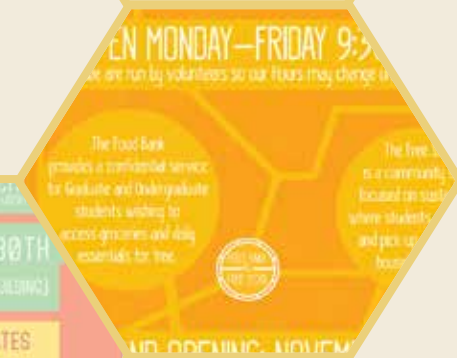
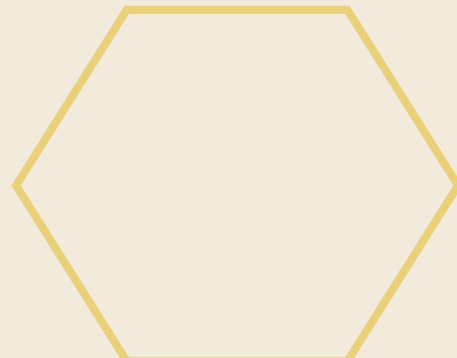




UVSS ANNUAL REPORT 2015

Run by students, for students.
www.uvss.ca







Board of Directors 2014 - 2015

Chairperson, Kayleigh Erickson

Director of External Relations, Greg Atkinson

Director of Student Affairs, Kaylee Szakacs

Interim Director of Finance & Operations, Valery Heckel

Director of Events, Ian Kopp

Directors at Large 2014 - 2015

Director at Large, Jamie Cook

Director at Large, Jordan Crocker

Director at Large, Annie Do

Director at Large, Karthik Gopalakrishnan

Director at Large, Mackenzie Zouboules

Director at Large, Katerina Perlova

Director at Large, Kenya Rogers

Director at Large, Nick Tang

Director at Large, Lindsey Willis

Advocacy Group Representatives 2014 - 2015

NSU Representative, David Parent

SOCC Representative, Aaron El Sabrout

UVic Pride Representative, Cal Mitchell

Women's Centre Representative, Daphne Shaed

SSD Representative, Heather Mitchell

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.

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MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRPERSON

Dear students,

I would like to thank everyone for allowing me the opportunity to serve as your chairperson for 2014-2015. I'm incredibly proud of the successes the organization has achieved over the past year, and I'm honored to have served on the board during the 50th anniversary of the UVSS.



Our first success was during our first month on the job when we successfully lobbied the University with petitions calling for the creation of disability parking spots outside the SUB to replace the stalls that were eliminated due to the new transit loop. Since then we have successfully rolled out our first mental health campaign which had a week of events in October that thousands of students participated in. We also secured our first grant through Coast Capital Savings for suicide intervention training (ASIST), and we were able to subsidize the cost by over \$175 to make the training as accessible and affordable as possible. We also expanded mental health coverage in our Health and Dental Plan, are working towards increasing the financial sliding scale of counselors in Victoria, and sent letters to all resident students outlining mental health supports both on and off campus. This is just one of our many successful campaign initiatives this year. The Let's Get Consensual Campaign had a record amount of pledges signed and pictures taken by students. During the first week in September, many students actively engaged and volunteered with the campaign, which has led to a growing conversation on consent at UVic. The UVSS also launched a campaign in December to inform students of potential increases to residence fees and to provide information about tenants' rights. This is an ongoing campaign which we hope will halt the aggressive fee increases students are facing.

One of the Board's priorities this year was to create fun, new, and interactive events that students wanted to participate in. We did this by bringing local talent to the SUB on multiple occasions - one of which was in September where bands played on the roof of the SUB. Students enjoyed themselves so much that there was crowd surfing, dance-offs, and an overall feeling of excitement and community. We continued this through events such as the video games tournament and Coffeeology.

We were also successful in enacting and changing current UVSS policies, notably with changes made to our harassment policy. In order to ensure a fair analysis and inquiry into all complaints, we adopted the policy of UVic's Equity and Human Rights Office. Now all complaints go through UVic's EQHR Department for investigation with a recommendation being sent to the UVSS for a final decision on each case. We also successfully reached quorum at our annual general meeting in October where we changed the structure of the UVSS Board of Directors with the addition of an international student representative. Also at this meeting, UVSS members overwhelmingly passed a motion to have a referendum on lobbying UVic to divest from fossil fuels during UVSS elections in March.

The Board also undertook a sustainable project this year, with the implementation of the Free Store in October. This service aims to provide a space for students to recycle supplies, small furniture, and household items that other students can use and benefit from. To create this service, we renovated the basement of the SUB to combine the services of the Food Bank and Free Store, which is run by our wonderful coordinators and volunteers.

We've seen many successes in 2014-2015, and it's been an absolute pleasure to serve as your chairperson over the past year. I have many fond memories that I will cherish for the rest of my life.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kayleigh Erickson".

Sincerely,

Kayleigh Erickson



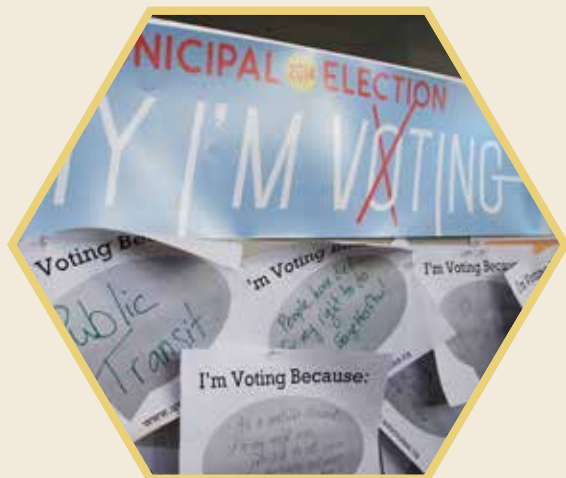
Post-secondary Education

The Alliance of BC Students (ABCS) is made up of 9 different student societies across BC who are committed to fighting for affordable and accessible education. In addition to a revamp of our policies and bylaws, ABCS took strong positions against the elimination of funding for adult basic education and ESL programs and wrote letters to the Ministers of Finance and Post-Secondary Education about continued budget cuts for post-secondary education. We met with the Minister of Finance, the official opposition critic for post-secondary education, and other MLAs to discuss our concerns about high student-loan interest rates, the highest provincial average student debt in Canada, and changes to the society act that would undermine student societies across BC. We have launched a petition campaign to institute a needs-based grants program for BC students, as we are the only province in Canada without such a program. There have been small victories including the complete adoption of our recommendations by the Select Standing Committee on Finance, but we must keep working to exert pressure on this government to support students. ABCS plans to do just that during our lobby days scheduled for late February where we will continue to highlight the issues facing BC students to the MLAs that govern our province.

More info: bcstudents.ca

Lobbying

In November 2014, we sent a delegation of board members to the annual Canadian Alliance of Student Associations' (CASA) Advocacy Week in Ottawa, Ontario. Greg Atkinson, David Parent, Kaylee Szakacs, and Makenzie Zouboules spent the week lobbying MPs and Senators on Parliament Hill on various post-secondary issues such as: the indirect costs of research, mental health, student grants, labour market research indicators, the Post-Secondary-Student-Support-Program for Indigenous students, and eliminating the income exemption limit on student loans while studying.



Municipal Elections

This November, the UVSS ran a precedent setting campaign to promote the Municipal Elections. For the first time in history, advanced polls were held on campus providing a point of access for UVic students, staff, faculty, and surrounding community members. Nearly 750 people took advantage of this unique voting opportunity and cast their ballots for candidates in Saanich, Oak Bay and Victoria.

The presence of the advanced poll on campus not only drew the attention of voters but those running as candidates as well. The UVSS made a concentrated effort to harness this attention while highlighting municipal issues that matter to students. We sent out a survey to all the candidates running in Saanich, Oak Bay and Victoria asking them to take positions on affordable housing, better transit, and ways to stimulate the local economy while providing jobs for students and recent grads. Candidate responses were published on our UVicVotes.ca website and widely distributed to the community. We also brought up these issues during our mayoral debates and all candidates forum. As a result, student issues were brought to the forefront of this election.



The Make Transit Work Campaign

The UVSS continues to work in partnership with Camosun College Students' Society and UNIFOR Local 333 (Greater Victoria bus drivers union) on the Make Transit Work campaign. This year, the Make Transit Work Coalition took advantage of the civic election to bring issues of pass-ups, late night transit, and transit accessibility to the forefront. We released a video discussing no-cost solutions to these problems and urged voters to vote for candidates that endorsed our message. Make Transit Work is continuing this work by actively seeking a student seat on the Victoria Regional Transit Commission as promised by some candidates who were elected this fall. In addition, we will be presenting a similar video to the commission during their first meeting in February. We are also reaching out to the Downtown Victoria Business Association and the Victoria Police Department to support a joint letter explaining the economic pitfalls and safety concerns associated with a lack of late night transit.

More info: maketransitwork.com

Sexualized Violence Awareness and Prevention

This year was our biggest year to date for our sexualized violence awareness and prevention campaign - Let's Get Consensual. Let's Get Consensual is a joint campaign between the UVSS and the Anti-Violence Project. Throughout the year, we tabled at a number of different events during campus kickoff, the Sexualized Violence Awareness Week, clubs and course union days, Frost Fest, and more. Our dedicated volunteers talked to thousands of students about why consent matters and how to practice it. This year, the campaign moved online with Instagram and Facebook where we posted pictures of students pledging their commitment to consent culture.

In addition to the work done on the Let's Get Consensual campaign, the UVSS partnered with the Anti-Violence Project and UVic to put on the Sexualized Violence Awareness Week. The week was held during the second week of school in order to proactively address the staggering amount of sexual assault that happens to students during their first few weeks at school. During the week, we were able to promote consent workshops, launch a video that raised awareness of sexualized violence and consent culture, and host a panel discussion on rethinking masculinity and men's involvement in combating rape culture. The week was a massive success and there are already plans in place to do it again next year.

Affordable Housing

With a proposed 13% increase to residence fees at UVic, the UVSS is making affordable housing a priority for the spring semester. We have been meeting with the University to discuss how a lack of affordable on-campus housing is yet another barrier to those seeking to pursue post-secondary education. We will be taking further concentrated action in consultation with our membership to ensure these fees are not increased and that deferred maintenance and expansion is not funded on the backs of students who are struggling financially. In addition to our work with on-campus housing, the UVSS has met with the mayors of Saanich, Oak Bay, and Victoria to discuss ways they can make housing affordable for students. Our mayors have committed themselves to this cause and are exploring solutions such as legalizing secondary suits, rent controls, social housing, and lobbying the provincial government for support. The UVSS will continue to work with our municipal governments to ensure that affordable housing becomes a reality.

Mental Health

This year marked the launch of the first UVSS mental health campaign called the "The HI-5 Project". The campaign, which was started at SFU, aims to raise awareness, eliminate stigma, and promote on-campus dialogue around mental health issues at UVic.

The vision of the campaign is to foster a campus-wide safe space for those whose lives are touched by mental health issues by engaging students on the issues and providing educational opportunities. Initiatives to date include the first annual UVSS 'Mental Health Week' in October. This week included opportunities for students to sign pledges to reduce stigma and share their beliefs as to why mental health is important, as well as to relieve their own stress with events like 'Puppies in the SUB'.

To address the growing number of suicide rates among university campuses, we have also partnered with Coast Capital Savings to offer suicide intervention training to the UVic community at a reduced rate. Our hope is that by having a campus community that is educated and equipped with practical intervention skills, we are working to prevent suicide and reduce stigma around mental illnesses as a whole.







COMMUNITY & EVENTS



Kaylee Szakacs
Director of Student Affairs





Student Groups

This year we have 34 active Course Unions who offer a wide array of services and activities for their members. In December, Course Union Council successfully changed the policy surrounding additional funding they allocate. In the first scheduled meeting of the semester (September, January, and May), no money from the Travel Pool Fund, Academic Fund, or Publication Fund would be granted. So far, this has been a welcome change. By changing policy, the Council hopes funding will be divvied out more equitably in the future since every member of the Council will get an introduction to the policies before requesting funding.

There are over 200 active clubs. From politics to athletics, video games to veganism, there is something for all students. Club and Course Union Days in September and January saw a record number of attendees. A huge change this year was eliminating the clubs anti-harassment policy and officially moving under UVic's policy. The two are virtually the same in process and procedure, this change will streamline the process.

Events

The post-Kickoff calendar has been characterized by smaller, stand-alone events of various types, most of which can be grouped in to "blocks" which are outlined below. Overall, planning and outcomes have been positive in terms of attendance and the variety of extra-curricular opportunities:

The "Halloween" event block included our first annual Scare Fair as well as several smaller events. Scare Fair — which consisted of an obstacle course in the SUB Upper Lounge, free pumpkins and carving implements outside, as well as apple bobbing, coffee, and other aspects, was highly successful as measured by the attendance. This event was run in conjunction with our affordable education campaign. October also saw an open mic event, oriented towards first year residence students, which saw good turnout in Vertigo.

The period from November until the end of exams is typically much slower on campus, which was reflected in both the size and amount that the events office attempted to achieve in this time. The majority of work was put in to planning for the New Year.

The "January" block of events, which consists of Frost Fair and Frost Fest, has been seeing moderate success. Second-term welcome back events have been lacking or significantly different in past years, and therefore year-to-year comparisons are difficult. Events similar to those in the first week of the first semester saw a lower turnout, although still significant. Early morning events saw the most drastic change, as on-campus populations seem to swell two to three hours later in the winter than in the first few weeks of fall class. The Pancake Breakfast and Free Coffee events were impacted most significantly by this change. The "Upper Lodge", conceptualized as a prolonged hub of welcome back activities in the redecorated Upper Lounge, has strong year-over-year potential, with several pop-up activities seeing successful activation during the first week back to school.

Frost Fest, our largest stand-alone event of the year, was approved by Events Committee in the summer with some alterations from the past two years. This included moving the event back to a Thursday, expanding the lineup to seven acts, and altering promotions to include a variety of canvassing, radio ads, and off-campus outreach. The most significant obstacle for Frost Fest has been the allocation of person-hours in order to appropriately support the operation. Other aspects to consider in the long-term event model are date placement and talent draw vs. affordability for the 1000 person venue.

Post-January, Events Committee has so far planned for the Marijuana Legalization Panel — to take place the day before the Semi-Annual General Meeting, and several other potential activations in February and March.





Financial Position

The 2014/2015 school year marks another great financial year for the UVSS. Having eliminated our accumulated deficit in 2012, the Society remains on a financially-sound track and will close on its 50th anniversary with an accumulated operational surplus of zero. Our healthy financial position has enabled us to focus on large-scale capital projects as well as the realization of committee visions and events which make UVic one of the best campuses in Canada.

SUB Renovations

Many major renovations were completed in September which welcomed students to a more inviting and lively student union building. The completion of Vertigo has guaranteed many students a vibrant on-campus space in which to hang out, eat lunch, and hold club events. The Upper Lounge was also completed during the Fall Semester, and has become a highly utilized study space which boasts floor-to-ceiling windows, a living-plant wall, and a glass-encased board room. Students who commute via public transit will have also noticed the University's major bus loop renovation situated on the east side of the SUB.

There are more renovations to come however, and our goal of continuing to abide by student feedback remains paramount. In conjunction with student society members and the UVic Urban Development club, the SUB Renovations Committee has been focused on solidifying the schematic design for the renovation of the Munchie Bar which will see construction beginning during the summer semester. Following this, the UVSS will enter into the third and final phase of renovations which will see a reinvigorated main concourse.

Organizational Strategy

This year we also prioritized the completion of the society's strategic plan. Three major policies have been created which include an HR Policy, a marketing and communications plan, and a product review and development framework. These three policies combined will enable the UVSS to continue to provide students with services, products and employment.



SERVICES



The Food Bank & Free Store

A dedicated group of directors and students have organized and opened the first free store operated by the UVSS. This continues to be an exciting project which provides students with clothing, furniture, accessories, and even school supplies!

This year, the Food Bank moved into a larger space in order to accommodate heavier traffic and the new Free Store. Many wonderful staff and volunteers have worked hard over the past year to keep the Food Bank open and accessible to our ever-growing user base. The Food Bank is grateful for the support of the many on-campus groups, clubs, and individuals who continue to make generous donations. A number of features in local and campus news publications helped draw attention to the effects of tuition hikes and student debt that are linked to increased use of the UVSS Food Bank. The Food Bank team and Board continue to implement new strategies to ensure the sustainability of Food Bank operations, from diversifying suppliers to committing to 9:30am-5pm hours of operation.

More info: uvss.ca/sub-services/services/food-bank/

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.

The UVSS Health and Dental annual maximum for Psychology was increased to \$700 per policy year. This came to fruition as a result of the newly established UVSS Mental Health Campaign.

Our Health and Dental Plan was also re-negotiated with Studentcare this year, which will see an extension of the opt-out period.

Environmental Sustainability

This Fall, the Board put forward a motion to go to our annual general meeting to vote on whether the UVSS should lobby UVic to divest itself from its investments in fossil fuels. Following this, we co-hosted a forum on divestment with City of Victoria councillors who are also pushing the municipality to divest.

Also on the lobbying front, in January 2015 the Board voted to support the UVision Report which was created by student-led on-campus groups and which calls for UVic to take a number of sustainability initiatives in its 2016 Campus Plan.





