;
- Bring speakers of interest to our members;
- Increase the number of well-being initiatives offered to members;
- Seek opportunities to engage with Student Associations in the planning and execution of cultural events, thus promoting diversity on campus;
- Provide better incentives to encourage event attendance.

### 3 Develop a Comprehensive Engagement Strategy

Active, meaningful engagement with membership is something all Student Unions strive for. This has been a tremendous area for growth for the SUO, which up until the 2019/20 academic year, lacked any official structure or plan. Last year saw huge gains in engagement, through mechanisms such as the Academic Experience Survey, the active pursuit of students to sit on SUO committees, and an increased and more robust social media presence. Student engagement will be a critical factor this year as we navigate the online nature of campus life brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic.

In the 2020/21 year, the Students' Union will:

- Continue to build on our Social Media plan to ensure we are speaking in one voice, have clear messaging, and are providing regular postings on both informative and entertainment issues;
- Complete the rebrand begun in 2019/20;
- Continue to seek opportunities to engage personally with students on a regular basis through forums, meetings, tabling, and events;
- Investigate an opt-in Students' Union component on Canvas to be better accessible to our members.

## **SECTION C – ADVOCACY**

2019/20 saw the Students' Union excel in its advocacy efforts. While leveraging our strong government relations to continue advocacy efforts that benefit students on campuses across the community and country, we stepped up our efforts to engage students on our home campus, encouraging them to add their voices as agents of social change. Additionally, last year saw the SUO work closely with UBC Okanagan's Ombudsperson office, championing fair and just treatment for all students, and supporting students in need of individual advocacy. Improved circumstances for Canadian students in all areas continues to be a priority of the SUO. We envision a future where we loudly and passionately champion students' best interests.

### **1 Continue work in BCFS Campaigns and Government Relations**

Over the past several years, the SUO has participated in the BCFS campaigns to tackle student debt, increase investment in open educational resources, and to limit tuition fee increases for international students. It is recognized that work such as this is not limited to a single academic year or executive term, and this important partnership with the BCFS campaigns will continue going forward.

#### **1.1 Lobby Federal Government Representatives to Eliminate Federal Interest on Student Loans**

Student advocates across the Province of BC celebrated a win in February 2019 when the Provincial Government eliminated interest on the provincial portion of student loans. The push to improve the financial outlook for students across Canada continues with the drive to pressure the Federal Government to follow the province's lead. In partnership with our BCFS colleagues, this will be an advocacy priority for the SUO in 2020/21.

In 2020/21, the Students' Union will:

- Continue to engage in campaign outreach in partnership and collaboration with the BCFS and other member locals;
- Engage Members of Parliament and the Federal Government in advancing this request.

### **2 Engage UBCO Students on Issues That Matter to Our Campus**

Together we are stronger, and we strive to provide opportunities for our student members to bring about effective and impactful changes to the UBC Okanagan campus. Our large and consistently growing student population gives us a voice not only in our own community but on the larger provincial and federal stages. Increased student engagement in the issues affecting students and education can and should be driven by the Students' Union.

#### **2.1 Raise Awareness of All-gendered Washrooms; Work to Change UBC's Sign Policy Addressing Same**

Diversity is valued, respected, and encouraged within both the UBCO and SUO communities. The SUO will continue to advocate for the equity, inclusion and psychological safety of all its members, and views a move towards all-gendered

washrooms as a necessary step in attaining this goal. Addressing the current signage policies at UBC is an important first step in this move.

In 2020/21, the Students' Union will:

- Engage in external consultation for equity information and advancement;
- Consult our colleagues at other post-secondary institutions that have been successful in this transformation;
- Promote awareness of all-gendered washrooms to our members;
- Create in house informational materials for campaigns.

### 2.2 Reduce the use of Single-Use Plastics on Campus

As the Climate Emergency remains a global priority, we recognize that many of our habits contributing to this crisis are within our power to change. While 2019/20 saw the SUO begin this process by banning the sale of single use plastic water bottles at our own businesses, we will continue to push for solutions to reduce the use of these products on campus. We envision a future campus that is sustainable, limits and re-purposes waste and is single-use plastic free, and will continue to demonstrate leadership in this area.

In 2020/21, the Students' Union will:

- Encourage our leased businesses to cease sales of bottled water;
- Work with UBC Foods, Sustainability Office and our leased businesses to promote packaging options that can be reused or composted;
- Consult our colleagues at other post-secondary institutions that have been successful in this transformation;
- Launch a pilot project for a Water Bottle Share Program and work with on-campus food services and departments to promote the program;
- Work with Campus partners to ensure adequate water-stops on campus;
- Better market water-stops to the campus community through improved signage and the provision of a map of locations.

### 2.3 Establish SUO Academic Advocacy Procedures

Continuing on the work began in 2019/20 that saw the SUO play a more active role in assisting students with their individual advocacy needs, established procedures will need to be created to guide the process and ensure effective collaboration with the UBCO Ombuds Office.

In 2020/21, the Students' Union will:

- Engage with Ombudsperson regarding updated resources, documents, procedures, etc. both in the office and on the website;
- Update our website to reflect the differences between campaigns and individual advocacy services;
- Investigate the creation of an Advocacy Office and research ways to facilitate an increase in demand for this service;
- Ensure proper training for Advocacy Office employees

## **SECTION D – GOVERNANCE**

A large component of our work in the past two years has focused on the areas of governance and finance, setting a strong foundation for our growth and success. The issues addressed reflected a desire to both execute best practices in governance and financial management, and ensure the Students' Union's adherence to regulatory requirements. As the organization continues to grow and evolve, so will governance needs and processes.

### **1 Planning Processes**

A constant challenge in the students' union environment is the yearly turnover of elected officials, which can often lead to disjointed, inconsistent, or impulsive planning and direction. Identification in 2018 of the three pillars of service, advocacy and campus life that guide our mandate was the first step in combating this unique challenge. A further support to ensuring consistency and focus was the move in 2019 to include unmet priorities from the prior year in current strategic plans. Growth in this area will continue, as we look to strengthen our planning processes.

#### **1.1 Implement Long-Term Planning Processes**

It is recognized that clearly defined, long-term goals are key to any organization's success. The UBCO Campus taking a strong lead in this direction with the establishment of a 2040 campus plan has highlighted the fact that a longer-term vision is necessary for the SUO, to enable us to keep pace and grow in tandem with our institution.

In 2020/21, the Students' Union will:

- Engage an external consulting firm to begin the process of establishing a long term vision and plan for the organization;
- Utilize the data gathered from the Student Experience Survey to drive the long term planning process;
- Establish the necessary mechanisms via procedure, regulation, and committee mandates to ensure alignment of activities and progress toward longer term goals.

#### **1.2 Tighter Fiscal Responsibility Through Consultation**

Huge gains have been achieved through increasing consultation around the SUO budgeting practices. To continue our advancements in this area, it is desired that budget discussions amongst both internal and external stakeholder groups increase.

In 2020/21, the Students' Union will:

- Increase and improve Executive discussions around the budget as a whole, rather than a localized focus on their portfolio areas;
- Ensure adequate details around the specifics of individual budget lines are communicated and discussed;

- Ongoing monitoring and evaluation of budget performance between VP Finance, Finance Manager and General Manager.

### 1.3 Efficient Planning and Marketing to Ensure Budget Use

Despite best efforts, from time to time specific budget lines – such as the Legacy Fund – may not be utilized to their full and approved potential.

In 2020/21, the Students' Union will:

- Increase marketing and awareness campaigns on under-utilized budget lines such as the Legacy Fund;
- Consult with Faculty of Management for potential Capstone project inclusion;
- Engage a team of student volunteers to research and design a marketing plan for SUO initiatives.

Priorities Brought Forward From Last Year:

### 1.4 Develop a model for the creation, implementation, regular review, and amendment of organizational plans to ensure that short-, medium- and long-term goals are identified and achieved.

Focus on longer term goals and objectives can easily become lost in the day-to-day business and priorities faced by our organization. Mechanisms are required to ensure our daily work is driving us toward our successful future.

In 2020/21 the Students' Union will:

- Ensure all standing committees are mandated to consistent review of their activities and progress in relation to the long term plan;
- Establish and commit to mechanisms that will allow us to celebrate wins and accomplishments along the way to the long term goals ;
- Research a software program that will work for the team to track action items and progress.

## 2 Board Engagement

An engaged and active board is the cornerstone to the success of the Students' Union. Despite individual best intentions, this is often as difficult as it is important. Board responsibilities compete with a number of other individual priorities, including academic and employment commitments, family and social pursuits, and limited time and energy. Time invested in building a strong team will pay dividends in the impact that we are able to make.

In 2020/21, the Students' Union will continue to:

- Use the committee structure adopted in the previous year to assist in optimal distribution of tasks;
- Appeal to the personal interests and passions of board members when looking to delegate tasks;
- Invest time and energy in social functions to help build the team outside of a work environment;

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- Ensure adequate time for meeting and event preparation is given;
- Mindfully and intentionally delegate tasks to members of the board using personal, individual requests and ensuring that expectations are clear and attainable and follow up as needed to maintain engagement;
- Investigate the use of project-based incentives to foster engagement;
- Increased campus collaboration through consistent and informed communication with our Board of Governors and Senate ex-officio members;
- Have board members highlighted on our social media channels.

## CURRENT BOARD AND STAFF

The Board of Directors for the Students' Union is comprised of three types of positions, and the elected officials for the 2020/21 year are indicated below.

Full time current staff are also noted below, and with the exception of the excluded General Manager, all are unionized with BCGEU.

The Students' Union also employs several casual, part-time student staff who assist with provision of front-line service in the Students' Union's several businesses.

### ***Executive Members***

Ali Poostizadeh	President
Taylor Dotto	Vice-President External
Abid Wahab	Vice-President Finance and Administration
Tashia Kootenayoo	Vice-President Internal
Ahmed Fayed	Vice-President Campus Life

### ***Faculty Representatives***

Arshdeep Purba	Irving K. Barber School of Sciences
Cody Isaac	Irving K. Barber School of Arts
Mohana Rambe	Faculty of Management
Richardo Brown	Faculty of Applied Science
Sage Cannon	Faculty of Creative and Critical Studies
Cassidy Wallace	The College of Graduate Studies
Naomi Maldonado-Rodriguez	Faculty of Health and Social Development
<i>Vacant</i>	Faculty of Education Representative

### ***Directors At Large***

Kai Rogers	Director At-Large
Jose Carvalho	Director At-Large
Rohan Dabral	Director At-Large
Jakson Pashelka	Director At-Large

### ***Ex-Officio Members***

Jassin Naqvi	Board of Governors Representative
Rhys Herzberg	Student Senate Caucus Representative

### ***Staff***

Lori Stevenson	General Manager
Aaron White	Project Manager
Leanne Smiles	Finance Manager
Sarah Furgason	Advocacy & Governance Coordinator
Elizabeth Rusch	Membership Outreach Coordinator
Joe Haugen	Campus Life Coordinator

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Rachel Fortin  
Micheal Ouellet  
Stephanie Patterson  
Shauna-Lee Hildred

Receptionist / Admin Assistant  
The Well Pub Manager  
Green Bean Coffee Manager  
GreenText Manager/Pantry Coordinator

## **APPENDIX 1 – Progress Tracker**

Progress meetings to be held once per semester. Tables to track progress will be inserted at those times.