

Intro to Student Senate and the Senate's Goals

Foreword

Hi Pharmily! My name is David Qi (PY3), and I am the Student Senate representative for the Faculty of Pharmaceutical Sciences! I am currently in my 2nd term as student senator and over time, I learned my PharmSci peers are not aware of what Senate does, or what my role entails. As such, I decided to include a monthly summary of topics discussed in the Senate, and highlighting any that pertain to the Faculty! If you have any further questions about my role or want to chat about anything, you can contact me at dqi01@student.ubc.ca or on Facebook!

What is the Senate?

The Senate is the highest academic governing body at UBC, and is one of two groups running UBC (alongside the Board of Governors, which handles the financial aspects). Both groups are given power by the BC [University Act](#), which governs all post-secondary education in BC. The Senate is NOT part of an existing student union.

The UBC [Academic Calendar](#) has information on all current courses, programs, services, policies, and procedures. It is the Senate that creates and passes many policies found in the Calendar, ranging from “Academic Concession” to “Student Conduct and Discipline”. The Senate also has 13 committees serving underneath it, and each committee discusses on specific topics regarding admissions, new student awards and curriculums to name a few. For example, the Academic Policy Committee deals with any policies pertaining to academia, such as “Academic Concessions”. The topics or changes discussed at the committees will be brought up to the main Senate meeting for final approval.

The Senate meets once a month, and these meetings are open to the public. Some of the individuals that sit on the Senate include the President, all 12 deans, and various faculty members. The Senate will discuss and vote on changes/topics brought by the various committees.

What is the Student Senate?

The Student Senate Caucus is a group of 18 students elected from various faculties and from the campus at large. Two student members are elected within the Caucus as Co-Chairpersons, and they lead the meetings. The Caucus generally meets one day before the monthly Senate meeting and discusses the meeting minutes and any concerns. It is NOT an OFFICIAL RECOGNIZED body in UBC and is not treated as a separate entity from the Senate, it is an unofficial collective of students united by common goals for student advocacy. However, it is still under mandate by a set of guiding principles that is approved by the Senate.

The Student Senate Caucus aims to act as spokespersons for all students, voicing their concerns and bringing up student perspectives within Senate discussion. This is important, as faculty members may lose sight of what matters to students, and the policies passed may not be beneficial for us. It is important for the Student Senate to have their say, as the topics discussed in the Senate affect ALL students. The Student Senate also liaisons with the AMS to facilitate sharing of information and communication about topics discussed at the Senate. Individual student senators also liaisons with their respective faculties to make sure their students are aware of. Thus, it is my job to keep you guys updated, and to pass any concerns to the Student Senate, where it can be discussed. I urge everyone to bring forward any of your complaints to me or through email! The Student Senate also identifies key strategic areas of focus for the year, and

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these goals are created based on past concerns our peers have brought to us. These goals can be found starting on page 4.

Senate Summary

Starting this year, I plan to post a summary of the meeting minutes and list of approved motions that have been passed in each month's senate meeting. The summary will be divided into 3 sections: Business pertaining to the Faculty of Pharmsci, Business pertaining to UBC students in general, and Other Business. All motions that are written in the document have been passed by the Senate. If any motions do not pass, I will still record it in the summary but will be clearly indicated that the motion did not pass. I hope this monthly summary helps you become aware of what's happening within and outside the faculty! If you have any questions about the contents of the meeting minutes, please feel free to contact me.

Thank you for reading. I hope you have a great semester and a productive year!

Respectfully yours,
David Qi (PY3)

Current Goals of Student Senate

1. Equity

a. Creation of a permanent “Senate Ad Hoc Committee on Academic Diversity and Inclusion” as a permanent committee

- i. In the past, this committee has been set up to review diversity and inclusion within academic bodies at UBC
- ii. Examples of past activities
 1. consultations with other committees on how policies can incorporate justice, equity and inclusion of marginalized groups
 2. Assessing the ability of Senate committees to incorporate inclusive practices during discussion of policies
 3. Liaison with external committees and stakeholders at UBC who are concerned with issues of justice, equity and inclusion
- iii. Strongly suggest Senate establish a PERMANENT committee, as we found its activities to be beneficial for academic diversity

b. Graduate Supervision

- i. Graduate students are the heart of research activities, contributing significantly to advancement of knowledge
- ii. Ensuring excellent supervision benefits their academic success, well-being and ability to thrive both during and after their studies
- iii. Although there is a framework for excellent supervision, there are no actual policies to enhance the importance of graduate supervision.

- iv. Aim to set up policies to outline clear expectations and guidelines for graduate supervision, and implementation of these policies in the form of resources, training and support to supervisors and graduate students
- c. Indigenous Strategic Plan
 - i. The Plan can be found [here](#)
 - ii. Focus on Goals 2 and 4
 - 1. Advocating for the Truth
 - a. Adopt the recognition of Indigenous peoples human rights, truth and reconciliation and making sure our history with indigenous peoples are properly being acknowledged whenever appropriate
 - 2. Indigenize our Curriculum
 - a. Review and reprioritization of Indigenous material currently being used in classes to value holistic truth first
- d. Children in Classroom
 - i. Aims to help students who are parents of young children
 - ii. No clear policy addressing children in the classroom
 - 1. A student-parent may need to bring their child to class in order to overcome barriers on their ability to learn
 - iii. Recommend a policy to help identify situations where it is necessary that a parent can bring their child to the classroom to help with their learning
- e. LR7 Review
 - i. Update LR7: Disability Accommodation Policy

- ii. Strongly suggest revisiting this policy as it has not been updated since 2019, and the needs of our students are ever-changing
- iii. Some changes suggested are: requirement of providing proof of diagnosis
→ this may create delays for some students that cannot obtain these.

2. Experiential Learning

a. Additional Co-op and Experiential Education Opportunities for International Students

- i. Disparity in opportunities between domestic and international students for Co-op opportunities
- ii. Suggest Senate work towards building specific opportunities for international students to partake in Co-op by tackling these problems:
 - 1. Lack of Institutional vision and shared understanding
 - a. Experiential Education is understood in different ways across multiple faculties → recommended to collaboratively develop common principles and goals when it comes to work-integrated education
 - 2. Struggles with communication and connection
 - a. The difference in Experiential Education amongst multiple faculties leads to the disconnected nature of support and resources regarding work opportunities., we suggest improving clarity and creating a joint portal accessing learning opportunities and resources
 - 3. Evaluation and Assessment

- a. Regarding the difference in Experiential Education amongst multiple faculties → there is no systematic approach to evaluating and assessment
- b. No clear cut goals in what needs to be evaluated → recommend to set a framework and vision on what needs to be evaluated and why

4. Inequity and Exclusion

- a. Current opportunities can exclude students based on identity markers such as nationality, race, religion, physical ability etc.
- b. Aim to eliminate these systemic barriers by collecting more data on equity and inviting more workplace partners to be involved in development of work opportunities

5. Teaching & Learning Difficulties

- a. Students say they feel they aren't prepared for Experiential Education opportunities due to missing many soft skills such as professional communication, teamwork-based learning and professionalism etc.
- b. We recommend establishment of online modules that aim to teach these skills and to develop supportive measures for establishing them, such as course development guidelines and eval rubrics.

b. Undergraduate Research

- i. We believe undergraduate research can further be improved in 3 key categories
 1. Research Funds
 - a. A central fund to undergraduate students will make it easier to gain funding and incentivize students to go into research while overcoming financial barriers
 2. Research Support
 - a. We believe a go-to one-on-one advising regarding research and how to go about generating research materials will help ease the transition of starting research → creation of a research support specialist position, similar to Advising
 - b. Recommend hiring graduate students, as they are some of the most experienced researchers on campus, impart their wisdom and knowledge onto interested undergrads and provide them opportunities on what kind of research is available.
 - c. Recommend that this advising program is universal to all faculties → helps ease the vastness of campus which can be detrimental to finding research opportunities
 3. Research Donations
 - a. Donors for undergraduate research are an untapped market → strongly suggest reaching out to 3rd party donors to help funding for budding researchers

3. Student Academic Support

a. Hybrid Education

- i. Newly established after the pandemic
- ii. Allows students to easily review course materials throughout the terms
- iii. Inclusive and accessible for students who have disability or accessibility issues
- iv. Recommend greater investment in the budget going toward lecture capture technology and training resources, so every professor has the tools to incorporate hybrid learning

b. Course Withdrawal Date

- i. Current policy states a student only given 1.5 weeks after term starts to decide whether to drop before given a “W” on transcript
- ii. The first week of class is largely introductory and only gives students 2-3 classes to assess their ability to perform in the course
- iii. Unforeseen problems can arise → students may be forced to incur the course fee or apply for academic concession if need to drop past the withdrawal date → stress for students, professors and advisors
- iv. Propose the course withdrawal day be pushed until the very last day of classes → inclusive to students experiencing financial difficulties and allow more time for students to determine their ability/interest in the course

c. Exam Hardship Policy

- i. Current policy: examination hardship defined as “3+ formal examinations within a 24 hour period”
 - ii. Current policy fails to address back-back exams, with students having 2+ exams in a 12 hour period → no time to rest and affecting their performance.
 - iii. Propose changing policy to include students with 2+ exams in a 12 hour period as part of “examination hardship”
- d. 24/7 Library Access
 - i. Commuter students do not have the luxury of having a readily available studying space that is convenient for them → use the library
 - ii. However, libraries do not have 24/7 hr access, resulting in students having to find alternate study spaces to complete projects/study after hours
 - iii. Propose a gradual change in hours and 24/7 library access for IKB
- e. Equal Library Access for Affiliate Students
 - i. Students from affiliated colleges face disparities in access rights and information-sharing processes compared to UBC registered students
 - ii. Propose integration and coordination of affiliate student information with the UBC library system → eliminated need for manually enrolment
 - iii. Advocate lengthening period of access for affiliate students
- f. Past Syllabi during course registration
 - i. Suggest creating a database for past syllabi to help students determine their interest for course registration

- ii. Political Science and Philosophy departments have already begun creating their own database, highly successful
- g. Use of Formal Exam Period Policy
 - i. Policy states: “The holding of any examination, formal or in-term is forbidden during the last two weeks of the term”
 - ii. Policy fails to mention repercussions if professors are not complicit → many professors aren’t aware of this policy and hold exams in the last two weeks
 - iii. Recommend reviewing this policy and creating an amendment on how students can report this misconduct → examinations in the last two weeks create mounting stress on students
- h. Exam Database
 - i. There is currently no centralized repository of past exams papers
 - ii. Past exams would help students to prepare for their upcoming tests, while guiding them on which topics to focus on
 - iii. Recommend the construction of an online database compiling past exams from each faculty for easy student access
- i. Affordable Textbook Policy
 - i. Suggest the development of this policy aiming to address cost barriers associated with course materials
 - ii. Currently, the V-131 policy limits the cost of digital learning tools and sets the goal of making these tools completely free by 2028

- iii. The Affordable Textbook Policy aims to set a cap on textbook cost and gradually reducing that cap until there is zero cost and reliance on Open Education Resources to support student learning
- j. Maintaining Compassionate Approach to Academic Concessions
 - i. Unprecedented challenges were faced during the COVID-19 pandemic → university admin demonstrated flexibility to accommodate these requests
 - ii. Post-pandemic → seems to be shift back to rigid, pre-pandemic approach to granting accommodations
 - iii. Strongly advocated for reinforcement of the compassionate approach to academic concessions, similar to that during COVID-19.
 - 1. Advocating for enhancement of standing deferred policy → safety net in terms of financial struggles and health issues
- k. Mid-Course feedback
 - i. Generally, the mid-course feedback gets less traction than the end of term feed-back
 - ii. Suggest to prioritize the value of mid-course feedback and translating this message to faculty members → give students more incentives to complete this
- 4. Accountability
 - a. Accountability and Transparency
 - i. Advocates for UBC Senate to be more open and transparent → make Senate meetings more accessible to public, and timely publication of meeting minutes

- b. Term Limits of Senators
 - i. Promotes the need for new ideas and points of view within the Senate → allows Senate to adapt to evolving challenges and opportunities
 - ii. Term limits may promote new candidates to run → bringing in fresh perspectives to concerns
5. Appeals
- a. Training for Appeals
 - i. Academic Discipline Committee has a direct impact on students and is the last-line for hearings regarding misconducts → members of the Senate require careful training
 - ii. Suggest a new training module with 3 components: General Training, Procedural Fairness and Anti-bias Training, Sexual Assault Subject Matter Awareness Training
 - b. Guideline for Appeals
 - i. Appeals committee on Academic Standing and Academic Discipline is impactful to students, as it's their last chance to plead their case regarding their academic standing or academic misconduct
 - ii. Recommend revising quorum of 5 members down to 3 members to create a smaller panel which is a more comfortable environment to the defendant
 - iii. Recommend setting up a comprehensive guideline as a resource to new members to smooth the transition of working on these committees
 - 1. Guidelines include what an appeal should look like, best practices, and consistent decision making

- c. Appeals Working Group
 - i. Recommend the establishment of an Appeals Working Group to mitigate issues and providing support amongst the Appeals committees
 - ii. Hearings in the Appeals committees can be complex and emotionally charged. The Appeals Working Group will provide support to members of various Appeals committees
6. Reviews
- a. Sentiment Analysis for Student Eval of Instruction
 - i. Propose the goal of investing in AI and software capable of conducting sentiment analysis for Student Eval of Instruction
 - ii. Hope to gain insights into emotions and feelings that students have towards their professors and courses
 - b. Secretariat Resourcing
 - i. The Secretariat is an essential force, running and facilitating Senate operations and making sure academic governance is running smoothly
 - ii. However, the Secretariat's efficacy and efficiency is linked to the level of resources it commands
 - iii. Suggest granting the Secretariat adequate staffing and support to minimize the amount of workload
 - c. Criteria for International Partnerships
 - i. Many international partnerships do not align with UBC's such as permitting human rights violations and other atrocities, putting our scholars and employees at risk

- ii. Propose setting up a dedicating working group tasked with developing a comprehensive set of criteria that governs university’s international partnerships
 - iii. If an institution does not meet the set criteria, no partnership will be formed
 - d. External Review of Senate
 - i. Advocate for regular and thorough evaluation of the Senate to ensure it is operating effectively and meeting the changing needs of our university community.
 - ii. Our last evaluation took place in 2005, which is far too long ago
 - e. Enforcement Mechanisms for Senate Policy
 - i. We advocate the goal of implementing robust enforcement mechanisms for Senate policies, and repercussions for those that do not follow
 - ii. We advocate the establishment of a dedicated working group tasked with developing and overseeing the implementation of these mechanisms
 - iii. Ex: “Formal Exam Period Policy” has no enforcement mechanisms regarding reporting misconduct or failing to adhere to this policy.
 - f. Admissions Process Review
 - i. We advocate for a data-driven analysis to unveil potential biases and inform necessary refinements
 - ii. No comprehensive review for “Broad Based Admissions” to see if it has achieved its goals
 - g. Teaching and Learning Enhancement Fund Investment

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- i. The Teaching and Learning Enhancement Fund has been beneficial in providing many students opportunities to start on their own projects
- ii. We advocate promoting this fund to be more public and widely known