



*UBC Law Students' Society*

## ACADEMIC ISSUES CAUCUS

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MINUTES – 14 October 2009

*\*All errors or omissions are the responsibility of Alexander Cooke (Director of Academic Issues).*

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### **Special joint meeting of AIC and SAC**

**Attendance:** Kate Phipps (Chair), Dave Andrews, Henry Bian, Alexander Cooke (Secretary), Keith Evans, Eric Gauf, Xiaodi Jin, Dia Montgomery, Ted Murray, Dave Peletier, Aimee Procyk.

**SAC:** Yun, Carrie.

**Guests:** Dean Bobinski, Associate Dean C. Young.

*Meeting called to order, 12:35 PM*

**Dean Bobinski** greeted. She proposes to provide AIC & SAC with an update of what she has been dealing with: 1) Building Space; 2) Teaching Space; 3) Budget; 4) Faculty Positions.

### **Building**

Many issues with the current space, specifically noise in room 101 (the “Star Wars” room), HVAC, and study/meeting space in UCLL.

#### ***Noise/HVAC***

There are two separate issues. Half the rooms are on the old faculty club HVAC system (to be upgraded), while the newer Arthur Erickson designed half (the glass-walled rooms) are on a different system.

The noise issue should be better now that the system has been “rebalanced”, though that may not last given that replacement/upgrade of the older system is not complete—we are still waiting for the air conditioning to become fully operational in October, and subsequent rebalancing might be necessary.

#### ***Food***

Survey forms are out with respect to the “café” in UCLL.

#### ***Student Space***

We now have a study room in UCLL, thanks to a proposal by student **David Volk**. There are issues with students not staying silent.

There is the ability for faculty to book a room to meet with students (an attempt to emulate the ability at the Curtis to meet professors without trekking across campus to Swing Space). These have not proved popular. **Keith** says students like dropping in to see professors, preferring that to appointments. The **Dean** thinks it's a chicken and egg situation: nobody comes to see the professors, so the professors won't book the space. **C. Young** thinks it's easier for first years with regular schedules—appointed hours don't work well with upper years that may not be on campus. You just have to email ahead.

## **Questions**

**Dia** digressed, asking about the Olympics. There will be a 2 week reading break through the regular games, but what about the Paralympics? Will there any ability for teleconferencing so as to avoid the traffic? **C. Young** says the faculty does not have the technological ability. Sledge hockey is the only event, and the University is well aware of the potential for problems. There may be room for accommodating first year mooters with food so they don't have to leave campus. **Dia** suggests a sleepover. **C. Young** says she expects it won't be that bad, the **Dean** says that some staff are coming in even over reading break.

**Aimee** asked about having a photocopier and/or print station in UCLL. The **Dean** says that had earlier been requested by a professor. **Ted** thinks it will be an issue with first year assignments. **C. Young** says they are already investigating.

**Keith** wants to know about LSS mail delivery, e.g. to specific officers. **Ted** thinks it an internal issue.

**Dave P.** says that there are non-law students taking up the extremely limited study space at UCLL. **C. Young** replies that it is a public university.

The **Dean** notes that all suggestions should be sent to [suggestions@law.ubc.ca](mailto:suggestions@law.ubc.ca), which is checked by Nancy Wiggs who will forward emails as appropriate.

## **New Building**

Most tenders are out, 4–5 week turnaround time, after which the administration will have to confirm that the project comes in under the approved budget set by the Board of Governors. **Keith** says he thought November 1<sup>st</sup> was the day. The **Dean** acknowledges we are behind already. She says that there is no official plan to “catch up”, which is to say that we are still “officially” on track, but that there are contingency planning already underway by the project management. Since the old library will still be standing the builders will skip finishing the new library, completing it after the target move-in date. **Eric** notes that finishing does take a while, so it is a reasonable suggestion.

## **Budget**

The **Dean** notes that UBC is attempting to rationalize its budget, moving away from a historically based system (i.e. last year's allocation, plus or minus). **Dia** states the AMS received a presentation from finance that was difficult to parse. Lifting the tuition cap on professional students was mentioned,

which would go to the debt.<sup>1</sup> Is this related? The **Dean** says that UBC did feel that the cap was related indirectly insofar as they are both tuition and budget rationalization are connected to financial sustainability, but there was no intention to link them in the presentation. The university does have financial difficulties. It will be cutting its own administrative costs 3%—it is unclear how that affects Law, though we use some of their services—and cutting faculty budgets by 2%. The latter will be difficult since most of Law’s costs are tied up in salaries.

For her part, the **Dean** reviews the 2005 tuition plan: increase tuition to what was then thought to be the Canadian/Ontario median, the money to go to the faculty not UBC. If tuition *were* to go up again, that would be preceded with a consultation process similar to that in 2005, and the money should again be destined for the faculty.

**Dia** says the lines of communication should be kept open. The **Dean** apologizes on behalf of **Pierre**, the finance official who gave the original presentation.

## Faculty

There is still a Canada Research Chair, granted to the faculty by UBC, to be filled. There is an opportunity for student involvement there.

**Kate** says that in the past students were involved in hiring through the Appointments Committee but that other issues like the role of instructorships positions have been dealt with via ad hoc groups without student participation. Will there be a role for students there this year? The **Dean** says that Prof. Benedet last year chaired the ad hoc group that looked at so called “non-research” instructors (as “instructors” proper are still tenure-track), and so she will forward student concerns to the Professor.

## General Discussion

The **Dean** reminds that she has a town hall coming up. She is trying to spend more time at UCLL. **Ted** says he has set up an email address to anonymize questions. **Dia** says at the last “Coffee with the Dean” the students started eating before the event started. The **Dean** says the format is a work in progress. **Dia** suggests moving to a new room. **Yun** notes that first years are intimidated and should be approached. **C. Young** says they will run away. **Keith** says that in terms of faculty/student interaction there will be more trivia events.

**Kate** thanks the **Dean** and **C. Young** for coming.

*Motion to Adjourn, 1:23 PM*

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<sup>1</sup> See AIC Minutes, 23 September 2009.