VUSAC Meeting Agenda

**Call to order:** 5:34 pm EST, January 21st, 2022

**Land Acknowledgement:**

*Tabina*

*We would like to acknowledge that Toronto and the land on which the University of Toronto operates is the traditional territories of many nations including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishinabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee and the Wendat peoples. This place is now home to many First Nations, Inuit and Métis people and is also home to a diverse population of people including settlers, immigrants and refugees. It is our duty to honour these treaties of the territories we live in and work with the original stewards of this land in good faith to care for this land we now share.*

**Official Regrets:**

*Erin Hill(Proxied by Kate Haberl)*

**Absent:**

**Approval of minutes:**

*Motion by Kayla Man to approve the minutes for December 3rd, Seconded by Rebecca Muscant*

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

**Additions to the agenda:**

*Vic Networking Night Discussion, put forth by Fatima Mohamed*

**Approval of the agenda:**

*Motion by Sooyeon Lee to approve the agenda for January 21st, Seconded by Tabina Ahmed*

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

EX-OFFICIO REPORTS:

*Motion: Tabina Ahmed motions to grant 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: Happy first VUSAC meeting everyone! I have a lot of updates for you all. First, I have created my own booking calendar, so share it widely with anyone you know. I have six meeting options including chatting about leadership opportunities, getting involved, navigating resources and support, first-year check-in and a general check-in. I would love to meet with you all! Next, Orientation applications are out. We have hired a Co-Chair who will hopefully be ratified today. Exec and Leader applications are out and I look forward to reading all of your applications. The deadlines are February 7th and March 7th respectively, with info sessions available before. Transition mentors are also out with all information available on <https://vic.utoronto.ca/current-students/office-of-the-dean-of-students/student-leadership-opportunities/>. Next, crescam applications are opening on Monday. Soo and I are very excited. Crescam applications are very special awards that are all about student leaders. It is not about doing the most, it's about doing the most meaningful work. Finally, we will have some fun leadership sessions over the reading week about new leaders and getting them excited to communicate and have fun at Vic. There will be three, with 30 minutes being a presentation from fun staff and the other 30 minutes will be a Q&A with current leaders. As always, please take care of yourselves!

ACTION ITEMS:

*Motion: Jerico Raguindin motions to ratify Zach Groves as the 2022 Orientation Co-Chair, seconded by Tabina Ahmed (3 minutes)*

Ali: Zach was a former exec and works with various student leadership groups across Vic. He’s here today to speak for himself in case you have any questions. We had the interviews in December and he officially signed his contract today. We are super excited to have him ratified!

Zach: Thank you for having me here. I am super excited to start this position if you ratify me and to get this process going because it’s going to be an amazing experience.

Jerico: Zach was a great Orientation Exec and I am really excited for you in this role. I think you can handle it and put on programming that will be exceptional.

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

*Motion: Shannon Vincent and Maggie Crawford motion to ratify Madeleine Wong as the incoming Caffeinds Co-Manager for January-December 2022, seconded by Kate Haberl (2 minutes)*

Kate: I was part of the interviewing process alongside the current Caffeinds Co-Managers and we were really excited about this candidate. The interview was great and they seemed really passionate, so I am excited for them to step into the role.

Maggie: Just to second what Kate was saying. She has been part of Caffeinds for a couple of years now and we are really excited to have her.

Madeleine: I want to say a quick thank you to everyone on the hiring panel. It was a really exciting process and moment for me, and I am even more excited to get to work more behind the scenes and to communicate more with VUSAC.

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

*Motion: Katherine Hovdestad motions to provide a $250 refund to Vic Records, seconded by Tabina Ahmed (1 minutes)*

Katherine: To give a quick recap of the situation, Vic Records ran an in-person off-campus event at the “supermarket restaurant.” They took on this event after some planning had already been done by one of the students. At the time, they were unaware of the financial deposit($250) that had been paid to acquire the venue. As this event was planned, hosted, and run by Vic Records for students, they were hoping we could give them a reimbursement. They have an invoice as well as a surplus in their budget, so I believe it would be nice to move ahead with giving the refund for the event planned by Vic Records.

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

DISCUSSION ITEMS:

*The Surplus, put forth by Katherine Hovdestad (15 minutes)*

Katherine: I just wanted to share a rough state of our financials document to show what numbers I think are most representative of what budget surplus we will have. In the fall, we received funding of $142,265.27, representing 60% of our funding. As you know, some of the funding goes towards clubs, initiatives and Levies. We receive 30% of our funding in Winter and 10% in summer. If we assume this to be 60% of our total, we would expect about $95,000 for Winter and Summer. Revised estimates from the Dean’s office would leave the amount we expect to receive about 85% of this($60,000 for Winter and $20,000 for Summer). With that context, we do have some outgoing payments for honorariums, machinery etc. This leaves us two estimates for what our surplus could be: a conservative estimate and a generous estimate. Our closing balance in the bank as of today is $101,941.65. Taking into account expected Levy payments, outflows, winter programming, Cat’s Eye payment, and Victoria College payments, that would leave us with a budget surplus of [$44,000(conservative) or $61,000(generous)]+$20,000 summer payment. There are a lot of excess budgets to think about and a priority to spend it to avoid carrying any funding over.

Kate: One thing I think we should consider doing is updating the VUSAC back office furniture and accoutrements. For example, the VP office doesn’t have a real desk, it is just a folding table with bad chairs. I think some of our conference room equipment can be updated. Now would be a perfect time since no one is utilizing our facilities. Once we reopen we should be ready to go full throttle and we have the funds available to serve us for the years to come.

Tabina: One thing I put in my budget was VUSAC sweaters. The UofT facility did not respond, so I had to look elsewhere for quotes, which came out to around $2,000. I think it would be good to spend the budget on upkeep(furniture and sweaters).

Jerico: To read the chat:

Katherine: Last time funds were spent on furniture, it was around $12,000 through the Student’s Projects funds.

Dixshant: Where does the surplus come from and are they for all of Vic or VUSAC in specific?

Jerico: As Katherine showed, these funds come from us not spending money that was budgeted for. We should be spending it with Vic and the VCU in mind, as well as VUSAC. Once this financial year is over, it will be way harder to spend what we put in the surplus.

Soo: I had a meeting with Ali this afternoon about upcoming crescams. Something we thought about doing differently this year is giving awards/gifts to not only winners but also attendees, which could take up a decent portion of the surplus. Another potential idea is doing a community fridge or free store/pantry with products that students may need(covid tests, perishable foods, menstrual products…). If maybe there is a way to have a space where people can access free products they need would be a good way to spend the budget.

Kate: There is a group at Vic currently working on that with the Cat’s Eye. They do not have club status yet, so they can’t apply for a budget through VUSAC. It is my understanding that that will be happening within the next few weeks. Perhaps maybe the best way to allocate for that is to put more money into my contingency fund so I can transfer it to them. Another thing is that we should maybe be reaching out to our clubs and Levies to let them know about the surplus and see if they have any ideas for funding that was not initially budgeted for.

Jerico: To read the chat:

Katherine: We really want to spend our funds or else it brings cause to stop funding VUSAC altogether. Students won’t want to pay if we can effectively spend our budget. We should carry over 0 funds for our non-profit status.

Kayla: We could spend a lot on giveaways/care packages.

Julie: That is a great idea. Mental Wellness is trying to prioritize giveaways/care packages for more expensive but good-quality items.

Dixshant: I second the idea of using some of the funds for VUSAC merch as a way to advertise our positions.

Lisa: We definitely need covid rapid tests as they are very hard to access these days.

Jerico: My question for Ali would be how do we go about ordering large amounts?

Ali: To address Soo’s crescam comment, typically the eight winners of the crescam awards get given a gift and often the people who nominate them will get one as well. These are usually blankets, glasses and water bottles. After speaking to Bergita, I mentioned to Soo and wondered if VUSAC would be willing to buy more. Possibly anyone who attends a leadership event in February and March gets a gift, as well as anyone who attends the crescams. We think its important because everyone deserves to be celebrated, not only the eight winners, for all their work. To Jerico, the best thing would be to message me and we can either get it from our account or have someone in the Dean’s Office pay for it. Additionally, with regards to the community fridge, I want you to be cognizant of the fact that no announcements have been made about non-academic spaces. I think we should wait on spending materials until an official announcement has been made.

*Motion: Dixshant Shreemal motions to extend the discussion, seconded by Tabina Ahmed (10 minutes)*

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

Jerico: Like Dixshant says, I think it would be a good idea to make our printing services free. I don’t think it would be impacting if you look at how it compares to previous years. I also want to start bringing up conversations of compensation for everyone on council. Given we have had surpluses all these past years, I think all of council should be compensated. Whether it this year’s council can be compensated is another question. I think it is necessary to compensate the students to hopefully increase engagement. In terms of giveaways, I want to highly encourage the Commissions to start thinking of giveaways. I think giving a PSA to the clubs would be a great idea. I also want to start a hobby Google Form, where we can connect you with people of the same interest and send you a package. To maybe include your name, select some hobbies (knitting, crocheting etc…) and we can do the rest. A question for Ali is would the DO be able to help facilitate this?

Ali: Do you mean if we would create the form or if we would be the one distributing the goods?

Jerico: I meant I would want students to input their student numbers to ensure it is Vic students receiving these packages, but not sure if that is necessary.

Ali: If you come up with the questions, I’ll create a Microsoft form since it is more secure and I will be able to cross-reference to ensure it’s Vic students. To make it easier, we can also do the distributing, since it would involve a lot of funds going out.

Mary: An idea that I just thought about is that I know a lot of students are having trouble paying for books, MCATs, LSATs. Maybe we could start some type of reimbursement form, if feasible and/or possible.

Jerico: To my recollection, we will not be able to reimburse students or provide a textbook bursary, but if we started giving away books that would be fine. It would be really complicated for the students who already bought books, but if we had 100 MCAT books to give to students that would be more likely.

Fatima: That has been something I have been looking into over the winter break because I have been planning on doing a loaning system with MCAT/LSAT/GRE books. I wasn’t sure if the office would be open or if it would be feasible to do a loaning system for hard copies, so I was looking into online versions instead.

Rebecca: The ASSU gives out a bunch of test/preparation packages, which we could bu and give out to the Vic students.

Jerico: Back in 2020-2021, a lot of the Commissioners houses/apartments/rooms became sending spaces for all the items. If we are unable to access the office, then we will have to facilitate it through other means.

Dixshant: Another place we could spend some of our budget could be through purchasing some of Adobe’s creative licenses for everyone in Vic to use. There are a lot of creative students who would benefit from Premiere Pro or Photoshop.

Jerico: Something we can do as part of the community building aspect of this could be to do co-learning sessions where students would have a “class” and help other students with the same hobby.

*Burwash Survey and Report Update, put forth by Tazneen Mahmud (5 minutes)*

Tazneen: A survey has been released about Burwash to which we received good responses and comments. Some common concerns were dietary restrictions, taste of food, freshness of food and the ticketing system. There is currently no ticketing system and they have included a build-your-own pizza station. Rebecca and I were thinking of writing a report based on the statistics and comments we received. If any of you are interested in helping us write the report then you can reach out either to myself or Rebecca.

Jerico: To read the chat:

Julie: There is no ticketing system but it is essentially the same as you are still limited to your options.

Rebecca: Obviously we have seen some good progress but there is still a lot that can be done and that is really the main purpose of the report. Another thing is since I am not on residence right now and Tazneen doesn’t go to Burwash often, we were wondering if anyone who is there right now would be able to update us about the current situation. We don’t want to be adding anything into the report that has changed and we want to make sure that we have all the information.

Ali: Have you spoken with the Food Services team? They would be your best bet in finding out what is currently happening.

Jerico: Thank you Rebecca and Tazneen for all the work that you have been doing. Just having them remove the ticketing system is a big accomplishment, so keep up the good work.

Tazneen: Jericho and I tried to enter a meeting with Food Services but they wouldn’t let us in. On the day of, I asked for an invite and didn’t receive one. They responded after the meeting saying they apologize and that I could attend the next meeting. It is good to see that they are making the necessary changes. It would be great to talk to them and get more insight.

*Return to In-Person, put forth by Jerico Raguindin (10 minutes)*

Jerico: I wanted to have a discussion about the university’s plan for in-person return. I know a lot of students have been expressing their concerns about the lack of support/information being provided other than we will be returning. For an update on the survey, it was sent to ASSU and engaged with the UTSU to which it was brought up to Dean Woodin.

Tabina: Essentially what that survey did was the Faculty of Arts and Science followed by sending out a survey to all the students who were affected by cancelled in person exams. They gave the students different options including to differ their exams, Cr/NCr(applicable to program requirements) or LWD. It didn’t take into consideration those that had online exams or in-person exams prior to the announcement. The survey was then sent over to the UTSU, and Omar and Kondrad are working on a statement based on the results.

Jerico: I wanted to mention that Omar, UTSU’s Vice President of Public and University Affairs, is currently working to advocate for a remedy to what happened in December. They essentially don’t want a promise of in-person courses and cancellation of exams. They’re currently taking a stance for online exams to avoid the same thing from happening.

Tabina: I had a meeting earlier today with Ali and we were talking about the uncertainty of Omicron and covid in general. I think that vouching for purely online exams would keep everyone safe and also make them feel very safe/certain. If there is to be another surge and seeing it will be in the summer, I don’t think that the students should be ending their year off with so much to worry about.

Jerico: An update from the Office of the Vice-Provost is that they have been having a hard time procuring masks for students. They placed an order but that fell through do to the large demands everywhere else. They said they would be hiring more UCheck ambassadors, but I have yet to see one. The province did announce that the university has an exception for social distancing; however, they have not responded about whether that would be followed or not. Another concern students have is the tuition prices and services.

Rebecca: I have seen a UCheck ambassador once before my physics lab. It was ironic since they were handing out candy from a bucket that everyone was touching. While I do agree that most people would benefit from the certainty of in person exams, I do worry about what certain professors will make of that. For example, my calculus professor decided to give us a 4.5 hour exam instead of a normal 1.5 because the university moved classes online. So I think that is something we should be weary of. In terms of the tuition and more so the residence rebate, I think that more can be done since they amount they’re giving now is far less than the cost had we been there in person.

Kate: Just a question for Ali and I know you’re not the RLC, but I am curious if you have any insight into the rationale behind giving a rebate but still have students essentially pay to not be there?

Ali: I can’t tell you the exact rationale behind the $350 because that would be above the RLC. I assume that they tried their best to give a rebate. None was given last year, plus it is a lot harder to give money back than students expect. I would guess that they weren’t able to give more, but at least it is something. I can’t say anything for certain since I am not in any of those conversations and neither would be Steven.

Jerico: Would you all be open to joining the UTSUs advocacy effort for online exams? Rebecca, I understand your case and I think it could still be worth it for online exams, especially the subjects that can hold their exams online. They would be able to have more protocols in place, social distancing, if the amount of in person exams are reduced.

Rebecca: I definitely agree that it is better to have the certainty with online exams and most exams can feasibly be held online.

*Orientation Exec Application Redactions, put forth by Tabina Ahmed (5 minutes)*

Tabina: Orientation Exec applications are open and I really recommend you all to apply. When we do applications we can either choose to redact the applications or not. When the applications are sent to Zach, he won’t be able to see the names associated with the application, only the qualifications. An advantage is that this eliminates bias; however, if there are any red flags associated with an individual’s character then they won’t be able to see that. Another is if the applicant is really passionate about leadership and the role but doesn’t have the best qualifications, then they won’t have the best chances of landing a role. I wanted to put forth a discussion to see what method we should proceed with.

Jerico: What happened last year?

Ali: They did redact last year; however, it really does change from year to year. Sometimes it’s the CLC, Chair or even an Exec that does the redacting. Tabina and I are fine either way and wanted to let you all have a say in the decision.

Soo: If there are interviews in the hiring process, then I would say that redacting the names would help filter out that bias.

Kate: I am a firm believer in redacting applications, especially in cases like this where the Vic bubble is concerned. It gives at least some sense of fairness to the applicants but also provides plausible deniability to those on the hiring panel. I know we have had issues in the past with hiring Execs and them taking it personally, so this at the very least provides a veneer of impartiality.

Jackson: I understand and agree with both points. I too struggle with voicing my qualifications in a resume but we should also aim to limit bias as much as possible. I think a good inbetween would be to reach out to the applicants who you think are very suited but haven’t voiced it the best to have them reapply. I think at the end of the day its more important to choose an applicant based on the experience they can contribute rather than what is written on their resume.

Jerico: With a position like Exec yes the resume matters, but the cover letter says a lot about the applicant. I think we should be open to interviewing as many applicants as possible.

Tabina: I will keep everyone’s comments in mind and I am leading towards redacting. Thank you for a great discussion.

*Vic Networking Night, put forth by Fatima Mohamed (3 minutes)*

Fatima: Vic Networking Night is set to take place on Wednesday, January 26th from 5:30 to 7 PM. I am bringing this up because it would be great for VUSAC members to be present at the event. I am looking for 4-5 volunteers to help manage breakout rooms and possibly speak at the end. We have sixteen alumni attending from eight different fields. Please reach out if you would like to help out.

STAFF REPORTS:

*CRO Update, put forth by Malhaar Moharir (10 minutes)*

Malhaar: Just a few updates regarding the Spring Elections. Firstly, the Fall Elections Report is finished and will be sent out and posted to the VUSAC website, to hopefully be ratified at the next meeting. Secondly, we’re looking to do a hybrid format for elections this semester where they will be allowed to do in person campaining. If you have any concerns please let me know. If things go back online, then we will change the format as well. Campaigning period starts March 14th tentatively and hopefully in person event will have returned by then. My third update is that I am looking for some VUSAC members, particularly those that ran last Fall, to help with planning, promos, managing socials and ultimately increase student engagement. Starting next meeting, VUSAC will be able to entertain discussions on any refernda questions that are to be included in the Spring Elections, these would be yes or no questions. The latest date that we can discuss this is March 4th. Lastly, I would like to introduce a few amendments to the ERC to facilitate greater flexibility for the CRO, those helping out and the candidates as seen in Appendix A.

Jerico: We can still be amending the ERC; however, if we want to have it apply to this years elections we have to do it two weeks in advance and another two weeks of discussion before that according to the constitution. So these are the two weeks that we are mandated to introduce for discussion and vote for at the next meeting.

Jackson: If we do proceed with in person elections, we should consider doing poster printing for students who are out of province/country. I think the in person campaigning is needed to boost engagement and this would just help to level the playing field.

Jerico: I totally agree. Malhaar and I already discussed this as an option.

Malhaar: It is also included in the ERC.

COMMISSION REPORTS:

*S&G Update, put forth by Kayla Man (5 minutes)*

Kayla: The winter semester is usually pretty busy for the S&G commission but with everything online I will be doing giveaways and sending out care packages. I hope to hold a semi-formal in March pending we can have in person events.

EXECUTIVE REPORTS:

*VPI: Tabina Ahmed (3 minutes)*

Tabina: Regarding the Exam Cancellation Survey, we still want to account for students who had an online exam or an in person exam before. I will keep you all updated if anything changes. Secondly, I wanted to remind you that transition reports will be happening soon(end of April). These are especially important for those receiving an honorarium. I will also be holding winter check-ins throughout reading week, so keep a look out for an invitation.

*President: Jerico Raguindin (5 minutes)*

Jerico: Regarding the overlap between campaigning period and voting, the biggest concern we had is that people will just vote for the first person they see? There definitely are pros and cons, which I would be happy to discuss.

Dixshant: I just think that it is inconvenient for the voters to have the students campaigning but tell them they can’t vote until a later date.

Malhaar: I think it makes sense that there can be overlap between campaigning and voting. The idea behind it is that you can’t put out new material but you are able to share posts already made. Another thing is it’s just the way things run, but I do think we can look into changing it.

*Motion: Tabina Ahmed motions to adjourn the meeting, seconded Thomas Keough*

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

*Meeting adjourned at 7:22 PM.*