



Alma Mater Society of  
UBC Vancouver

# Quarterly Executive Report

Tom Dvorak, Vice-President Finance

March 1, 2009 to June 17, 2009

# Table of Contents

## Opening Remarks

## The Vice-President Finance Portfolio

### AMS Committees

Hiring Committees

AMS/GSS Extended Health and Dental Plan Committee

Budget Committee (Chair)

Business Operations Committee (Chair)

Human Resources Committee (Chair)

Appointments Review Committee

Fundraising & Sponsorship Committee

Impacts Committee (Chair)

Finance Commission

Renovations Planning Group

SUB Renewal Committee

### External Committees

Walter Gage Memorial Fund Committee

Aquatic Centre Management Committee

Alumni Association Board of Directors

CiTR Board of Directors

## Opening Remarks

Wow! Here I am, 3 months into my term as the financial director of Canada's largest student union, and it feels as if just yesterday I took office and hit the ground running. I expected an aggressive learning curve in this job that would keep me on my toes, but I've gotten a lot more than I bargained for. The first month of my time here was like drinking from a fire hose.

Every imaginable question involving money or legal agreements was ending up on my desk. "Tom, could you please look up my club's account balance? Tom, can you please process this invoice? ... can I buy a new computer? ... can I opt out of my student fees that I paid 7 months ago? ... can you help me set up a PayPal account for my club? ... can I have \$35,062? ... can we meet on Thursday to talk about our payment processing company? ... can you refund the \$40 I was overcharged on my credit card at Blue Chip? ... can you sign this contract? ... can we increase wages for tutors? ... can you go prep a lawsuit against the University to get the \$300,000 that they owe us? ... can you spot me the \$300,000 that I owe my bookie? ... can you PLEASE process that invoice I gave you? ..."

It took me about a week to get the design just right, but I eventually put in place a measure to help me maintain my sanity: an e-mail auto-responder.

That turned down much of the peripheral noise, and gave me time to focus on everything that my predecessor had laid out for me during transition. Chris Diplock did an amazing job in clearly defining what my day to day job would look like, and as a result, I was able to get a steady rhythm going early on. The titanic amount of financial data and paperwork that I swim in is absolutely mind boggling. Without Chris' excellent teaching, I would not have been able to keep things afloat through those initial weeks.

Eventually, I got a handle on things, but that honeymoon was short lived. Hiring and budgeting seasons came along with a great of their own time-consuming baggage. This might not exactly read like a sales pitch or job posting, but ultimately, the job is fun. I'm surrounded by some great people that I have the privilege of working with, and the results that we're able to produce make all of the mayhem worth it. I attended our executive retreat on Bowen Island and Whistler Orientation Weekend with council. There was a great amount of value in both of these weekends, and I feel that they can play a huge role in setting the tone for the year.

It's exciting to have learned so much over the past 3 months, and I look forward to devoting more of my energy in this next quarter to business projects that are planned for the year.

I'd like to round off by thanking all of the amazing permanent support staff that we have here at the AMS. Everyone from our outlet cashiers right up to our senior managers often put in Herculean amounts of effort that isn't always recognized. They do incredible work that makes up the backbone of our society, and we owe much of our success to these individuals.

Take care,

-Tom Dvorak

## The Vice-President Finance Portfolio

As previously mentioned, this society relies extremely heavily on the contribution of its dedicated employees. The Vice President Finance portfolio is certainly no exception. We were absolutely overwhelmed with qualified candidates for these positions, and it's with pleasure that I introduce my team for the 2009-2010 year:

Associate Vice-President Finance

**Catherine Metrycki** - [avpfinance@ams.ubc.ca](mailto:avpfinance@ams.ubc.ca)

Catherine has done an amazing job this year of moving the AMS Finance Commission into the twenty-first century. Under her direction, all of our funding applications and budget submission systems have been put online and are now fully operational. She worked well above and beyond her core hours early in the year to get these initiatives in place for use during her term, automating many time-consuming processes. As a result, she's taking a well-deserved extended vacation and has exciting plans for promoting financial awareness amongst students at UBC.

Financial Orientations Coordinator

**Edwin Chan** - [finorientations@ams.ubc.ca](mailto:finorientations@ams.ubc.ca)

Edwin's work has been instrumental to keeping our accounting systems functioning properly. He is given the daunting task of ensuring that every group that hosts its accounts at the AMS is fully aware of how to use our systems. This is the time of year when most student groups turn over their executives, so there are well over 300 individuals to familiarize with our sea of paperwork.

Business Promotions Coordinator

**Mike Brown** - [businesspromotions@ams.ubc.ca](mailto:businesspromotions@ams.ubc.ca)

Mike's position is an expansion of a previous position, with a new directed focus on marketing for our business operations. Having just wrapped up a BCom degree in marketing, he brings a wealth of applied knowledge to the portfolio. He's already initiated some comprehensive market research and we look forward to seeing the results of his hard work and dedication returned to the our society's bottom line.

Sustainability Coordinator

**Joyce Shen** - [sustainability@ams.ubc.ca](mailto:sustainability@ams.ubc.ca)

Joyce is tasked with leading sustainability initiatives within our society. She's already reformed composting practices within the AMS offices, and is now turning her attention towards phasing out the use of bottled water on our campus. She has been able to accomplish a great deal by working with the University Sustainability Office and other student groups to share resources in reaching common goals.

## AMS Committees

### **Hiring Committees**

Getting our society's appointed student staff on board was a monumental task this year. I put in a great deal of time on various committees, but I'd like to particularly acknowledge the contributions of councillors on these committees.

### **AMS/GSS Extended Health and Dental Plan Committee**

This committee has met twice so far this year, and is a great opportunity for us to partner with the GSS. We have set the health care premiums for the coming year and assessed what parts of the health and dental plan students are using most, and in what areas they would like to see increased coverage in coming years. Our fantastic health plan provider, Student Care, administered opinion surveys to collect a lot of the relevant data. They also continue to operate an office on the Lower Level of the SUB to facilitate student health claims. Of note, the Health & Dental Plan fee is one of a few that is tied to CPI, ensuring the sustainability of the health plan well into the future.

### **Budget Committee (Chair)**

This committee has been working hard over the past weeks in putting together a budget for the coming year. Special thanks to our dedicated councillors and members at large that have been coming to our weekly evening meetings. This committee sends its apologies to council for not having a budget ready for June 17th. A structural deficit has been identified, and in an attempt to raise the popularity of this committee, we've asked all student government staff to find 10% of their budgets that could potentially be trimmed down. We look forward to presenting the fruit of our labour at the first council meeting in July.

### **Business Operations Committee (Chair)**

We have a unique situation here at the AMS. Most student unions operate a business operations of their own, but they do so predominantly as a service where they barely break even. We, on the other hand, made over \$1,000,000 in profit from our operations this past year while maintaining rock-bottom prices for our students. With the help of very active membership, this committee is in the midst of a strong review of marketing practices throughout society businesses, with a particular focus on the Whistler Lodge website. There have been some recent renovations to Blue Chip Cookies, as well as a review of security policies. There is also a review underway of how to take advantage of new technologies in terms of our point of sale terminals. Something of interest that will be coming to council next meeting will be a recommendation from BOC on policies to set about our Whistler Lodge during the 2010 Olympics.

### **Human Resources Committee (Chair)**

This committee was formed as a result of recommendations that came from an organizational review done by the Hay Group last year which identified a strong need for a comprehensive HR function at the AMS. With over 500 employees working here, it is amazing that we have been able to manage without such a function in the past. The introduction of this new position will take on a great deal of work that is currently bogging down many of our staff in their own roles. We have created a job description and set a salary level for a new full-time Senior Manager in Human Resources. We have also selected Ray & Berndston to lead an executive search for the ideal candidate which is now well underway. Current plans look to have this new staff member on board by the end of the summer.

### **Appointments Review Committee**

This committee is a reincarnation of the Compensation Review Committee. It is in essence an operational HR committee, ensuring pay equity throughout the society and approving new positions. One key project for the year is a full reform of pay standards and rates throughout the student government of the AMS. Another item that is now needing to be addressed is that of Work-study positions, and the effects they have on pay distribution and equity throughout the society.

### **Fundraising & Sponsorship Committee**

This committee has yet to meet, but a meeting is on the books. So far, our Communications Manager, Kelli Seepaul, has been doing an outstanding job of securing sponsorship deals for the year. Our Events Manager, Shea Dahl, has also been working with various companies for sponsorship of our society's big events such as Welcome Back Barbeque and Block Party.

### **Impacts Committee (Chair)**

Joyce Shen has been taking a great lead on sustainability initiatives this year. A project currently on the table is that of phasing out bottled water on campus. The installation of new water fountains with spouts for refilling water bottles in the SUB as given us a great opportunity from which to springboard into the future. We also look forward to a follow up waste audit coming towards the end of the summer.

### **Finance Commission**

Just as one group paid off a loan to the AMS, another has had to take one out. I'm working closely with this group to form a strong budget for the coming year, and get it on a path to repay its debt in the near future. Some new, concrete policies are also being put into place in terms of penalties and communication policies with student groups in terms of their finances. Also, we are currently going through an upgrade for online payment systems from one based on PayPal to one hosted through a system called Rezgo, plugged into a different payment engine. Otherwise, we continue to take in applications for funding from the Student Initiatives Fund, Clubs Benefit Fund, and Constituency Aid Fund. Applications for these funds are now all online at [www.ams.ubc.ca/fincom](http://www.ams.ubc.ca/fincom).

### **Renovations Planning Group**

Renos is a committee that looks at space planning and change to current AMS facilities. Some recently approved projects include changes to office space to facilitate our expanding Human Resources department, as well as upgrades to the Whistler Lodge. An ongoing concern at this committee is making large investments in our current facility with the development of a new one in the near future.

### **SUB Renewal Committee**

The new student union building is a monster of a project. I've been setting time aside to participate actively in the meeting of this committee, particularly in how the project plugs in with other groups on campus such as the Alumni Association. We're looking to secure an agreement with the University on the project in the near future, and are exploring a number of different options in how to get towards such an agreement so that we may begin the design phase of this exciting project. See the quarterly report of Crystal Hon, Vice President Administration for a more comprehensive update on the SUB Renew project.

## External Committees

### **Walter Gage Memorial Fund**

This is a joint committee with the University's Vice President Students office that meets several times a year to screen applications for funding. Our next meeting is next week, and we encourage groups with exciting projects to apply.

### **Innovative Projects Fund Committee**

This joint University-AMS committee will be deciding on IPF applications this fall.

### **Aquatic Centre Management Committee**

This is a tri-partnered committee with representation from the University, the AMS, and the University Neighbourhoods Association. There are some basic operational decisions that are made, and we're working around the wonderful cut in student admission fees last year, making admission for students free for public swims.

### **Alumni Association Board of Directors**

This is an exciting organization to work with, as they're just now climbing out of a complete strategic review, and are starting to see mechanisms put into place that are yielding amazing results. There is a current goal to double alumni engagement in the next decade, and this motivated group of volunteers with an outstanding support staff are well on their way to making that a reality. The Alumni Association is particularly interesting in that legally, it resembles the AMS, but its relationship with the University is much more cooperative, and some might argue, more successful. I'm excited to see what lessons I can apply to our governance and operations here at the AMS.

### **CiTR Board of Directors**

This committee has also met only once this year, due mainly to long-term projects being underway and no new items to address. A new focus is being put towards making fundraising a functional part of the organization to facilitate its growth in the future.