To: Dr. Erika Paterson

From: Emily Leung

Date: October 11, 2019

Subject: Proposal for enhancing communication and collaboration among sustainability-

 related student groups at UBC

**Introduction**

As one of the world's most sustainable universities, UBC is home to over 35 sustainability-related student associations and clubs. Each of these groups fills a niche in areas ranging from climate actions, recycling, conservation, energy and resources, sustainable food system, social justice, or some combinations of them. Some of the most well-known groups include Common Energy UBC, Social Justice Center, and Environmental Science Students Association. The great diversity of groups allows students to explore the economic, social, and environmental pillars of sustainability from different perspectives and varying levels of impacts (i.e. individual, organizational, societal).

To raise students' awareness of sustainable issues, an array of events – panel discussions, coffee houses, speaker series, and job fairs, to name a few – are put on by groups throughout the school year. These events are intended to provide a platform for students to gain new knowledge in sustainability, exchange ideas and innovations, share experiences, and build a social network with like-minded peers. However, given a large number of groups, events often overlap both temporally and spatially. This problem mainly stems from the lack of communication tools available for groups to interact during event planning. The disconnected nature of sustainability-related events needs to be addressed to ensure resources are being allocated effectively.

The target audience for the final report is the UBC Sustainability Initiatives (USI). It is the leading body on campus in fostering the integration of academic and operational sustainability, through the partnership with student and campus groups. USI has been hosting the Sustainability Student Council that comprises of representatives from most sustainability groups for several years. The established relationship they have with these groups, as well as their authority to act on my recommendations, well-positioned them to resolve this problem.

**Statement of Problem**

Events with a similar focus in sustainability can conflict with one another in terms of timing (having two or more happenings in a week), location (having two or more happenings in close vicinity at the same time), or both. The unplanned and undesirable concurrence of events has been a concern for many student organizers. A particular example of this problem is the clustering of job fairs, career nights, and professional networking events for students with an environmental background right before reading breaks.

The implications of this problem are three-fold. First, competitions over the same group of participants reduce the turnout at each event; second, the distribution of resources over multiple events limits the capacity of each group; third, a plethora of similar messaging in event promotions may confuse participants.

The crux of this problem is the lack of easily accessible communication platforms for groups to coordinate while planning events. Because groups are unaware of what others are organizing, their ability to coordinate and prevent this problem from happening, and collaborate with others with similar visions, is hindered.

**Proposed Solution**

One of the potential solutions is to create an online event calendar that compiles all sustainability happenings on campus. An open calendar enhances transparency, and in turn, facilitates cooperation and communication among groups. The calendar can separate into two components: private and public. The private calendar will only be viewable and editable by the committees of sustainability groups. Groups can input their tentative plans for events (i.e. when and where) to prevent other groups from organizing similar events around the same time or location. Alternatively, they can use it to identify groups that they can collaborate with if a similar event is in the process of planning already. On the other hand, the public calendar will be a one-stop-shop for students looking for sustainability events. Students can schedule their time accordingly and find events that best align with their passions.

This solution is technologically feasible. It can be established using Google Calendar and be embedded into an existing web page.

**Scope**

To assess the most easy-to-implement and feasible way to solve the problem, I plan to examine seven areas of inquires:

* What do groups usually take into consideration when planning an event?
* What are the challenges groups face in terms of event planning?
* Have groups ever collaboratively put on events? If yes, how do they find the collaborative experiences?
* How often do groups run into the problem mentioned above?
* When that happens, what is the general approach to solving it?
* What methods have groups tried to avoid the problem, if any? Are they successful or not?
* What could be the challenges of implementing the solution?

**Methods**

My primary data source will be a survey for the Event Coordinators of sustainability groups on campus, including questions related to the areas of inquiries. An interview with a representative of USI will potentially be scheduled to discuss the feasibility of my proposal and their capacity to carry it out. Moreover, I will be collecting information on sustainability events from social media to examine the seriousness of the problem.

The secondary data source will include publications on group collaboration for event planning.

**My Qualifications**

As a committee member for UBCC 350, a climate action group, for two years, I am experienced in event planning; I organized various events such as the Just Transition Panel Discussion, TransMountain Pipeline Coffeehouse, and Pull Together Fundraisers. I understand and have struggled the problem of events overlapping. Besides, I was involved with USI as a Sustainability Ambassador and later a mentor to new ambassadors. I am familiar with the resources in USI and have connections with some staff who I can contact for an interview. My involvement in other groups such as Sprouts, Roots of the Roof, and Force of Nature further equipped me with knowledge of fostering effective collaboration and communications between groups.

**Conclusion**

Collaboration between sustainability groups is crucial in event planning. It allows for greater efficiency and capacity, particularly because sustainability is an intersectional issue that requires input from different perspectives. Action is needed to facilitate inter-group communication via the creation of an event calendar. By addressing the six areas of inquiry mentioned earlier, I can determine the benefits and feasibility of creating an online event calendar. With your approval, I will begin research at once.