

Recommended Improvements to the Residence Hall Association of the  
University of British Columbia

Submitted to:

The Residence Hall Association Cabinet

Created by:

Mitchell Prost

December 18, 2020

## Letter of Transmission

December 18, 2020

**Zach Higgins**  
RHA President  
The University of British Columbia  
2205 Lower Mall, Vancouver, BC V6T 1Z4

Dear Zach,

As you know, I have been working on a report aimed at analyzing the RHA as it currently exists and seeing if any improvements in the processes could be made. I am happy to inform you that my research has concluded and I have created my report.

This report touches upon a variety of topics ranging from marketing procedures and positional duties to event management and tracking. Many of these recommendations are framed to be starting points for further discussion.

If you have any questions, please reach out to me at [mitchell.prost@gmail.com](mailto:mitchell.prost@gmail.com). I would be happy to chat about anything in this report.

Best,

Mitchell Prost

## **Abstract**

The University of British Columbia's Residence Hall Association is a large, student-run organization aimed at improving the student experience of residence. While the student population has grown quite a bit, the RHA has not matched that growth in terms of updating its structure and processes. In this report, several different ways to improve the RHA were explored. This was achieved through research through past RHA documents, the RHA drive, past experience, and information interviews with the current RHA Executives. This ultimately yielded several recommendations, including: the hiring of a Marketing Coordinator to manage the RHA's social media, website, and more; the introduction of monthly position reports; and much more. These recommendations are intended to spark discussion and hopefully lead to positive change within the organization.

# Table of Contents

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>4</b>
Report Introduction	4
Introduction to the RHA	4
Current Marketing and Event Strategies	6
Current Executive Role Structure	7
Current Election Model	7
<b>Improvements Regarding Marketing and Event Strategies</b>	<b>7</b>
Marketing Strategies	8
Collaboration with the Resident Engagement Committee	8
Consistent use of an internal event calendar	9
Implementation of monthly residence newsletters	9
Implementation of biweekly Internal Newsletters	10
Internal Event Reporting and Tracking	10
<b>Improvements Regarding Executive Role Structure</b>	<b>11</b>
Introduction of Associate Vice Presidents	11
Introduction of a Marketing Coordinator	11
Introduction of Monthly Positional Reports	12
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Appendix</b>	<b>13</b>
Interview Questions	13

# Introduction

## Report Introduction

This report is a collection of research regarding several key areas of the Residence Hall Association (RHA) of the University of British Columbia (UBC) and their associated recommendations for improvements. It is being written by Mitchell Prost as part of the ENGL 301 Technical Writing Course. Its aim is to analyse several areas of an organization and provide recommendations for improvements.

This report and its recommendations will be presented to the RHA Cabinet, a group made up of the RHA Executive Team, the Area Council Presidents, and the staff Advisor.

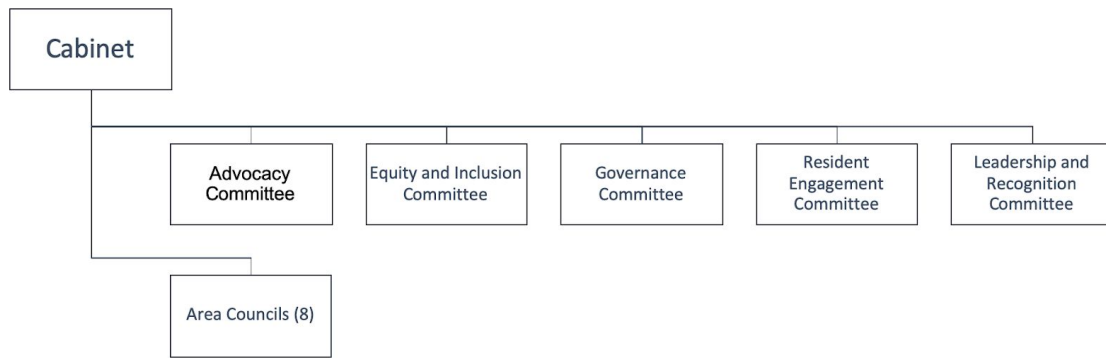
## Introduction to the RHA

UBC is host to a plethora of student-run groups, one of which is the UBC RHA. This organization regularly has over 100 student-members and represents over 12,000 students living on campus. Each year, the RHA works to support students by providing engaging programming, advocacy support, and leadership opportunities. The RHA structure is depicted in figure 1. There are six RHA Executives:

- the President;
- the Vice President Administration and Finance;
- the Vice President Internal and Advocacy;
- the Vice President External and Marketing;
- the National Communications Coordinator; and

- and the National Residence Hall Honorary (NRHH) President.

The RHA is made up of eight Residence Area Councils, each with their own Presidents, Vice President(s), and other members. The presidents of each council sit on the RHA Cabinet alongside the RHA Executives and make up the highest body of the organization.



**Figure 1.** The UBC Residence Hall Association’s organizational structure as of December 2020.

Each year, the RHA and its area councils put on hundreds of successful events, creating many resident interactions and building residence communities. However, the RHA is limited by its structure and current operations. Engagement with students living in on-campus housing, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic and with those living in upper-year housing is not what it could be. Additionally, the RHA’s organizational structure can inhibit an effective flow of work, often leading to a lack of progress and growth in the organization year after year. A lack of engagement has profound effects on student success and their sense of belongingness within the university. How successful the RHA’s engagement efforts are additionally directly correlated to its organization and structure.

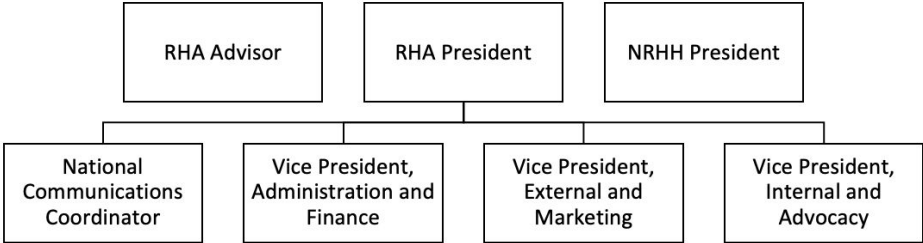
There are several aspects that contribute to the less-than-ideal levels of engagement and operation. Firstly, marketing is a large consideration. How the RHA markets events and initiatives will directly impact how the RHA is engaging with students. From this, the organizational structure becomes more important when the question “who does the work?” is asked. Lastly, the operations of the RHA’s election has been an aspect of the organization that has been criticized year after year for its exclusiveness and effectiveness. These three aspects of the RHA are explored in detail. From this detailed analysis, recommendations have been made that will be presented to the RHA Cabinet for consideration.

## Current Marketing and Event Strategies

At present, the RHA has a diversified event marketing strategy. Each area council typically either has a Vice President, External or a Marketing Coordinator. These positions are overseen by both their respective Area President and the RHA Vice President, External and Marketing. With this model, however, there is no centralized system for marketing between residence areas, nor is there a consistent one dedicated to the RHA Cabinet and Executive. Marketing strategies used include: posting on social media, physical postering, and word-of-mouth. Strategies largely consist of novel ideas each year; other than transition reports, there is no database of past programs available to RHA members. Additionally, there is no common system used for the evaluation and documentation of events.

# Current Executive Role Structure

The RHA’s executive team structure has been a dynamic one. Over the past several years, the makeup of this team has changed considerably. Figure 2 presents the most recent organization of the RHA’s executive team.



**Figure 2.** Current structure of the UBC RHA’s Executive Team as of December 2020.

# Current Election Model

The UBC RHA’s current election model is styled as a closed boardroom. This is distinct from the elections of the area councils which operate in an open election style, with all residents residing in a particular residence having the ability to vote for their representatives. This style of election has caused issues in the past due to lack of transparency surrounding it. Similar organizations such as undergraduate societies operate open elections where all constituents have the ability to vote. In the RHA’s current model, only the Area Presidents of each area council (or their representative) have the right to vote.

# Improvements Regarding Marketing and Event Strategies

In this section, various improvements based on research done are proposed.



## Marketing Strategies

While the RHA usually does well with promoting events at the area council level, there could be more cohesiveness in promoting events at the RHA level and beyond. In order to engage better with residents and beyond, more attention should be dedicated towards marketing. As of December 18th, 2020, the UBC RHA's Instagram account has 528 followers, and the Facebook page has 1085 likes. This is a decent audience that is rarely tapped into. The consistent engagement of these channels of communication would allow the RHA to facilitate greater connections with residents and also project a better, more engaged image of itself.

The RHA additionally operates a variety of Facebook groups. These groups are often disorganised and difficult to keep track of. A potential remedy is to better track the links and locations of the groups, monitor them, and look for ways to improve them and increase student engagement through them.

## Collaboration with the Resident Engagement Committee

The newly created Resident Engagement Committee of the RHA is mandated to create, promote events, and engage with all residents. As it is written in the RHA's constitution, the Resident Engagement Committee shall:

- 1) Plan and run RHA-wide events and initiatives;
- 2) Promote awareness of the resources available to students in residence;
- 3) Promote awareness of the RHA's role and responsibilities;
- 4) Assist the Executives in creating and distributing a newsletter or similar communication to residents outlining the ongoing work of the RHA;

- 5) Plan and execute the Annual General Meeting in conjunction with the Governance Committee;
- 6) Hold meetings at least bi-weekly;
- 7) Propose goals for the session to the Governance Committee and be responsible for working towards those goals; and
- 8) Have such other duties as assigned by RHA Cabinet.

There is a great opportunity for collaboration with this committee. One potential avenue for collaboration is having members of this committee do the “groundwork” of sharing events, spreading the word and using their own personal connections to engage residents.

### Consistent use of an internal event calendar

The RHA runs many events, but it can be hard to keep track of everything that is going on. The consistent use of an internal event calendar would allow for integration and communal knowledge of what is happening and where it is happening. This could promote knowledge of other councils’ work and increase understanding of what is happening in the organization as a whole. There is also the potential for this calendar to be made public for residents to browse for events of interest.

### Implementation of monthly residence newsletters

The RHA and its area councils have direct access to thousands of students. However, this access is mostly limited to social media at present. An additional avenue of exploration in engagement is through the use of monthly residence newsletters, sent out to student emails. This newsletter would be coordinated and sent out to residents in specific residence areas, with information

pertaining to events and initiatives occurring in their area. This initiative would greatly increase the knowledge that residents would have on what is going on with their respective area council. This initiative could be coordinated at the RHA level by the Vice President, Internal and Advocacy to ensure consistent and high-quality delivery of the newsletters. If not feasible, the newsletters could be distributed on a termly basis.

### Implementation of biweekly Internal Newsletters

A biweekly internal newsletter is one that would be sent out to all RHA members by the RHA Executive, most likely the President. This newsletter would update all with the work of the Executive and Cabinet, ensuring transparency and equitable access to information throughout the entire organization. The RHA already maintains a list of RHA members' emails, so the collection of information would not be a barrier.

### Internal Event Reporting and Tracking

One important way that events are successful is in their tracking. This aspect of the report proposes the creation of an RHA event tracking and evaluation form that will allow for the creation of a database of events run by the RHA for current and future use. This could be achieved through the creation of a Google Form that is circulated through councils and maintained at the RHA level. This form would be a required piece of closing down any event run by an RHA member. Each year, these results can be turned into a database of programming that could theoretically allow future years' RHA members to recreate an event.

# Improvements Regarding Executive Role Structure

A part of this report was gaining information on any new roles that could be created to better support the RHA Executives. To achieve this, four questions were asked of the RHA Executives:

1. How would you describe your current workload as an RHA Executive?
2. What projects or activities in your role take up most of your time?
3. Are there projects that you would like to work on but cannot due to time constraints?
4. If you had Associates working with you, what would they work on?

Valuable information was gained from 1:1 interviews with the RHA executives, and have been interpreted in the recommendations below.

## Introduction of Associate Vice Presidents

A major question going into this report was regarding the potential addition of Associate Vice Presidents (AVPs) to the RHA Executive. After conducting the interviews with the RHA Executives, it was determined that, at this point in time, there may not be a need for such a role. All of the execs stated that their positions were balanced and did not necessarily necessitate an AVP. However, there was a need expressed for additional support regarding marketing, thus the recommendation of the role of Marketing Coordinator at the RHA level.

## Introduction of a Marketing Coordinator

A Marketing Coordinator that works with the RHA Executives but is not an elected executive is recommended to be hired. This position would support the Executives in the tasks relating to marketing, including but not limited to:

- Social media management
- Website development
- Poster design

This position would allow the Vice President, External and Marketing to focus on more higher-level matters that can often be neglected due to duties relating to marketing management.

## Introduction of Monthly Positional Reports

The last recommendation involves the introduction of a monthly positional report. This requirement would be for all RHA Executives, Cabinet Members, NRHH Executives, and Area Council Members. This would take the form of a short survey asking questions about positional duties that will allow transition reports to be more easily completed. It will also allow the appropriate supervisor of a member to monitor progress of each member.

## Conclusion

In summary, recommendations regarding marketing and event strategies, and positional duties are proposed. These are recommendations that necessitate further exploration and discussion before being approved and enacted. The RHA has the potential to grow and I believe that the recommendations provided in this report will help facilitate that.

# Appendix

## Interview Questions

How would you describe your current workload as an RHA Executive?

1. What projects or activities in your role take up most of your time?
2. Are there projects that you would like to work on but cannot due to time constraints?
3. If you had Associates working with you, what would they work on?