ABOUT THE UVSS

The University of Victoria Students’ Society (UVSS) is a non-profit society run by students for students. It was founded in 1964 and represents all 17,000+ undergraduate students at the University of Victoria. The UVSS’ annually elected student board of directors is responsible for a $12 million a year operation that is housed in the Student Union Building. The UVSS works on your behalf by offering essential services, throwing great events and building partnerships to defend and promote your interests at all levels of government.

VISION

Our vision is a picture of what we aspire to create. To be a leader in providing high-quality services, advocacy and events which enhance the student experience and build a campus community that embodies our values.

VALUES

Our values are what we stand for. They underlie our vision and guide how we make decisions, perform our work and work with each other. There are six core or primary driving forces behind all that we do:

EQUITY

We believe in an equitable society in which no person is left behind. Whether we are providing services such as the Emergency Food Bank or advocating for an accessible and affordable post-secondary education, the UVSS works every day to achieve a just society.

FUN!

We believe that our campus should be fun. Students should be able to feel excited about the work their students’ society does and experience a dynamic atmosphere that propels engagement and positive change.

COMMUNITY

We believe in a campus where students feel a sense of belonging, solidarity and mutual respect. We foster this by creating spaces in which students are able to come together and participate in our events, advocacy, and non-profit services.

INCLUSIVENESS

We believe that the UVSS should be as open, transparent and welcoming as possible to all students and community members. We believe that inclusiveness is an action and not a passive belief.

ADVOCACY

We believe in working with and on behalf of students to promote and defend their interests and rights to all levels of government. We will partner with other groups, raise awareness and empower students to create change.

SUSTAINABILITY

We believe that our use of resources should not only meet our present needs but also the needs of future generations. We work to reduce the environmental impact of our operations by working collaboratively with like-minded organizations.

SEPT 3 SUMMER TANS & RAY BANS
SEPT 4 PANCAKE BREAKFAST
BEVERAGE GARDENS (SEPT 4-6)
SUB FAIR
FELICITA’S REBOOT
SEPT 5 POOL PARTY
MOVIE IN THE PARK (MEAN GIRLS)
HIP-HOP KARAOKE
SEPT 6 THUNDERFEST
BLUE & GOLD PARTY
SEPT 7 CAPTURE THE FLAG
KICK OFF FINALE

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Hey everyone!

Being a part of the UVSS this year has been an amazing experience. I wanted to start off by thanking everyone for giving me this opportunity. We’ve done a lot of great things this year and I’ve been stoked to be a part of it all. You can read about everything in detail throughout the Annual Report, but here’s a rundown.

We helped launch the Alliance of BC Students, which is now the largest student organization in British Columbia working on post-secondary funding issues. We launched an educational campaign about the prevention of sexualized violence and also continued to work on improving transit infrastructure in the Greater Victoria Area.

We renovated Felicita’s Campus Pub, and over the summer you’ll also be seeing renovations happening in Vertigo and the SUB Upper Lounge, which we have been planning this entire year.

Operationally, we have continued to improve the financial state of our organization. Our businesses are thriving and we’ve experienced some record sales. We’ve eliminated our accumulated deficit. Maintaining this financial strength is going to take care, but it’s still very good news.

The UVSS also helped support the largest youth environmental conference in the history of the province, bringing over 700 student and non-student youth together for PowerShift BC. We continue to engage with student societies all across the country to develop strategies for increasing voter turnout.

As an organization, we strive to represent students. We all have diverse needs, hopes, desires, frustrations and complaints. This year especially, we have tried to be as transparent and inclusive about all of our decision-making as possible in order to properly accommodate these many viewpoints. It’s impossible to represent what all students want, but we do our best, and we’re always open to feedback. Never hesitate to get in touch if you have questions or concerns, suggestions or recommendations.

Happy 2014!

Kelsey Mech
ADVOCACY

Alliance of BC Students

This year, the UVSS has been working very hard on the issue of affordable post-secondary education. The Alliance of BC students (ABCS), which is a coalition that first came together in May 2011, decided to formalize into a legally recognized non-profit society this year. Its members include UVic, UBC, Capilano, UFV, Kwantlen, UBC GSS, as well as other collaborating student societies. These members work together to represent BC students on issues including post-secondary education affordability and accessibility. The Alliance of BC Students is the largest non-partisan post-secondary advocacy group in B.C. Its three major priorities include: eliminating interest rates on student loans, the re-establishment of a provincial needs-based grants program, and an increase to core-funding for colleges and universities. We organized a set of “lobby days” in July with ABCS members and other collaborating student societies, where we spoke with many BC Liberal and BC NDP Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs), and the Minister of Advanced Education. We are planning another set of lobby days in February, so we are busy with those preparations. The UVSS also hosted many free coffee and soup days, which gives us the opportunity to engage with students about all of our wonderful campaigns.

More info: bcstudents.ca/

Make Transit Work Campaign

The UVSS has been working hard with bus drivers and Camosun students again this year to reduce bus pass-ups with our Make Transit Work campaign. We’ve been out at bus stops off-campus, and around campus, talking to students about their experiences of being passed up by buses. We have been collecting signatures for our Make Transit Work petition that is addressed to the Victoria Regional Transit Commission, and asks its members to consider the following:

- Implementing more pilot projects for bus-only lanes immediately.
- Asking the province for an increase to the local gas tax.
- Lobbying the province to allocate a portion of the carbon tax to public transit.

These measures will increase service hours, expand the frequency of buses, and make transit work better for students and community members. We have also met with B.C. Transit and municipal mayors and councilors to discuss pass-ups and other transit issues. This year we decided to do something interactive with the campaign and make two videos where we interviewed students and other stakeholders.

More info: maketransitwork.com

Let’s Get Consensual

This campaign is very exciting news for UVic, as this year the UVSS and the Anti-Violence Project launched a sexualized violence campaign called “Let’s Get Consensual.” The campaign’s focus is on engaging with students about what consent means to them, and the necessity of obtaining consent in every sexual interaction and at every step. The campaign’s priority is to create comfortable and open spaces to talk about the importance of consent. At all of our Campus Kick Off events at the beginning of the year, we took Polaroid pictures of students with signs about what consent means to them, and we posted them up on our “Let’s Get Consensual” photo wall. We are in the beginning stages of planning an event for the campaign in March. Watch our on social media for details. And thank you to everyone who participated in our many campaigns!
COMMUNITY & EVENTS

Student Groups

This year we saw continued meaningful engagement with UVSS student groups across campus. Resources for clubs online, including the online registration process, have really helped streamline the process of setting up and maintaining clubs. This year, improvements were made to the cheque requisition form and the process as a whole to make it easier for students and staff. We have seen the formation of 40 new clubs since the start of the summer semester, ranging from the Unicycle club to the Farmland Protection club to the Arabic language club, building on the wide diversity of clubs already offered. Our student clubs have been working on countless events, concerts, social nights and special activities. Clubs Council approved over 20 Special Project Grants, which enables clubs to throw distinct events and enrich the student experience on campus. Our 45 course unions continue to hold both academic and social events - each semester seems busier than the last! Course unions have hosted countless social nights, movie screenings, and academic events, published scholarly and creative work in their journals, and sent students to academic events and conferences. The UVSS is building its capacity and support for students seeking engagement with campus life.

Looking to the future, we are excited for the renovations to the SUB Upper Lounge and Vertigo. We are hoping this renovation will bring greater usage to the space by student groups to host fundraisers, concerts and other functions.

Events

The UVSS not only has a commitment to advocacy and expansive student representation, but it also continues to throw great parties planned by students, for students. Campus Kick Off started the year off right with a week of events to welcome students back to campus. These included a giant game of Capture the Flag in the Quad, a Blue and Gold party, Thunder Fest, the annual Movie in the Park (Mean Girls was the classic of choice), Hip Hop Karaoke, Summer Tans and Raybans, the free pancake breakfast, Felicita’s beer gardens, and the SUB Fair (with Bands on the Roof). Students flocked to the SUB from across campus for this series of unforgettable back-to-school celebrations. The wide array of activities, events, and student interactions allowed us to build on last year’s inaugural celebrations. The first few days saw record attendance, even though our beloved West Coast weather turned on us, and the skies emptied on students! Despite this, students took the expression “the West Coast is the best coast” to heart. The rain couldn’t put a damper on the excitement, and we celebrated the end of the week with Thunderfest and Bands on the Roof.

September was also a landmark year for the UVSS with the Felicita’s “Reboot” and ongoing renovations in the SUB. It is truly exciting to see spaces for further events come together right in front of us! During the year, scheduled events like the annual (and ever-popular) Fred Penner concert, the Battle of the Bands series in Felicita’s, and the first ever all-ages Thriller Halloween event kept the party going after Campus Kick Off. As students transition into another fun-filled semester, the UVSS made the new year a little sweeter with another free pancake breakfast. We were excited to celebrate the launch of Vikes Nation with the UVic Vikes, including attending the pre-launch celebration at the UVic Bookstore and Days of Thunder events. Events Committee members and volunteers are hard at work promoting the second annual Frost Fest, a winter formal party in the Strathcona Hotel featuring bands and DJs on multiple floors. This legendary welcome back party will set the tone for upcoming events scheduled for the rest of the semester. All in all, the UVSS continues to stay true to its roots with fun and innovative events that provide dynamic and engaging entertainment for students.
Financial Position
Thanks to the hard work of our over 150 awesome employees, previous Boards, and this year’s Board, the UVSS is in a solid financial position. We eliminated our accumulated deficit at the end of last year (ahead of schedule!), and are on track to be in a balanced financial position this year. Maintaining this status requires care and prudence, but it’s still a situation to celebrate.

This balance means we have been able to focus on services students have been asking for, like dramatically expanding the amount of seating available in the SUB. We’ve put tables on the dance floor in Vertigo for lunch and kept more portions of the Upper Lounge open more often.

Our staff has also worked hard to serve students with everything they need while the University Centre is closed for renovations. We have expanded our ability to handle long lines during lunch and opened more options for full breakfasts.

It’s been a successful year of serving students and balancing our budget!

SUB Renovations
The student-approved renovation of the SUB started with a bang this year with the opening of the newly designed Felicita’s Campus Pub. We’ve now got a larger dance floor and a better stage for bigger name shows. We’ve got more seating, a fun, fresh design, and a fun, fresh menu (featuring kimchi!) to match.

For the rest of the year we are focused on continuing to collect student feedback and making sure the renovations are directed by student needs. We did a number of surveys, and shared the results with students to make the process as transparent as possible. We also hosted an open house with our architects to get student feedback on the actual design plans. More than 50 students showed up to shape their Upper Lounge renovation. We were also helped with our consultation plans by the Urban Development Club, who ran an innovative art project to gather input from students in creative and unconventional ways.

The rest of the renovation plans are running on budget and on schedule, with the Upper Lounge and Vertigo projects scheduled for summer 2014! As part of our efforts at transparency, the plans for Vertigo, which have been mostly finalized, have been on display in the SUB since January.

Socially and Environmentally Responsible Finances
One of the most exciting things happening in the finances of the UVSS this year is aligning our banking with our values. We’ve put together a policy that outlines what we stand for and how we make sure our money supports those values. The policy also makes sure we meet our service and financial needs and bank with institutions that are competitive and viable. Over the coming months we’ll finalize and implement that policy. We’ll make sure our savings are funding the right things.
SERVICES

The UVSS Emergency Food Bank

The UVSS Food Bank is an essential service that increases in use every year. Over the past year, the Board has focused on making the Food Bank as accessible as possible and keeping the door open for longer. We have been especially focused on increasing the sustainability of the Food Bank, including developing a positive relationship with the Graduate Students’ Society (GSS), and we truly appreciate their support for this service. This year we received donations from more than a dozen groups ranging from clubs, course unions, UVic departments, and community members. That the Food Bank is able to function as effectively as it does is due to our invaluable coordinators and many volunteers, and for this we are so grateful. However, we are always looking for more volunteers to keep the door open as often as possible. If you would like to get involved, please e-mail foodbank@uvss.ca!

Health Plan

Our Health and Dental Plan provider StudentCare continued this year to offer help to students through an office open during both the Fall and Winter change-of-coverage periods. In addition, we did some work to streamline and standardise the appeal process, which remains ongoing.
This year the UVSS helped organize the largest youth environmental conference in the history of British Columbia. With speakers including David Suzuki, Crystal Lameman, Maude Barlow, Caleb Behn, Andrew Nikiforuk and many more, PowerShift BC brought together nearly 1000 individuals to learn, network, and plan for climate justice in Canada. PowerShift’s main focus is to shift the power away from the status quo of fossil fuels and resource extraction projects, and back into the hands of the people. It brought together students and non-students alike to learn the skills and tools to begin building a just and sustainable future. The conference aimed to tackle not only environmental concerns, but also issues of social justice and colonization.

UVision
The Environmental Sustainability Council (ESC) of the UVSS has continued to work on the UVision project this year. UVision aims to apply an environmental sustainability lens to campus planning processes here at the University. We are continuing to work on contributions to upcoming planning processes including transit, biking, food production, energy, and natural spaces. In part due to the ongoing pressure of students, including the UVSS, to take concrete action on these types of projects, the University of Victoria constructed a large covered bike centre this past year and is in the planning stages for a higher-capacity bus loop outside the SUB to improve public transit infrastructure.