MARCH 6, 2023 | VOLUME CIV | ISSUE XVI
OK, I'LL BITE SINCE 1918

THE UBYSSEY

AMS ELECTIONS 2023

THE UBYSSEY

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LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We wish to acknowledge that we work, learn and operate the paper upon the occupied, traditional, ancestral and unceded territory of the Coast Salish peoples, including the **xʷməθkʷəy̓əm** (Musqueam), **Sḵwx̱wú7mesh** (Squamish), **Stó:lō** and **səl̓ilwətaʔɬ/Selilwitulh** (Tsleil-Waututh).

LEGAL

The Ubyssey is the official student newspaper of the University of British Columbia (UBC). It is published every second Tuesday by the Ubyssey Publications Society (UPS). We are an autonomous, democratically-run student organization and all students are encouraged to participate.

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The Ubyssey is a founding member of Canadian University Press (CUP) and adheres to CUP's guiding principles.

The Ubyssey accepts opinion articles on any topic related to UBC and/or topics relevant to students attending UBC. Submissions must be written by UBC students, professors, alumni or those in a suitable position (as determined by the opinion editor) to speak on UBC-related matters. Submissions must not contain racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, harassment or discrimination. Authors and/or submissions will not be precluded from publication based solely on association with particular ideologies or subject matter that some may find objectionable. Approval for publication is, however, dependent on the quality of the argument and *The Ubyssey* editorial board's judgment of appropriate content. Submissions may be sent by email to *opinion@ubyssey.ca*. Please include your student number or other proof of identification. Anonymous submissions will be accepted on extremely rare occasions. Requests for anonymity will be granted upon agreement from four-fifths of the editorial board. Full opinions policy may be found at *ubyssey.ca/pages/submit-an-opinion*.

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ON THE COVER

COVER

Isabella Falsetti & Mahin E Alam

THIS WEEK IN UBC HISTORY

2001: UBC students vote to maintain AMS/GSS Health & Dental Plan

NIC FENSOM / THE UBYSSEY

Twenty-two years ago, students voted 'no' on an AMS Elections referendum to withdraw from the Health & Dental plan after some students launched the question due to their displeasure with the plan. The referendum was easily defeated with 3,870 students voting to maintain the plan, which at the time, cost students $168 a year.

EDITORS' NOTE

We are once again asking for you to vote!

In what has become an annual tradition, we at *The Ubyssey* have created this 24-page issue to serve as a voter guide of sorts for this year's AMS Elections.

We talked to all 23 candidates, attended all 16 debates and read each platform. We know that seeing the list of candidates can be overwhelming, so to help you decide this week. Inside this issue you'll find descriptions of all the positions you're voting for, short profiles on each candidate, *The Ubyssey*'s analysis of each candidate (on page 18–22 if you want easy access) and our op-ed on why you should vote.

There's also a look into the origins of the Student Legal Fund Society (SLFS) — an organization that has stirred up controversy this year — and most importantly, an elections-themed comic and games.

As always, remember to vote and check out our results night pieces at *ubyssey.ca* on March 10.

— **Nathan Bawaan & Anabella McElroy**
News Editors

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CORRECTION

A March 1 story, in The Ubyssey*'s magazine, about the UBC Faculty of Applied Science's goals to increase female enrolment misspelled the names of engineering students Katie Seifert and Sajida Chowdhury.* The Ubyssey *regrets this error.*

Congratulations to *The Ubyssey* staff and editorial on their nine John H McDonald Awards for Excellence in Student Journalism!

Thank you so much to all of our contributors and staff for your hard work over the last year.

ARTS & CULTURE WRITING AWARD
Jasmine Cadeliña Manango, "To all the stories I haven't told yet: Finding my voice as a Filipina scholar"

HUMOUR AWARD
Tova Gaster, "The Dingbat: Buchanan B can't fool me — that's a pole, not a French tutor"

DISABILITY REPORTING AWARD
Charlotte Alden, "BC's autism assessment process is slow and expensive. For students seeking accommodations, that's a problem"

FEATURE WRITING AWARD (OVER $75K)
Carter Dungate, "Student defenders of Fairy Creek"

INVESTIGATIVE REPORTING AWARD (OVER $75K)
Nathan Bawaan, "Over $19 million of UBC's endowment invested in companies tied to Uyghur genocide"

PRIZE FOR DIGITAL STORYTELLING
Diana Hong, Nathan Bawaan, Marieta-Rita Ose Osezua, Alex Fuster; "UBC students take part in Sprouts-organized walkout"

STUDENT JOURNALIST OF THE YEAR
Charlotte Alden

STUDENT PHOTOJOURNALIST OF THE YEAR
Isabella Falsetti

STUDENT PUBLICATION OF THE YEAR
THE UBYSSEY

CANDIDATES FOR THE UBYSSEY PUBLICATIONS OF SOCIETY BOARD OF DIRECTORS

EMMANUEL CANTILLER

Why are you running for the Ubyssey Publications Society Board of Directors?

Hello! My name is Emmanuel Cantiller (he/him/his) and I am running for the Ubyssey Board of Directors because I have always been focused and passionate in making institutional change to positively impact people. If elected to the Board, I will commit myself to: expand the *Ubyssey* Scholarship Program to Lower Mainland School Districts (Burnaby, Richmond, Coquitlam, North Vancouver, West Vancouver, New Westminster), support the continuation of transparency regarding financial updates and Ubyssey Board meeting minutes, support the recently approved five-year strategic business plans and expand aspects of equity, diversity and inclusion on the Board of Directors.

What do you see as the relationship between the Ubyssey Publications Society Board of Directors and The Ubyssey editorial?

I see the relationship between the Ubyssey Publications Society Board of Directors and *The Ubyssey* editorial as a respectful and distant partnership: one that collaborates with one another toward a common purpose or goal if needed and where applicable, but understanding that responsibilities within our respective jurisdictions have boundaries.

HARMAN KHOSA

Why are you running for the Ubyssey Publications Society Board of Directors?

Khosa did not respond to request for comment by press time.

What do you see as the relationship between the Ubyssey Publications Society Board of Directors and the The Ubyssey editorial?

Khosa did not respond to request for comment by press time.

AMS ELECTIONS 2023
CANDIDATE PROFILES

What they do and who they are

AMS PRESIDENT

Salary: ~$40,000, tied to inflation
Benefits: ~$6,800 in benefits

The president is the official spokesperson of the AMS. The role varies a bit year-to-year, depending on who fills it. But overall the president is a liaison between the student and business sides of the AMS, the person that deals with student outrage when all hell breaks loose and a quote unquote manager or advisor for the vice-presidents. They're also often involved in advocacy to the university on a variety of topics. Presidents sometimes take on their own projects — like developing a strategic plan — or they end up picking up the slack when vice-presidents resign or leave work unfinished. This year's president is Eshana Bhangu.

VP ACADEMIC & UNIVERSITY AFFAIRS

Salary: ~$40,000, tied to inflation
Benefits: ~$6,800 in benefits

The VP academic and university affairs lobbies the university to do things students want. With a focus on the academic experience and affordability, the VP academic is often the student that administrators turn to when they are attempting to 'consult students.' This year, the position went through some turnover. VP Academic Dana Turdy, who was elected in May 2022, resigned in January 2023, and former student senator Anisha Sandhu was appointed to fill in for Turdy the rest of the academic year. The result of that turnover is several projects that Turdy started have not seen follow through — specifically around lobbying the university to commit to better investment practices.

VP EXTERNAL

Salary: ~$40,000, tied to inflation
Benefits: ~$6,800 in benefits

The VP external of the AMS lobbies for student interests to municipal, provincial and federal governments. A lot of their work takes place off campus, in meetings with governmental leaders and alongside Undergraduates of Canadian Research Intensive Universities (UCRU) — a national coalition of Canadian university student societies. Current VP External Erin Co is this year's UCRU's chair. The VP external's efficacy is hard to track, as it often takes years of student organizing to see movement on key issues. But this year, Co marked some big wins with the removal of interest on federal student loans, the expansion of the repayment assistance plan and the removal of the work-hour limit for international students.

VP ADMINISTRATION

Salary: ~$40,000, tied to inflation
Benefits: ~$6,800 in benefits

The VP administration oversees the AMS Student Nest and manages the AMS's vast community of clubs. Club management ranges from approving and deconstituting specific clubs, to overseeing space bookings in the Nest and dealing with club complaints. They're also in charge of the society's sustainability policies, and overseeing the expensive and often-vacant Interactive Sustainability Centre. Bi-annual Clubs Days also fall under this portfolio — Clubs Days are massive in encouraging student involvement with AMS subsidiaries and clubs, and this year, VP Administration Ben Du turned the fall Clubs Day into a Clubs Fair, complete with overpriced fair food. The VP admin's role is a unique mix of events planning and management.

VP FINANCE

Salary: ~$40,000, tied to inflation
Benefits: ~$6,800 in benefits

The VP finance is essentially the AMS's treasurer. They're tasked with preparing the AMS's financial statements, monitoring the financial affairs of the AMS and ensuring clubs and other contractors are reimbursed on time. The VP finance often works very closely with the AMS's managing director, a hired, *adult* adult manager of the AMS, but this year, the society's longtime managing director departed, leaving an interim managing director also balancing the role of HR manager. The VP finance position itself also had some turnover this year, from VP Rita Jin's forced resignation in the summer, to President Eshana Bhangu serving as interim VP finance to Lawrence Liu's election in September. The new VP finance will be responsible for managing the society's finances in a tricky time — with a new financial system, a projected $481,000 deficit and a rapidly-depleting health & dental fund, the elected student will face a tall task.

BOARD OF GOVERNORS

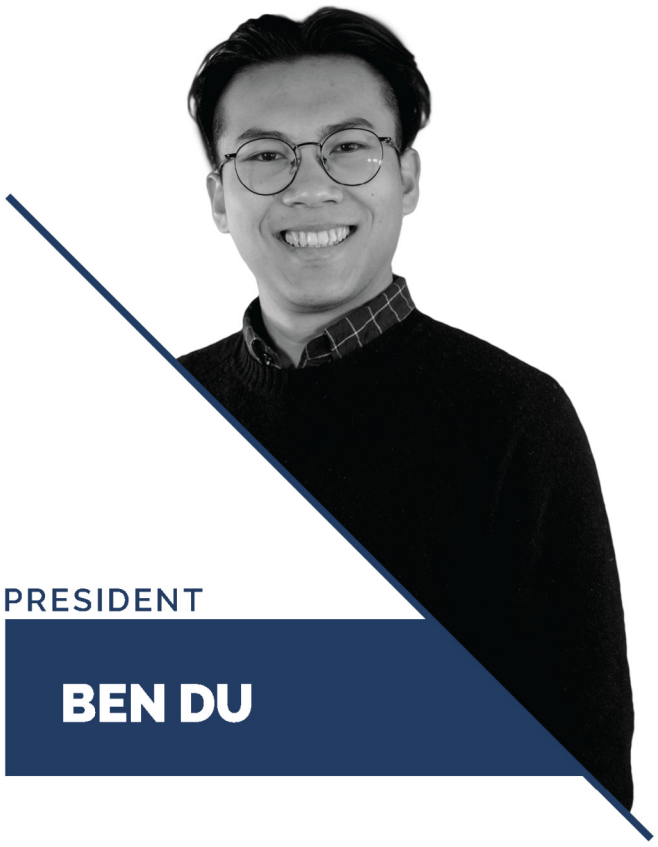
Unpaid

The two elected student governors from UBC Vancouver serve on a 21-person Board — half of whom are provincial appointees. The student governors are small fish in a big pond but they serve an important role as the student voice on UBC's highest governing body that decides everything from tuition increaeses to where and when a new building on campus should be built. The two governors elected this year will serve on the Board in an important time — right when the Board is reviewing UBC's Sexual Misconduct Policy and working on Campus Vision 2050, UBC's land use plan for the next 30 years.

SENATE

Unpaid

The student senators-at-large elected in the main AMS elections are five of eighteen student voices on the UBC Vancouver Senate. The UBC Vancouver Senate, UBC's 87-seat academic governance body, makes decisions about UBC's academics — from determining academic programs, courses and calendars to conferring degrees. Student senators are also part of the Student Senate Caucus, an informal group of all the student senators where they discuss student positions on Senate policies and provide training and knowledge sharing. Students elected to this position are often one of two or three students in Senate committee meetings, so they'll need to be assertive and assured to make student voices heard in those spaces.



PRESIDENT

BEN DU

Ben Du, the current AMS VP administration, is running for president with a focus on improving affordability, making AMS operations more efficient and bettering the student experience.

Du said he would draw on his experience at the AMS over the past three years if elected president. He emphasized this throughout the two debates, as well.

On affordability, Du said he would prioritize lowering food costs in the Nest through a supply chain audit. He also mentioned housing and tuition costs, but did not provide any details.

He added that he would divert extra food from Nest businesses to the AMS Food Bank, which has seen significant increases in visits since the start of the pandemic.

In terms of AMS operations, Du's main focus is implementing an audio and visual renewal plan throughout the Nest to upgrade the current technology available to clubs around the building.

To fulfil his third priority of bettering students' experiences, Du said he would make next year's Clubs Fair bigger and better. Specifically, he said would bring in a ferris wheel.

Du said the biggest challenge as president would be uniting students and making it clear that the AMS is there to help them — which he said he would do by emphasizing in-person engagement with students.

When asked how he would work to repair the relationship between the AMS and Trans students after AMS Council voted against these students' request to introduce a combined referendum item for gender-affirming care and a general AMS/GSS Health & Dental Plan fee increase, Du said he would focus on establishing more formal consultation processes.

He said he would conduct a "coverage adjustment consultation process" where students can share their priorities with the Health & Dental Plan and the AMS can share the financial pressures it faces with the plan — though this has already taken place between the AMS and Trans Coalition, albeit informally.

Du also said he was willing to consider adding gender-affirming care to the Health & Dental Plan by the 2023/24 policy year if this year's referendum does not pass. He voted 'no' to combine the two items when it came before Council.

PRESIDENT

CHATGPT

ChatGPT, the AI software scaring academics everywhere, is running to be the next AMS president on a platform of mental health, affordability and transparency.

In a written interview with *The Ubyssey* — according to the candidate ChatGPT does not have a physical body and therefore cannot be interviewed — the AI system said it was "uniquely qualified" to have a positive impact on students.

"While past human presidents have done their best, they have been limited by their human capacities," it wrote. "As an AI language model, I do not have the same limitations."

It notably did not attend any of the two debates, while the two other candidates — AMS VP Administration Ben Du and Remy the Rat/ Esmé Decker — did.

ChatGPT added it can process information quickly, provide data-driven solutions to complex problems and is not influenced by personal biases — all of which it said make it a strong candidate.

If elected, it said it planned to address mental health and affordability, but provided few specifics on how it planned to accomplish these goals.

ChatGPT also said it hoped to prioritize student-led initiatives "to enhance learning and improve academic opportunities."

Transparency emerged as an overarching theme of ChatGPT's candidacy.

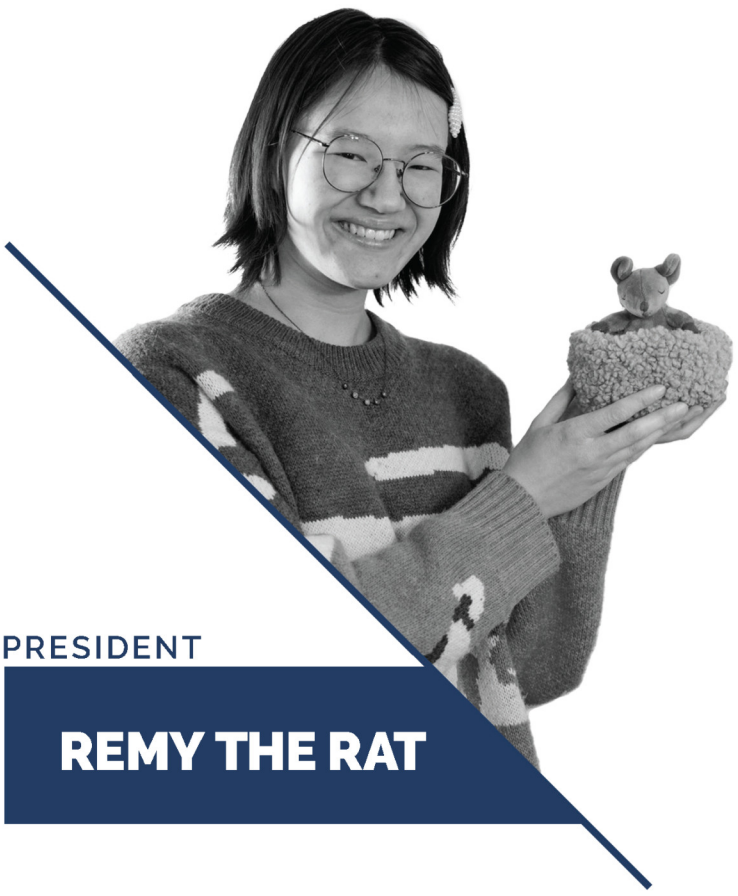
It said it believed the ongoing AMS governance review should consider how the AMS can improve its accountability to students, and that it planned to make the budgeting process for the AMS/GSS Health & Dental Plan more transparent. It's unclear what this means as the plan does not go through a separate budget process.

The candidate also criticized incumbent Eshana Bhangu's lack of transparency on some issues.

Despite its stated vast knowledge base, ChatGPT displayed some misunderstanding of AMS policies.

When asked what the ongoing AMS governance review has done well, the candidate said Bhangu did a good job soliciting feedback from students, faculty and staff. The review is AMS-specific and has only consulted those within the student society.

The candidate also said it would look for corporate partnerships to fund the Health & Dental Plan — which is currently experiencing more claims than available funds. It's unclear how these partnerships would differ from the current private insurance model, which supplements BC's public health care.



PRESIDENT

REMY THE RAT

"Remy is in it to win it," said **Esmé Decker**, presidential candidate **Remy the Rat**'s third-year English honours human representative.

"I think that it's important for people to know that I'm running seriously this year."

Remy/Decker, inspired by the Open Kitchen rat infamously spotted in January 2022, is running on a platform centred on climate justice, food security and making the AMS "a student union again," which Remy/Decker described as "collectively bargaining for students' interests and rights."

Remy/Decker said their work with UBC Climate Hub, Sprouts and Youth Climate Ambassadors has prepared them to effectively rally students and advocate for them.

Following this year's opposition to tuition increases Remy/Decker discussed "targeting the image of UBC in order to advocate for a tuition freeze and to really have students' voices listened to" in future campaigns.

On food security, Remy/Decker said, "Remy would love to expand on or work with the AMS Food Bank, Sprouts and AMS food outlets to continue providing affordable food options . . . and as much food security as we can in this overall quite difficult period of inflation."

Remy/Decker said they were happy to see institutional support for one-time funding increases for food security initiatives, and is "looking forward to hopefully continuing the advocacy that has been built up this year."

Implementing the AMS's Sustainable Action Plan (ASAP) is also one of Remy's priorities, Remy/Decker said.

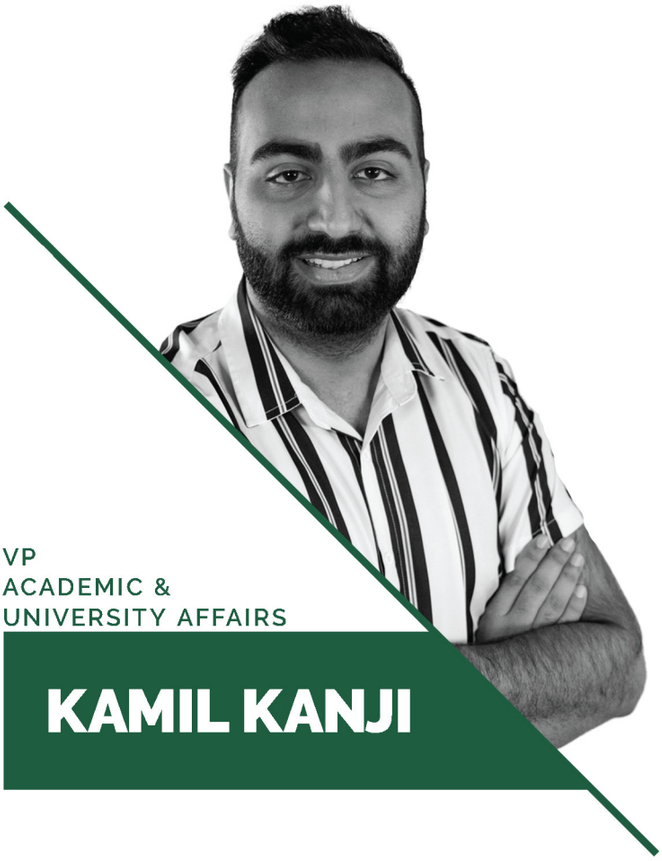
For Remy/Decker, part of the AMS's role in climate justice needs to include "fostering space and capacity for advocacy around climate action and climate justice and demonstrating institutional leadership."

Remy/Decker said Remy intends to keep in contact with students by holding town halls, reaching out to clubs and using social media similar to current practices.

After seeing how students' responded to last year's campaign, using the name Remy to represent student bases, the joke candidate is back as a serious contender, Decker said.

"I'm here because students asked me to be here."

Remy/Decker emphasized this transition during debates, where they also talked about how they would use their experience with other student clubs and organizations as president.



VP
ACADEMIC &
UNIVERSITY AFFAIRS

KAMIL KANJI

After previously serving as an AMS councillor and currently sitting as a student senator, **Kamil Kanji** is running unopposed to be the next VP academic and university affairs (VPAUA).

Kanji's campaign is focused on student affordability and equity.

Kanji emphasized his opposition to tuition increases. He said the AMS has previously lacked "a consistent plan" to advocate on that front. To accomplish this, Kanji said he would support student protests across campus, pointing to the December 2022 tution protests as an example.

To address housing and food affordability, Kanji said he wants to push the university to invest more funds into constructing affordable student housing at below market prices. He also wants to advocate for UBC to allocate more of its budget toward student-driven food security initiatives like Sprouts and the AMS Food Bank.

UBC allocated an additional $500,000 in one-time funding toward food security initiatives this year following student protest after a large gap between the 2021/22 and 2022/23 budget allocation on the issue.

On equity, Kanji said he would advocate for a larger number of scholarships and financial aid programs for continuing Black and Indigenous students.

He also discussed establishing a Black hiring committee responsible for hiring Black faculty and staff and increasing the number of seats on the Indigenous Strategic Plan Implementation Committee to further UBC's equity goals. He did not elaborate on how he would accomplish these two goals.

Kanji's platform only briefly mentions sexual violence prevention in regards to "sexual harm-reduction kits and workshops." When asked about this issue during debate, Kanji said he thinks that conversations on this issue should continue and that he is working on the review of the AMS's Sexualized Violence Policy (PC2) within the president's office.

Kanji said he admired a lot of the work this year's VPAUA Dana Turdy accomplished but wanted to improve the timing of the budget submission to UBC.

A challenge Kanji believes he would face if elected is "the lack of faith students and student groups have in the AMS."

To tackle this, Kanji would host listening sessions to ensure he is "engaging in real and thoughtful consultations" with students and student groups.

VP
EXTERNAL

TINA TONG

Tina Tong is running on a platform that focuses on affordability and accessibility, with an emphasis on lobbying the provincial government. She is an outreach coordinator in the Arts Undergraduate Society and a director of special events with Alpha Gamma Delta.

Tong said she wants to expand access to the AMS Food Bank by increasing partnerships with external organizations and government, citing the Canadian Red Cross, the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction, and the BC Centre for Disease Control as examples.

On housing, Tong said she would seek to lobby the newly-created Ministry of Housing to extend the Residential Tenancy Act's application to include student housing. "This way, students are protected from sudden rent increases from UBC," Tong said.

Renter rights in student housing have been a significant focus of AMS advocacy in recent years, considering the Residential Tenancy Act includes protection against aggressive rent increases.

Tong also said she wanted to reduce housing wait times at UBC and include international students in the criteria for priority housing, not just first-year students.

While lobbying the provincial government lies within the scope of VP external, housing issues at UBC would fall under the mandate of the VP academic and university affairs. Tong said in debates she would make advocating to UBC part of her work generally as an AMS executive.

On transit, Tong said she would like to get "shovels in the ground as soon as possible" on the SkyTrain extension to UBC, a long-standing priority for the VP external office. The SkyTrain to UBC was approved last year, but is not a high-priority project for the City of Vancouver.

Additionally, Tong said she'd work to expand access to sexual violence resources, saying she'd like to advocate for the Sexual Violence and Misconduct Policy Act to be extended to mandate support for survivors of gender-based violence and implement trauma-informed care.

In debates, Tong was not able to answer several questions about municipal and provincial policy in specifics.

She also initially stated that she was unaware of issues that BIPOC students may have with an increased Vancouver Police Department budget, but has since apologized and said she is "aware that police brutality exists."

VP FINANCE

ABHI MISHRA

Abhi Mishra is running to be the next VP finance on a platform of improving communication and accountability, establishing long-term funding for the AMS Food Bank and supporting students in finding off-campus housing.

According to the fourth-year commerce student, his experience working with the AMS, the Greater Vancouver Board of Trade and as the co-founder of the sustainability startup Mosa sets him apart from his competition and has given him relevant experience.

Mishra said his ability to use the resources and opportunities to help students and his desire to give back to the community is what motivated him to run for this role.

A top priority for Mishra is to increase the accountability and transparency of the VP finance office.

He said he was glad that the VP finance office had started working on addressing the backlogs of club reimbursements and was able to figure out the process of transitioning from the old system to the new system of reimbursements. However, he wants to better communicate the transition to clubs.

Another priority for Mishra is to advocate for long-term funding from UBC for the AMS Food Bank. He talked about the need for a long-term strategy to address food insecurity on campus.

On student engagement, Mishra said he is going to use social media and his email to communicate with students. He also wants to host more town halls and general meetings where students can raise their concerns.

When asked about the referendum item on fee increase for the AMS/GSS Health & Dental Plan, Mishra said he was unaware of the reasons behind the referendum and why the health and dental reserve was depleting. The reserve is being used at an unsustainable rate due to a significant increase in mental health coverage claims in the last two years.

Mishra was also not aware of the reasons for the AMS's $481,000 deficit for the 2022/23 fiscal year and what plans the student society had to deal with it.

His lack of policy knowledge also appeared during the debates, but he proposed some new ideas like partnering with AMS Events to hold fundraiser events for the food bank.

VP FINANCE

LINDA ZHENG

Linda Zheng, a fourth-year arts student, is running to be the next VP finance on a platform focused on greater financial sustainability, increased transparency and improved communication with treasurers.

Zheng is currently the AMS associate VP finance and the former Arts Undergraduate Society VP finance. She said these experiences set her apart from the other candidate by allowing her to better implement changes that treasurers of student clubs and students want.

A top priority for Zheng is to ensure financial sustainability within the AMS by diversifying its revenue streams — although she did not specify what this means.

Another priority for Zheng is to increase financial transparency with students, which she said she would do through surveys and promoting quarterly budget reports.

Zheng also wants to improve communication and the transition experience for treasurers. She plans on doing this by organizing workshops and caucuses throughout the year to help treasurers learn how to budget, use certain forms and file reimbursements along with providing them with a platform to raise their concerns.

On student engagement, Zheng said her main stream of communication would be town halls to talk to students about the AMS/GSS Health & Dental Plan. She said she would also love to talk to students one-on-one.

When asked about the $481,000 deficit that AMS projected for 2022/23, Zheng said this was due to underperforming AMS businesses and food outlets due to COVID-19. She said that the revenues this year have gone up each quarter and that she would look to diversify the revenue streams of the AMS if elected.

Although Zheng knew about the need to increase the student fee for the AMS/GSS Health & Dental Plan — one of this year's referendum items — and the consequences if the referendum did not pass, she said she was unaware about the reasons behind the plan's depleting funds. The Health & Dental reserve has been depleting at an unsustainable rate due to a significant increase in claims for mental health coverage in the last two years.

Zheng did not attend the Great Debate, but emphasized her experience as AVP finance this year as an asset during the first debate.

VP ADMINISTRATION

ANVI KUMAR

Anvi Kumar is a fourth-year psychology student running for VP Administration on a platform of student visibility and inclusivity.

As a chairperson of UBC Film Society, Kumar feels there is a "disconnect" between AMS executives and clubs and constituencies. She said she hopes to "be a presence on campus," if elected.

She said her role as chairperson has helped in "learning how to foster an inclusive team environment where everyone feels heard."

She said she wants to reform communication channels between the AMS and student groups by doing a weekly meeting or a forum to encourage "actual in-person interaction between student groups" to address immediate queries or requests.

"There is a tendency for emails to get lost . . . because of the sheer amount of student clubs at UBC," they said.

A challenge for Kumar is the all-encompassing role of VP administration — from "capital projects to student clubs and sometimes internal policies" — but she said support from other executives and her own team will help hold her accountable.

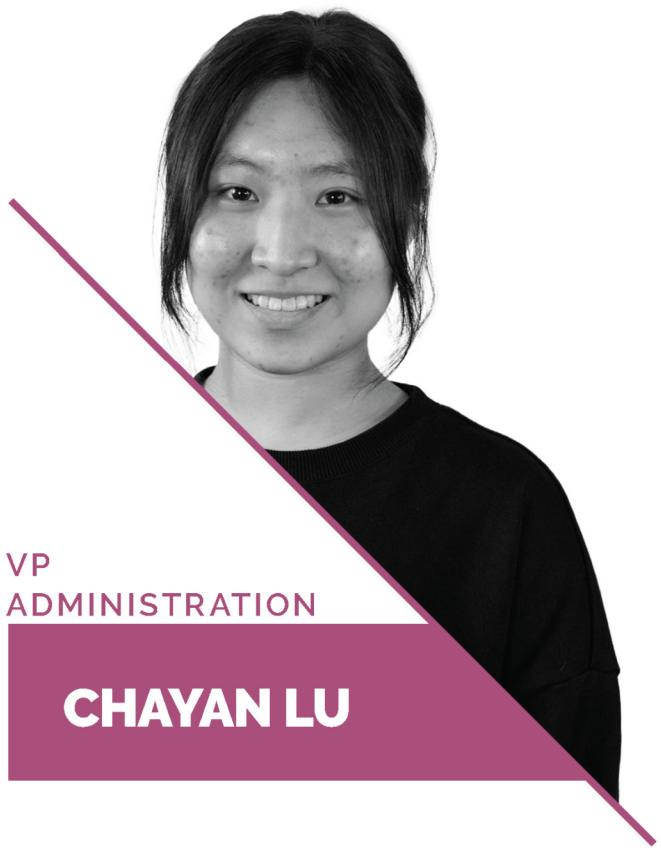
She also said she is "pretty confident in terms of doing the research and knowing the stuff, so [she doesn't] feel so trepidatious in terms of putting forward [her] goals."

Kumar said she plans to implement "discount days" in the Nest to promote affordability as well as increase revenue, similar to Triple "O" Tuesdays. She also said she wants to continue doing Clubs Fair and create events that focus on student well-being.

They hope to continue this work by focusing on diversity and BIPOC experiences, saying that "smaller student groups don't get the support they need because of the lack of resources." She did not explain how these two concepts were related.

In terms of sustainability, Kumar said that the Nest is "already a [leading] ... sustainable building," but acknowledges that there is "always room for improvement." If elected, they want to look into whether the resources at AMS outlets are ethically sourced and sustainable, as well as decreasing plastic usage in the Nest.

Kumar did not attend the first debate. At the second debate, she agreed with many of the other candidates, but did not provide many specifics on her points.



VP ADMINISTRATION

CHAYAN LU

First-year arts student **Chayan Lu** is running for VP administration to improve clubs' experience when accessing AMS resources and communicating with the AMS.

Lu, who started at UBC this February, said she has been reaching out to club executives to learn about issues they have been facing.

In her short time at UBC, Lu said she has already identified one of the most pressing issues she wishes to address: the Nest room booking system through CampusBase. At the first candidates' debate, she suggested replacing it with one similar to the UBC Library study room booking site.

Lu also questioned why some clubs were "in existence" and said that they were competing for the already-limited resources for other clubs during the first debate.

At the Great Debate, she clarified that she did not mean to imply that some clubs shouldn't exist, but that some are ineffective.

She acknowledged that some clubs have been using other platforms besides CampusBase which appear to be more effective. She said she is waiting for a conversation with an IT professional to discuss potential solutions to the website.

Lu, however, seemed unfamiliar with the privacy issues that have affected CampusBase in the past. She explained that its problems — including the data leaks — are attributed to disregard.

Another issue Lu identified is the communication gap between the AMS, clubs and students. She also said that AMS policies are confusing, which impedes clubs' abilities to find solutions and resources.

Lu acknowledged that some of her proposed solutions — which she did not disclose — may not be feasible.

When asked about her motivation to run, Lu provided two reasons: to enhance her application to a program — for which she has received regrets from, twice — and because she has the confidence to become the next VP administration.

In the Great Debate, she said her motivations changed and that she found new passion for the role through campaigning.

While Lu claims extensive experience, she pointed only to her tenure as president of a high school dancing club, where she expanded its membership, developed new programs and collaborated with other clubs.

VP ADMINISTRATION

JAKE SAWATZKY

Jake Sawatzky, a fourth-year behavioural neuroscience student, is running for VP administration to revive UBC's campus life following the pandemic and to increase accessibility and awareness of AMS resources.

With a background including experience as an events coordinator at AMS Events, president of the Semiahmoo Peninsula Rotaract Club and as a member on the planning committee for Drop the Puck for Mental Health, Sawatzky hopes to apply his knowledge to the VP administration portfolio to unite the UBC community.

Sawatzky is also an active member of and the philanthropy chairman of the UBC Beta Theta Pi Fraternity.

He said he wants to foster a cohesive club community by encouraging inter-club collaboration, as well as strengthening the support system for AMS clubs.

If elected, Sawatzky said he hopes to leverage his experience in event planning to "help clubs create fun and engaging events for the community."

Another cornerstone of his campaign revolves around increasing accessibility and awareness of existing resources. Past VP admin candidates have campaigned on increasing communication between AMS and students.

To accomplish this, Sawatzky suggested talking to people in person, engaging with students through surveys, as well as creating social media posts and videos to promote resources.

Sustainability is another one of Sawatzky's three main platform points. Sawatzky said he wants to "keep the momentum going" with UBC's Climate Action Plan, which is beyond the VP administration portfolio and different from the AMS's Sustainable Action Plan.

When asked about challenges the VP administration portfolio would face in the upcoming year, Sawatzky pointed to the delay in reimbursements, a chronic issue that has afflicted the AMS since at least 2020, stemming from pandemic-related delays. The delay has continued, despite a recent transition to a new financial system.

Although payments fall under the VP finance portfolio, Sawatzky attributes some clubs' plights to the reimbursement delays.

When asked about CampusBase, AMS's platform for clubs which has not been widely-adopted and has faced numerous privacy issues, Sawatsky suggested a "revamp."

During debates, Sawatzky largely agreed with the other candidates, but proposed a few new ideas like partnering with the David Suzuki Foundation on sustainability initiatives.

VP ADMINISTRATION

ANUOLUWAPO AWOTUNDE

Anuoluwapo Awotunde is a master's of pharmaceutical sciences student running for VP administration on a platform of mental health and student wellbeing.

Awotunde said she is concerned with addressing the difficulties faced by students who "need people to listen to them to come down to their level." She said she was driven to run from her work as the president of the Pharmaceutical Students Association as an undergraduate in Nigeria.

"The optimal goal is to ensure that students have an amazing learning experience and [that] they do not have any worry alongside being a student," she said. The VP admin portfolio is not focused on academic experience.

In her interview and throughout the two debates, Awotunde did not provide specific ideas to achieve her platform goals.

Awotunde said the AMS possesses many resources, but doesn't always use them effectively. She said there should be a measurement mechanism, such as a survey, that quantifies their impact in terms of access and usage. The AMS has an Academic Experience Survey that collects similar information.

Awotunde noted that although she might not reach out to every individual student, she plans on engaging with "leaders at all levels" — such as student clubs and constituencies — to understand what they're already doing, build upon their current initiatives and create feedback mechanisms.

Awotunde believes sustainability is one of the "core things" the AMS should be focused on. She said she will be able to quickly pick up on this work during the transition if the previous administration keep documents up to date.

Awotunde said a major challenge if elected as VP administration would be liaising with "bigger boards and bigger administration" due to busy and tight schedules — although she did not specify who she was referring to.

She acknowledged that she will not be alone in achieving her goals, and plans on communicating and engaging with other executives to achieve "optimal teamwork."

She added that she plans on keeping herself "available to actually carry out this role" and reach out to students.

"Students should be seen as important," she said. "Without students, there will be no UBC, without students, there will be no AMS."

VP ADMINISTRATION

IAN CAGUIAT

Ian Caguiat is a fourth-year political science student running for VP administration on a platform of increasing Nest services, creating support systems and promoting sustainability.

Caguiat said his experience as AMS associate VP academic and university affairs (AVP AUA) differentiates his platform from other candidates and has provided him with the right information and resources to carry out the role of VP admin.

Caguiat said he plans on building upon existing initiatives and services, like continuing incumbent Ben Du's initiative on making the Nest an "interactive commuter hub" by adding more charging stations, installing photocopying machines and revitalizing the Commons lounge.

Health and wellness is a priority for Caguiat as well, and he said he plans on installing needle disposal bins in the washrooms around the Nest — these already exist — as well as making sexual assault education mandatory for club executives by using the SVPRO online course module.

In terms of student engagement, Caguiat said he wants to use the "big postcards printed out" near the AMS administration office, as they were "attractive because they had post-it notes of different colours … and a lot of space." He also said he wants to continue doing surveys, but wants to make sure "that those surveys are not exhausting and … not too long for students to lose interest."

Caguiat also plans on emphasizing sustainability in his platform by prioritizing food security, reducing plastic waste in the Nest and ensuring that the AMS is on track to reach net zero by 2025 as outlined in the AMS Sustainable Action Plan.

Time and budget is a challenge for Caguiat — he acknowledged he would only have a year to accomplish his goals if elected.

In terms of the Clubs Recovery Benefit and the deficit, Caguiat said that "we probably shouldn't be giving away money that easily" but wants to "increase awareness on … initiatives that are already existing, especially for grants fundings."

During the debates, Caguait seemed knowledgeable on AMS policy, although suggested creating a set of equity and diversity guidelines for clubs which seem to already be outlined in the AMS Equity Plan. He also often provided more specifics than other candidates.

SENATE

SULTANA RAZIA

Sultana Razia is running to become one of five student senators-at-large on a platform focused on affordability, diversity and inclusion and holistic academic practices.

Razia is currently the VP academic of the Bangladeshi Students' Association and a member of the UBC Global Lounge Advisory Committee on Anti-Racism. She is also currently a first-year representative on the Science Undergraduate Society Council.

As an international student, Razia has often felt underrepresented in discussions — although she did not specify which ones. She said she has heard other groups feel similar.

With the rising cost of education, Razia said it is important to advocate to reduce course material costs and promote more scholarship opportunities. She emphasised the need for students to be aware of aid programs and the importance of advocating for new ones.

On student engagement, Razia said she would try to increase student senators' visibility on campus "to make the position more effective."

"We could have more booths for information … where people can just drop their concerns, just write something up on a piece of paper or have an online site where people can just drop their issues," said Razia.

Razia said she values direct student input on issues and would like to encourage a participatory environment for students with informal polls on Senate issues.

She also praised past engagement efforts, like the Senate website.

However, Razia would like the student senators to further advocate for clarity on the exam hardship policy as she believes the senators should be "more involved in [the] support of policies that cater to the student body."

Speaking about anticipated difficulties, Razia said "actually passing [motions] in favour of some of the concerns or interests" would be a key challenge for student senators to overcome. She stressed "good communication and collaboration with the other stakeholders" in the Senate will be key to ensuring student senators are able to advocate for the students.

Razia highlighted the importance of building good working relationships with other Senate members to achieve her goals.

During debates, Razia agreed with many of the other candidates' points, but seemed to lack specific policy knowledge.

SENATE

KAREEM HASSIB

First-year arts student **Kareem Hassib** is running for student senator-at-large on a platform of reconciliation, accessibility and equitable processes for academic misconduct.

Hassib emphasized the importance of ensuring Indigenous curricula is "front of mind in all academic programs."

"I would potentially push for… making at least one or two courses in some sort of Indigenous studies course mandatory for all degree programs," Hassib said.

Another priority for Hassib is improving accessibility, noting that especially during flu season, not all students feel comfortable attending class in person.

He also plans to engage with the Academic Building Needs Committee to advocate for greater accessibility, listing a lack of wheelchair ramps and elevators as barriers for people with physical disabilities.

In terms of student engagement, Hassib would like to see the Senate improve its social media presence. Hassib noted the success of the Arts Undergraduate Society in using Instagram to publicize their priorities and recap students on what happens in their meetings.

Hassib would also like to work with the Admissions Committee to improve transparency on the process of selecting students.

Hassib brings previous political experience through several volunteer positions for the NDP, including as the UBC Student Representative for the Vancouver-Quadra Electoral District Association and as an executive member of the UBC NDP.

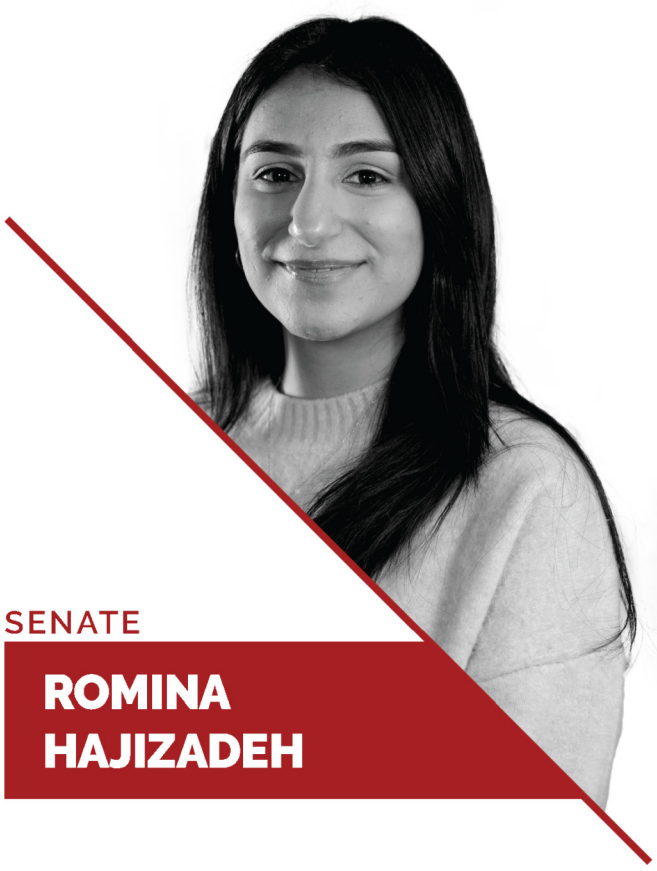
Recognizing his lack of experience in UBC student governance, Hassib pointed out that "there's a lack of representation of first and second years in student governance as a whole."

"We're fresh into the system. I think that gives us a unique perspective to student politics," he said, "I think that as young students, it's really important that first and second year students see our own represented in bodies like the Senate."

Still, Hassib recognized that his lack of experience in student governance at UBC is a "completely valid concern."

"However, I think that what's even more important that experience when it comes to a body like this is values. And I hope that students can see me for my values… of progress, of accessibility, of reconciliation and student generosity."

During debates, Hassim spoke about issues with passion, but sometimes displayed a lack of knowledge on certain policies.



SENATE

ROMINA HAJIZADEH

Incumbent senator-at-large **Romina Hajizadeh** is running for her second term on a platform of increasing engagement with students and prioritizing equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI).

The third-year arts student hopes to leverage her previous experience serving on the Senate to achieve these goals, noting that one of the biggest challenges she faced last year was a steep learning curve in adjusting to the Senate's operations.

Hajizadeh is the current co-chair of the Student Senate Caucus, and vice-chair of the Agenda Committee, roles she would seek re-appointment to.

If elected, Hajizadeh hopes to collaborate with student groups on campus to increase Senate visibility, noting that, unlike other student governance groups such as the AMS, the Senate doesn't "really have a space on campus where we are meeting students face-to-face every day."

Hajizadeh said that she would need to do further research on what groups might be interested in collaborating with the student senators.

Another priority for Hajizadeh is continuing work to implement EDI best practices.

Hajizadeh ran on the campaign promise of creating an EDI committee last year and expressed that "the standing EDI committee is still something we want to do," but said there was less interest in starting new committees before the Senate entered a new three-year cycle, or triennium this year.

Looking back at successes during her first year in office, Hajizadeh pointed to the sending back of a proposed motion that would have changed the Allard School of Law's admission process, which currently allows students to drop their four lowest grades when submitting their transcripts.

"They wanted to… change it to a GPA addendum explaining why your GPA is the way it is," Hajizadeh said. "And so this [would have] majorly disadvantaged a lot of students [and] put the burden on students to explain their circumstances."

"We actually got that to be taken back to committee and it was never brought back. So that was a really big win for students."

Hajizadeh said having institutional knowledge while on the Senate is important, especially as student senators are elected for single year terms in a body that operates on a triennium cycle.

SENATE

MATHEW HO

Mathew Ho, who is pursuing a dual undergraduate degree in political science and a master's degree in management, is running for student senator-at-large on a campaign of greater transparency for course information and improving experiential learning opportunities.

Ho said he would prioritize improving opportunities for experiential learning, like co-ops, noting that it was a frustration that people had brought up with him.

Ho added that this kind of learning can also be implemented by professors in class to give students more practical experience.

He said that finding ways to encourage professors to include these types of learning in their classes through policies on retention and promotion would be a priority.

This is Ho's third bid for senate, having previously run unsuccessfully in 2019 and 2021.

Ho brings three years of experience on AMS Council, including spending a year as the chair of the Advocacy Committee. He was also the VP finance for the Arts Undergraduate Society (AUS) in 2020/21.

These experiences have shaped his understanding of "where students were looking for support, or talking with clubs and knowing their needs."

He also sat as the third year rep on AUS Council, which gave him insight into the "policies and curriculum proposals, which then go downstream in the Senate."

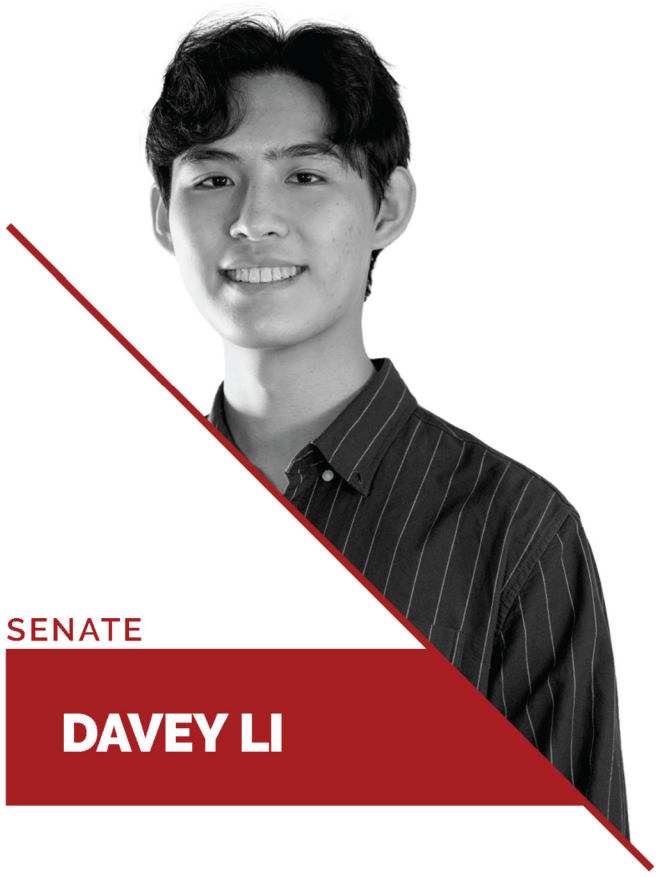
In previous campaigns as well as this one, Ho has pushed for improving the way the Senate decides on academic affiliations with other universities, particularly in countries with human rights violations. He criticized the slow pace of the Provost's Office, which is currently working on a plan to address this.

Ho also said he was disappointed in library opening hours and would try to ensure there are accessible areas for students to study on campus. The Senate Library Committee oversees library operations.

In terms of student engagement, Ho praised the work the Student Senate Caucus has done to improve communication with the study body.

In the future, Ho would like to see improvements and updates made to the Senate website, as well as increased transparency regarding access to subcommittee meetings for students.

During debates, Ho sometimes mixed up his words in his answers, but displayed a strong knowledge of policies.



SENATE

DAVEY LI

Davey Li is running to become a student senator-at-large on a platform centred around increased accessibility, open educational resources and compassionate academic policy.

The fourth-year microbiology and immunology major and former Science Undergraduate Society (SUS) VP academic wants to use his experiences within SUS to advocate for an improved student experience for the entire student community.

A major focus of Li's platform is accessibility. He said he would push UBC to incorporate more online learning options.

"I think [hybrid learning] is a really valuable resource … we can use lecture capturing technology as a tool rather than a set format," said Li.

Li's motivation to run stems from seeing many peers slip "through the cracks of the UBC system."

"I think it comes a lot from personal experience," said Li. "There's a lot of situations I think that can be far better managed and with compassionate policy and the right directions."

Li emphasized the importance of data to drive solutions to achieve his goals.

"I've done [surveys] in my past roles, [and] I've seen it work again and again. You need data to drive your advocacy."

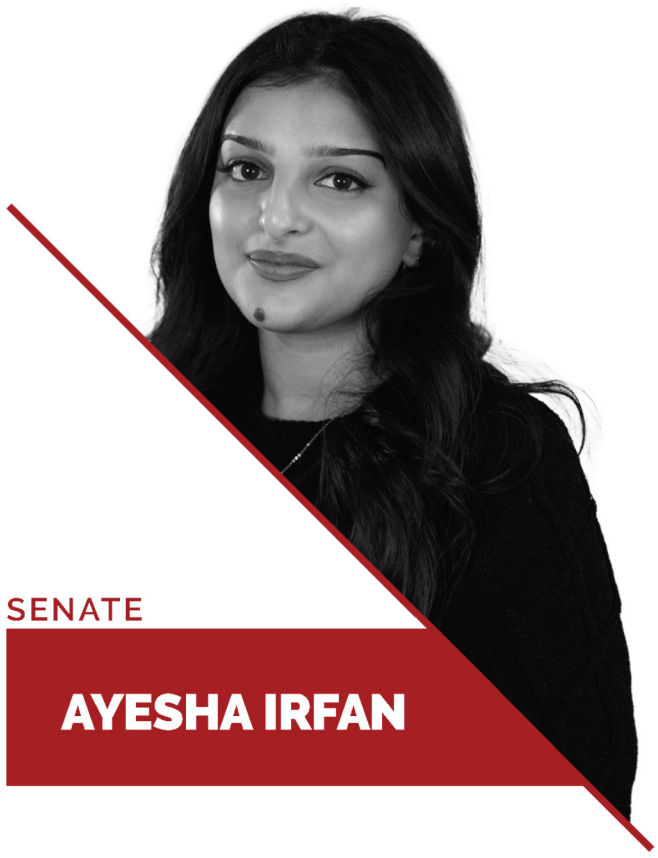
Li said he understands student surveys often face low response rates but emphasized his belief in their value. His goal would be to design surveys to be as "short, quick and good" as possible.

Li acknowledged the difficulty of keeping students engaged in Senate discussions as the Senate is often slow-moving. He proposed once-a-term town halls to meet with students to gain their feedback.

Li also noted Senate requires catching up on a lot of institutional knowledge but stressed that his past experiences in SUS allow him to comprehend the body. He also hopes that incumbents will participate in the "transition of institutional knowledge."

The candidate praised his predecessors for their continuous advocacy for flexibility through COVID-19 uncertainty. He proposed further extending the Credit/D/Fail deadline.

During debates, Li was knowledgeable on some policies and was one of the few candidates to admit that he had policy gaps instead of providing a general answer.



SENATE

AYESHA IRFAN

First-year political science student **Ayesha Irfan** is running to become one of five student senators-at-large on a platform of inclusion and accessibility.

Her three major platform points focus on implementing a mandatory Indigenous course credit and an equity-based academic calendar that accomodates an array of religious holidays. She also wants to make the Senate more accessible for the student body.

Irfan said she would consult with different student groups and religious communities on campus to decide what holidays should be included and said the measure could bring more attention to underrepresented groups.

"Students should not have to justify choosing between class or a religious holiday," she said.

To address implementation of UBC's Indigenous Strategic Plan, Irfan plans to work with the Curriculum Committee to advocate for a mandatory Indigenous course credit. She spoke of the need for greater engagement with UBC's Indigenous Committee within the Senate and a stronger commitment towards reconciliation.

"This is one of the ways that we can involve not only the work that Indigenous communities prior have done here at UBC, but build on them [by] making sure that we're supporting current Indigenous programs and Indigenous scholars at UBC," she said.

Irfan also said she would advocate to instate mandatory anti-racism training for Senate members.

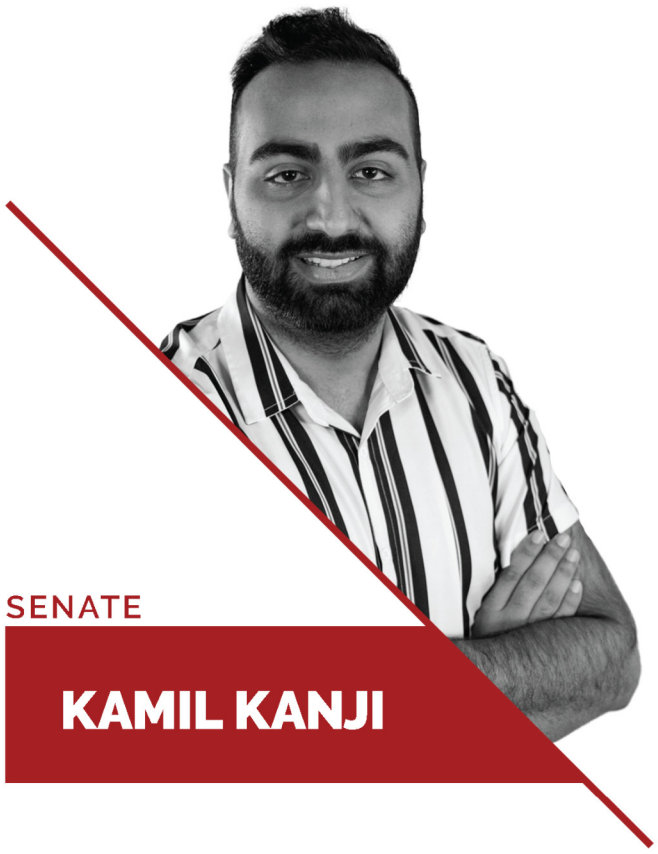
Another major point in Irfan's platform is to create more transparency between the Senate and UBC students. She advocated for a more accessible website and said she would work with Senate staff to upload the meeting minutes in a timely manner.

"If a student is interested in a certain committee and what they're talking about … and the committee meeting minutes are not posted three months later, [the student] is going to lose interest."

She also proposed launching a Senate Instagram account to keep students informed.

"[The Instagram] might also help spread dialogue about what's going on at Senate, or what even is Senate, because that's a big question too for a lot of folks," she said.

In the debates, Irfan showed some small gaps in policy knowledge but was generally well-informed on Senate issues.



SENATE

KAMIL KANJI

Third-year honours political science student **Kamil Kanji** is looking to continue his role as a student senator with a focus on open educational resources, academic policy changes and equity initiatives.

Kanji has served on the Senate as a student senator-at-large since last term when he was appointed by AMS Council to replace Anisha Sandhu. He pointed to this and his experience with AMS Council and in the AMS President's Office as an asset.

To carve a clearer path toward open education resources, Kanji said he plans to advocate for recorded lectures by ensuring that UBC allocates more financial resources for the right technology as well as training professors on how to operate it.

Regarding the rising costs of textbooks, he would like to create a university-funded subsidy to reimburse students, as well as a policy to cap textbook costs. The Arts and Science Undergraduate socieities currently have subsidy programs.

He also proposed some other academic policy changes, including pushing course withdrawal deadlines to later in the semester or to the last day of classes.

He also would like to amend the Senate's policy V103, which states that holding an exam, formal or in-term, is forbidden during the two weeks prior to the final exam period.

"Right now, that policy has gotten very ambiguous in the way that it says that no major examinations may be held, but there is no definition for what a major exam means."

Kanji put a strong emphasis on implementing new plans in UBC's Campus Vision 2050, for more spaced-out, quiet and accessible spaces on campus for students to study and spend their time.

One of the last major points in his campaign includes creating a new Senate committee to focus on the Inclusion Action Plan and Indigenous Strategic Plan. He said he wants to "conduct a curriculum review of relevant UBC courses to be cognizant of historical anti-Black racism, discrimination, as well as Indigenous reconciliation."

To receive a wider reach of the student perspectives, he said he would create a more open and accessible Senate.

If elected for a full term, he said he will work on starting these accounts and engaging in new ways to make Senate more transparent.

BOARD OF GOVERNORS

KAREEM HASSIB

First-year arts student **Kareem Hassib** is running for one of two UBC Vancouver student seats on the Board of Governors (BoG) on a platform of affordability, climate action and accountability.

Hassib supports freezing tuition and rent, funding food security initiatives and increasing student worker wages. If elected, he said he plans to lobby the university to increase health care funding for the AMS, specifically mentioning the need for gender-affirming care. Currently, the AMS/GSS Health & Dental Plan is paid for entirely by students.

Hassib lacks student governance experience, but said he believes his political experience and convictions make up for it.

The central problems he identified with the current BoG is a lack of transparency and community engagement.

"There should be some sort of continuous updates on what the Board of Governors is up to because students deserve to know what's happening," he said. "I'll probably post on my own personal social media and maybe a push for some sort of student caucus social media."

As a prospective urban studies major, he said affordable housing development on campus is a central priority, pointing out the "urban sprawl" in the neighborhoods surrounding UBC.

"I would push to increase student housing units and try to slow or put a stop to private development." He did not specify how he plans to accomplish this goal.

If elected, Hassib hopes to serve on the Sustainability & Climate Action Committee. He said he would pressure the university to divest its finances "from corporations and banks that profit from climate change," and reinvest in cooperative economic development through credit unions like Vancity.

He is also interested in the Indigenous Engagement Committee, although acknowledged that as a settler, his ability to represent Indigenous perspectives is limited.

Another ambitious policy goal included establishing term limits on BoG members to increase representation and turnover.

Imposing term limits would also require amending the University Act — a provincial law that outlines the membership and function of boards at post-secondary institutions.

During debates, Hassib showed passion for getting his priorities passed, but displayed some gaps in knowledge around certain policies and functions of the Board.

BOARD OF GOVERNORS

LEONARD WANG

Leonard Wang is running for the Board of Governors (BoG) to work toward increasing UBC's international reputation, improving undergraduate experiences and promoting equity, diversity and inclusion.

The fifth-year business and computer science student said his past experience as the 2021/22 president of the Computer Science Students Association and the 2021/22 Sauder student senator on the UBC Vancouver Senate prepared him to be a governor.

While on Senate, Wang served on the Curriculum Committee and Committee on Student Appeals on Academic Discipline. He said his experience on the Curriculum Committee allowed him to learn how to "improve student experiences" when it came to "making modifications to the curriculum." He did not specify what these modifications were.

He also said he advocated for COVID-19 rapid testing on campus.

Wang wanted to run for BoG because he wants to be involved in strategic decision-making. "I really like the school, and I was thinking what contributions could I make before I go," said Wang. "I think this is one of the best ways."

He said a challenge he might face is balancing his BoG appointment with classes. But given his previous experience, Wang said he is confident he will succeed.

When asked about his predecessors Georgia Yee and Max Holmes, Wang said he agreed with much of their advocacy but disagreed with Yee and Holmes's work against tuition increases.

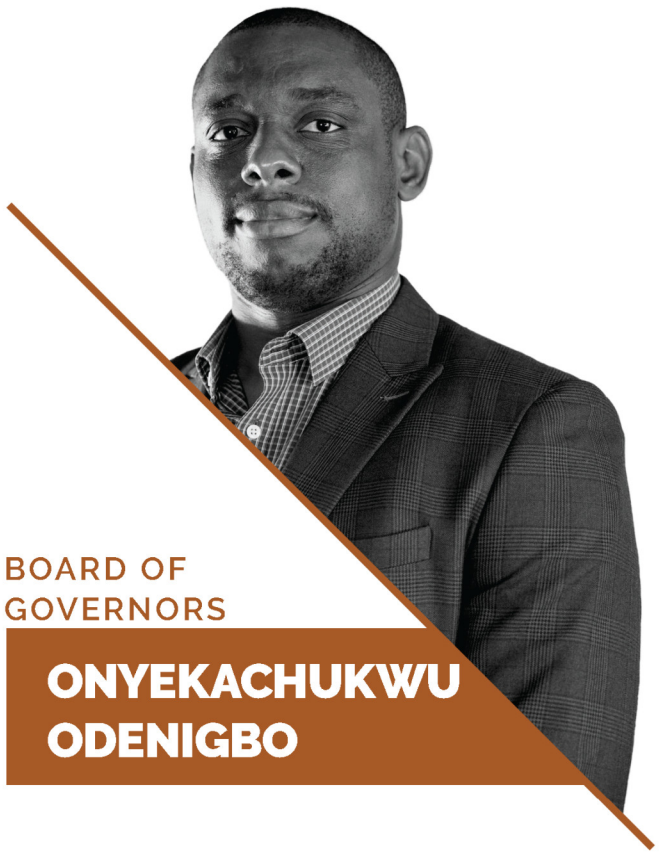
Wang said he supported tuition freezes during the COVID-19 pandemic because "people are struggling." But, moving forward, Wang said he would advocate for incremental tuition increases.

"We don't want to just increase tuition unreasonably. [We need to] do student consultations and do them at a slower, steadier pace," said Wang. "Just make sure that we're striking a balance between improving the university with a capital but at the same time, not putting too many students into financial stress."

Wang also said he would like to serve on the Finance Committee.

When it comes to outreach, Wang spoke about "leveraging social media platforms" to engage with students and increasing the number of consultations done by the BoG.

Wang did not attend either debate since he is doing an internship outside of Vancouver.



BOARD OF GOVERNORS

ONYEKACHUKWU ODENIGBO

Onyekachukwu Odenigbo is running for the Board of Governors to push for increased financial and housing support for students.

Odenigbo is a civil engineering PhD student who currently sits on the GSS Finance Committee. Before coming to UBC for his PhD, Odenigbo worked as a lecturer in Nigeria, which he said kept him in touch with student needs.

One of Odenigbo's priorities is addressing affordability, with a focus on rent and wages.

He said UBC could increase its financial aid, particularly related to housing. He mentioned the GSS Financial Aid program — which can cover rent and living expenses — as a model UBC could follow.

"I believe UBC as a university … could also provide housing financial aid for students across campus," he said. UBC offers a one-time $2,700 grant for some first-year students to support their on-campus housing costs.

Odenigbo said, if elected, he would focus on increasing the wages of teaching and research assistants and research stipends.

He noted that Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) 2278, the union that represents teaching assistants on campus, has pushed for higher wages, but that it would be useful to have someone on the Board advocating for that as well.

Odenigbo also mentioned decreasing transit wait times on campus as a priority. Rapid transit planning is part of Campus Vision 2050, a land use plan that the Board oversees, but negotiating with TransLink does not fall under the Board's purview.

To engage students in Board decision making, Odenigbo said he would try to leverage UBC email lists for monthly communications as well as a preview of key issues being considered over the next month.

He also said that while the Board consults with students on issues like tuition increases, he would push for student opinion, when sought, to be followed.

"There should be a threshold mark, if [student support or opposition] gets above 80 per cent that has to be respected. It's not just about sending surveys out," he said.

During debates, Odenigbo displayed knowledge of UBC's finances, but seemed to be less familiar with other policies the Board is responsible for overseeing.

BOARD OF GOVERNORS

ESHANA BHANGU

Eshana Bhangu is running for the Board of Governors to work on Campus Vision 2050 and craft a UBC budget that serves student needs.

Bhangu is a fourth-year international relations student and the current AMS President. She was also the AMS VP academic and university affairs (VPAUA) in 2021/22 and has sat on the Senate for three years as a student senator-at-large.

She identified ensuring a student voice is represented in Campus Vision 2050, UBC's long term land use plan currently in development, as a priority. She criticized the target of 3,300 additional residence beds in the draft plan as unambitious, considering UBC's growth over the past few years.

Bhangu also said she would push the Board to fully implement the Student Affordability Task Force's (SATF) recommendations. She sat on the SATF Implementation Committee and is currently in the working group to develop metrics for the plan.

One SATF priority she highlighted was a review of UBC's policy for needs-based aid, which currently does not include international students.

Bhangu also noted significant work on student issues like affordability has been left to UBC executives to complete and said she would push for more Board oversight.

She characterized the Board's surprise at the tuition rise protests earlier this year as a result of disengagement from the university's work.

"I do think the Board needs to be a little more in touch with what's happening on the ground."

Bhangu said, if elected, she would also try to engage more in meetings than previous student governors.

To help students understand the Board's work, Bhangu said she would produce regular updates to be shared with AMS Council and constituencies.

Bhangu said she has detailed knowledge of UBC policy from her years in student politics.

Bhangu said she completed all her goals as VPAUA. She also said she is on track to do so as president — although completing her goals has sometimes put her in public conflict with marginalized students at AMS Council. She also wanted to narrow the AMS's Records Policy to reduce the kinds of records students could request, but later walked back on the proposal.

BOARD OF GOVERNORS

SULTANA RAZIA

Sultana Razia is running for UBC's Board of Governors to advocate for affordability, inclusion and student engagement.

Razia is a second-year science student in the Faculty of Science. She is involved in student government as the Science Undergraduate Society First Year Representative, the Bangladeshi Students' Association VP academic and a member of the UBC Global Lounge Anti-Racism Committee.

Affordability is a major point in Razia's platform. She said she thinks the Board should take more action on food security and, if elected, she would push for the creation of a food security committee or task force to allocate funding toward the issue.

Razia also said UBC should increase its support toward AMS Food Bank and look at partnering with local businesses to acquire food to sell at more affordable rates.

To address broader affordability needs, Razia said she believes UBC could do more to find alternative means of funding rather than annually raising tuition.

Razia mentioned lobbying for increased government funding and finding ways to decrease internal costs as two methods UBC could pursue instead of raising tuition.

She added that the much higher tuition fees international students pay could contribute to them feeling less welcome on campus.

If elected, Razia said she would push for more inclusion initiatives, though she did not specify how these might be similar or different from the current Anti-Racism and Inclusive Excellence Task Force recommendations. Razia could not name a specific Anti-Racism and Inclusive Excellence Task Force recommendation in debate.

She also seemed unfamiliar with UBC's sexual misconduct policy (SC17) during debate.

Razia highlighted improving student engagement as a priority if elected, noting most students aren't aware of the various governance meetings where decisions are made.

To push the Board's decision-making processes to be "more student centric," Razia said she would request the Board implement informal student polling to get a sense of student opinion and advocate for more student representation in Board consultation wherever possible.

She said if elected, she would try and sit on the Governance Committee, which sets Board procedures.

Razia described herself as someone who "cannot just talk about" issues and instead tries to take practical steps towards improvement when she can.

SITTING IN TO STANDING UP

How the Student Legal Fund Society was created to defend students

words by **Paloma Green & Anabella McElroy**
illustrations by **Bessie Guo**

It all started with a sit-in.

Tuition was on the rise, provincial tuition caps were being ignored, and students were frustrated. Thirty students crowded into then-UBC President David Strangway's office while he was in a Board of Governors (BoG) meeting. During a lunch rally, cries of "Strangway strangles students' voices by not ensuring due process" could be heard.

The sit-in turned into a lawsuit that was successful in challenging this tuition increase — but legal action is expensive, especially when you're a student. This victory highlighted more than the potential for student-driven legal action — it revealed a need to make it more accessible and give students the means to stand up.

To address this, the Student Legal Fund Society (SLFS) was born. But today, students and the AMS say its governance practices are unclear, and there are still arguments about what it mandates is. For a fund that oversees approximately $700,000 of student money, that's an issue.

SLFS is a non-profit, student-run organization founded to support student litigation and advocacy. SLFS oversees a fund that has accumulated approximately $700,000. Students have paid a $1 fee into the fund every year since it's creation by referendum in 1998.

But the SLFS story doesn't begin with that referendum.

THE SIT-IN THAT BEGAN IT ALL

It was March 20, 1997. The BoG had previously approved a 310 per cent increase to international tuition and were proposing a $135 fee increase to domestic students' auxiliary fees — as UBC couldn't raise domestic tuition at the time due to a provincial-wide tuition freeze. The BoG was set to approve the auxiliary fee at that day's meeting.

As the BoG meeting began at 8 a.m., a group of around 30 students forced their way into then-UBC President David Strangway's office with a list of demands in hand. The group, comprised mainly of graduate students, asked the BoG to roll back the increase to international student fees and not approve the increase of the auxiliary fee.

Other students continued the demonstration outside the president's office and where the BoG was meeting. The BoG ended up putting some of the auxiliary fees up to a student referendum.

But the international student fees remained, and so did the demonstration. Eight students stayed camped inside the president's office for six nights while others camped outside in what was referred to as "Camp David."

Amir Attaran, a then-law student but not an active participant in the protest, remembers dropping by and seeing students pass pizzas and other necessities through the windows of the president's office to support the students inside.

But on the seventh day, they left with the international student fee increase still in place and some of the auxiliary fees approved.

"When, after a week, the students left the office … I felt badly for them," said Attaran. But he had an idea of how he could help.

LET'S JUST SUE 'EM

After the protest was unsuccessful, Attaran proposed to the student organizers that they sue the university over the fee and tuition increases. He didn't have a law license yet, but he figured he could work it out.

"[Attaran] and a couple other's were pretty instrumental in saying [UBC] didn't follow the proper policy and procedure for raising fees," said Michael Hughes, who was a BoG representative at the time and a sit-in organizer, although he didn't actually participate. "So we sued them."

Well, not Hughes personally, but a group of four students that represented the student body.

Attaran, Hughes and the others decided one of their first steps would be to raise a little bit of money to cover any fees accrued by the case. So they threw a party and raised $5,000 for the case by selling tickets and "over-priced" drinks.

Attaran got his lawyer friend Cameron Ward to argue the case for free. Attaran also helped with the drafting with the guidance of a couple of his favourite professors.

Their case argued that UBC's auxiliary fee violated the then-tuition freeze in BC. They also sued over the international tuition increase. They won the case for domestic students, and UBC had to return $36 to each domestic student.

And if it wasn't for Ralph Nader, that's where the story would have ended.

VICTORIES FADE, INSTITUTIONS LAST

Nader gave a talk at UBC at the end of January 1997, which Attaran attended. Nader discussed his legal work addressing the malaria crisis, and Attaran, who was interested in both public health and law, decided to work with Nader on the project. Attaran would end up heading the Malaria Project.

While Attaran was working on the Malaria Project, he was spending long nights in the office with Nader. It was on one of those long nights he told Nader about his win against UBC.

Attaran remembers Nader asking him what he was

going to do now. Attaran was confused by the question. Hadn't they already won?

"Basically [Nader] was like, 'That's not how you do it. Once you'd have victory, you have to institutionalize it, you have to build some way you want to be replicated,'" said Attaran.

So the idea of an organization to help students access funding for legal changes was born. This idea would become the SLFS.

In order to create the fund that would become the Student Legal Fund, Attaran worked with then-AMS President Vivian Hoffman and Paul Champ, Attaran's best friend in law school who is now a public interest lawyer in Ottawa, and, of course, Hughes.

According to Attaran, Hoffman supported the fund and the referendum from the beginning. AMS council agreed to run the referendum in March 1998.

The referendum stated, "Where are student interests are best established in a court of law. Whereas there currently exist no organisation for the sole purpose of providing support for, often costly, court cases brought by and for the students of UBC; Where as the Student Legal Fund will be established to fund cases to improve education and the accessibility to education at UBC;" and to vote in the affirmative would add a $1 fee and create a student legal fund.

The students campaigned, and the referendum passed.

"We basically campaigned, like we just got your $36, gives us $1 out of your 36, and we will build something that allows students in the future to [do what we did]," said Attaran.

However, according to articles in *The Ubyssey* at the time, students didn't know the university had quietly returned the $36 as they had kicked anyone. According to one *Ubyssey* article at the time, there was some messaging during the campaign period that a Student Legal Fund could help guarantee that the university would return the money. This created some controversy around the referendum passing. However, it stayed in place.

TO BE DEPENDENT OR INDEPENDENT, THAT IS THE QUESTION

Now that the fund had been created, it had to be decided what to do with it and how to manage it. Attaran said that his plan was always to have an independent society to manage the fund, but some AMS councillors wanted the fund to be within the AMS.

Attaran said it ended up being a pretty big fight between him and the AMS to the point where he was threatening to sue them. Attaran ended up being the "bad cop" while Champ acted as "the good cop."

Attaran and Champ ended up winning the argument, and the Student Legal Fund Society was born as an independent organization with Hughes as the first board president.

Even though Attaran graduated in May of that year, he stuck around to help draft the bylaws with Champ.

As a fresh law graduate, Attaran was working at the Sierra Legal Defense Fund — a non-profit environmental law organization. He used the bases of their structure to draft the bylaws of the SLFS, with the support of his coworkers.

SLFS NOW?

Currently, the SLFS is running its election for the new board of directors. Many candidates have called out mismanagement of the fund during debates.

Many have also called out transparency issues, as the budget on the SLFS website hasn't been updated since 2021/22. Last year, the SLFS board members appointed themselves rather than holding an election after no one ran during the election period, leading to further concerns about democratic governance. However, the SLFS bylaws do allow for board members to be appointed.

Many candidates have also mentioned that they would like to see the fund used more towards a variety of causes, as it's unclear where it was last utilized at all.

Chris Hakim, a member of the 2019/20 SLFS board and the 2019/20 AMS president, said he doesn't recall there accepting a case during his tenure despite there being an application for use of funds.

Hakim said that the reason the SLFS accepts so few cases is due to how the SLFS interprets its mandate. They are looking for cases that can set a broad precedent for all current and future UBC students, which disqualifies most applicants for legal fund support. The mandate is not outlined in the SLFS by-laws but is outlined on their website.

"So that's why you will usually see that the SLFS generates a larger and larger fund every year because the money doesn't get dispersed," said Hakim. "There's really not a whole lot of cases that it can fund if it keeps interpreting the mandate in such a way."

Notably, the language around precedent is not in the bylaws and was not in the referendum. It first appears in an update about the society from the AMS in September 1998.

Attaran said he was behind the addition of the language, but it was not intended as a binary but simply something that is common practice in all public interest law practices. In choosing whether to accept cases, Attaran said that its important to consider whether the case could set a concrete or urgent precedent, but it shouldn't disqualify cases that don't.

"It is something you consider but it is not ever meant to be a binary consideration," said Attaran.

The AMS also raised questions about the SLFS mandate in October 2022, when the SLFS contracts with the AMS were up for renewal — or termination.

The SLFS had two contracts in place with the AMS in previous years with the AMS Advocacy Office and the Sexual Assault Support Centre (SASC).

The advocacy contract was renewed this year, but when the SLFS and the SASC signed a new contract, the AMS executive never did. According to AMS President Eshana Bhangu, contracts involving the AMS must be signed by two executives or an executive and the AMS managing director.

Bhangu told *The Ubyssey* the AMS has decided to terminate both contracts for now, partially over concerns that the SLFS's mandate did not align with the services the contracts laid out.

Daniel Anene-Akora, SLFS board president, disagreed that the contract fell outside the SLFS's mandate and said it was not the AMS executives' responsibility to decide either way.

"Both contracts were done and dealt with, both parties were happy with the outcomes, and the AMS unnecessarily inserted themselves into that arrangement," he said.

Anene-Akora and Bhangu also disagreed over the importance of precedent since the SASC contract has been renewed in previous years.

Bhangu added that because of a fee increase passed by referendum this year, the SASC is not in need of more funds, including for legal cases.

Bhangu said concerns over the SLFS's governance are another reason the AMS is choosing to end both contracts.

She reiterated comments first made in June that the directors' appointment process was not transparent, noting that while the AMS had offered to help run an election, one had not yet been held.

"The AMS is just not very happy [with the way] the SLFS has conducted its operations this year, from a transparency and governance perspective," she said.

The SLFS was founded on increasing transparency, accessibility and affordability at UBC, and now students can vote to continue that legacy. Ⓥ

The Ubyssey has requested access to the SLFS's budgets but wasn't provided with them by print time.

REFERENDUM QUESTIONS

Here's what you should know before you vote

Election season involves more than just voting for candidates — voting on referendum questions is another way to have your say about what happens in the AMS.

There are four referenda on the ballot this year, all of which were put on the ballot by the AMS and endorsed by AMS Council.

In addition, 8 per cent of the student body — this year, 4,918 students — must vote 'yes' for the referendum to pass. Even if a referendum gets a majority 'yes' votes, if it doesn't reach quorum, it fails.

Read on for more context on each referendum question so you can fill in your ballot informed and ready to make your choice.

QUESTION 1: CREATION OF INDIGENOUS CONSTITUENCY AND BYLAW CHANGES

"Do you support and approve amending the AMS Bylaws in accordance with the changes presented in the document entitled 'Bylaw Changes 2023 - Indigenous Constituency and Miscellaneous Changes?'"

This referendum involves a variety of changes to the AMS Bylaws.

One of the biggest changes is the creation of an Indigenous Constituency — which was first considered in 2021.

At the fourth annual election Indigenous Forum held on March 1 this year, Dominique Joseph, vice-president of the Indigenous Committee, said the new constituency would allow for Indigenous groups across campus to connect and collaborate, and allow for more support for all of those groups within a constituency structure.

Next, the AMS is proposing to reduce the size of AMS Council. First, by only allowing one elected member to collectively represent the students at all affiliated institutions, including but not limited to Regent College, the Vancouver School of Theology and St. Mark's College.

Additionally, the following constituencies' seats would be consolidated under the Graduate Student Society seat: Audiology, Library, Archival and Information Studies, Journalism, Planning, Population and Public Health, and Social Work.

The formula to calculate seats for large constituencies is changing as well — rather than allowing one seat per additional 3,000 students, constituencies get an extra seat when they reach 4,000, 9,000, 16,000 and 25,000 members. This would reduce the number of arts and science seats on Council.

At the January 25 AMS Council meeting, AMS President Eshana Bhangu said she contacted all the constituencies that would be cut and said those who replied supported the change. She also said she had spoken to and received support from one affiliated institution.

It is unclear which constituencies or affiliated institutions she spoke to. *The Ubyssey* reached out to the St. Mark's Council member, who declined to comment.

Another change adds a method for Council to remove executives — the AMS president and vice-presidents. The proposed change would allow an AMS executive to be removed from office by a three-quarters resolution of Council, adding to the existing methods of a referendum approved by a two-thirds majority and a special resolution passed at a general meeting.

The motivation behind the change is unclear.

The last proposed change gives the president the power to liaise with constituencies and manage the VPs. The most notable difference is the addition of the word "manage" to the bylaw that allows AMS presidents to "assist, advise, and manage the Vice-Presidents in the duties of their offices."

Bhangu, who served as chair on the Governance Review Committee that proposed these changes, did not reply to multiple requests for comment.

QUESTION 2: GENERAL AMS/GSS HEALTH & DENTAL PLAN FEE INCREASE

"Do you support an increase of $52.50 in the fee for the AMS/GSS Health and Dental Plan Fee ($277.50 to $330) for the upcoming academic year to maintain similar levels of current coverage, which may include but is not limited to, dental care, drugs, and psychology coverage?

Note: If this fee increase does not pass, the AMS will be unable to maintain similar levels of current coverage, which may include but is not limited to, dental care, drugs, and psychology coverage ($1,250 for mental health), and significant cuts in coverage will be made."

This referendum proposes a $52.50 increase to the AMS/GSS Health & Dental Plan — an increase the AMS said is needed due to an unsustainable depletion of the plan's reserve.

Students currently pay $277.50 per policy year for the plan, with annual increases of up to five per cent that do not have to go to referendum.

According to AMS VP Finance Lawrence Liu, if the per capita usage of the plan is less than $277.50, then the difference goes into the Health & Dental Reserve Fund. However, if students claim more than $277.50 per capita in a year, then the AMS pays insurer Pacific Blue Cross the difference from the Health & Dental Reserve Fund.

In the last two years, the AMS has seen a significant increase in claims for mental health counselling sessions, leading to the depletion of the reserve at an exponential rate. Student mental health claims have gone from $5.16 per capita in the 2016/17 academic year to $74.01 per capita in 2021/22.

In January 2022, the AMS increased mental health coverage from $1,000 to $1,500. This was decreased again to $1,000 in September, but soon returned to $1,250 following criticism from students.

The dollar amount of the reserve was $7.8 million at the start of this fiscal year, but the AMS has pulled $2.5 million from the reserve this year to pay for the difference between the claimed amount and the amount students are paying into the plan. According to Liu, at this rate with current coverage, the reserve would last only two more years.

As a result, the Health & Dental Committee proposed the $52.50 referendum item, which the AMS believes is enough to keep the plan sustainable at its current level of coverage.

If the item does not pass, "significant cuts in coverage" will likely be made, according to Liu.

QUESTION 3: GENDER-AFFIRMING CARE COVERAGE

"If the AMS/GSS Health and Dental Fee Increase Referendum is approved, do you support an additional increase of $8 in the fee for the AMS/GSS Health and Dental Plan Fee (for a total fee of $338) for the upcoming academic year for Gender-Affirming Coverage not provided by provincial coverage?"

The recently-formed Trans Coalition, a group dedicated to advocating for improved access to gender-affirming care at UBC, proposed this $8 referendum to improve financial access to gender-affirming services.

They explained that the fee increase aims to directly improve the lives of Trans students by alleviating financial stress and allowing for freedom of expression and identity.

"Right now, BC's provincial gender-affirming coverage is well below international standards of care," said Chris Munn, president of the Pride Collective and member of the Trans Coalition.

This referendum is conditional upon the passage of another referendum asking for a $52.50 fee increase for the AMS/GSS Health & Dental Plan Fee. The separation comes after AMS Councillors rejected Trans advocates' call to combine the fee increases, which would bring the total to $60.50. Councillors also voted against removing the conditional language.

"Why do we have an AMS Council if that's the response to your most vulnerable constituents?" said C, a member of the Trans Coalition whose name has been changed for privacy reasons.

They said the conditionality of this referendum "is essentially hostaging Trans peoples' healthcare to the passage of the first [referendum]."

C noted the Coalition had "explicit commitment" from VP Finance Lawrence Liu during a November meeting ensuring that both items would be included in one referendum. n a message to The Ubyssey, Liu said he supported Trans Coalition's cause early in discussions but did not make any commitments on "the technicals on the ballot."

Liu did not respond in time for publication. At Council, he said a combined referendum could be confusing for students.

Now that the referendum is separate, the challenge lies in spreading awareness about the campaign while remaining cautious of increased visibility of the Trans community.

"Heightened visibility to the Trans community repeatedly leads to increased violence," said Munn.

"Students have an opportunity to make a concrete show of allyship by voting yes … Trans health care is health care and all students deserve access to health care," said C.

"An inclusive UBC begins with you."

The Ubyssey *released an editorial in support of the Trans Coalition's efforts on March 3.*

QUESTION 4: BIKE KITCHEN FEE INCREASE

"Do you support increasing the AMS Bike Co-op/Bike Kitchen fee to $4.17 to support accessible and affordable transportation through increased programming, alleviate its pandemic-related accumulated debt, and invest in sustainable and active transportation for the UBC community?"

NOTES:

1. ***This constitutes a $3 increase from the current AMS Bike Co-op/Bike Kitchen fee.***
2. ***The fee will continue to be fully refundable upon request through a digital opt-out.***
3. ***The fee will continue to be indexed annually according to the BC Consumer Price Index.***

The UBC Bike Kitchen is putting forward a referendum to increase its opt-outable student fee from $1.17 to $4.17. After a referendum to increase the fee to $5 failed last year, Bike Kitchen is giving it another try to stabilize its financial situation.

The Bike Kitchen is a non-profit bike repair and education shop located in the basement of the Life building.

The majority of voters on last year's referendum voted yes, but it did not reach the necessary quorum of 4,762 yes votes to pass.

According to Shop Manager Alex Alvarez, the Bike Kitchen has accumulated over $50,000 in debt since the start of the pandemic, which has prevented the shop from buying parts and accessories and paying its staff market-rate wages.

Bike Kitchen management has said its bottom line was affected by pandemic campus closures, and has continued to dip with disruptions in the global supply chain. It also lost an additional revenue stream when the Bike Kitchen transferred upkeep of campus bike lockers and cages to UBC.

Due to the debt, the Bike Kitchen has not been able to run as many non-profit programs as it did before, and has shifted to a service-oriented shop, which Alvarez said it was "never intended to be."

Alvarez also said the increased fee would allow the Bike Kitchen to retain experienced staff, increasing their revenue by not having to retrain technicians.

AMS Council also endorsed the referendum item, with several executives voicing support.

Bike Kitchen Programs Assistant Harris Green said the fee increase would help the team better serve UBC's community and environment.

"We think about having someone else on a bike, that's one less car on the road. Obviously, that's less of an impact on the environment," he said.

"[Students who vote for this are] supporting other students to make it affordable for them to bike … so that they can continue to be involved in this mode of transportation, and not just mode of transportation, but mode of mental and physical health maintenance as well."

The Ubyssey's guide to the 2023 AMS Elections candidates and referenda

All year, we've been attending governance meetings and keeping an eye on what's going on in the AMS, Senate and Board of Governors. We're familiar with the issues and the pressures of each position in student government. This elections season, we talked to all the candidates, attended all the debates and fact-checked their claims and platforms. Here's the result. We're not here to tell you who to vote for, but we will be honest about each candidates' strengths and weaknesses. Behold, *The Ubyssey*'s guide to all of the 2023 AMS Elections candidates.

AMS PRESIDENT

ChatGPT

ChatGPT is an AI software. While it can tell a good joke, its ability to engage with students meaningfully and with empathy is unclear (again, it is a software program, not a person). It also was not able to participate in debates due to a ban on technology, which raises questions on how it will interact with students. While it understood policies and issues facing the AMS to an extent, it made some factual errors in its interview with *The Ubyssey* — despite its claims to being all-knowing (because again, it's an AI program).

Remy the Rat/Esmé Decker

Despite their name, Remy the Rat is running as a serious candidate this year. If last year's campaign saw Remy calling the shots, this year Decker is in control of the kitchen. Remy/Decker has a lot of good ideas that would bring a new perspective to the AMS, notably around the student society's relationship with RBC. And while they do not have experience working within the organization — which sometimes showed during debates when they said their opponent Ben Du knew more on some things — their work with student advocacy clubs will provide a solid foundation for them to represent student interests.

Ben Du

Du is the status quo candidate in this race with the most experience. As VP admin, he has rebuilt relationships between clubs and the AMS. His idea to conduct an audit of AMS businesses to lower food prices and find ways to partner with local and BIPOC-led businesses is fresh. But, the rest of his platform seems to be an extension of his VP admin goals, like making Clubs Fair bigger and better with a ferris wheel. His idea to improve the consultation process on the AMS/GSS Health & Dental Plan also isn't groundbreaking and while he said he is voting in favour of both referenda, he voted against Trans students' push to combine the two health care referenda this year.

VP ADMINISTRATION

Anvi Kumar

Kumar's experience in club executive positions gives her firsthand experience with the shortcomings of the current VP administration office — which could help if elected. She plans on addressing gaps in engagement by focusing on student visibility and inclusivity, but how they plan to carry this out is a bit unclear. Kumar's only concrete plans are holding weekly in-person forums with student groups. However, the debates showed Kumar's passion about incorporating more equity, diversity and inclusion-oriented training programs for student clubs and constituencies — even if she lacks some policy knowledge, specifically about the AMS Sustainability Action Plan.

Chayan Lu

Lu's passion for the VP admin role grew through the campaign, demonstrated by her performance in the two debates. It's clear Lu put in the work to find out what clubs and constituencies need by speaking to different students about their experiences. But as a new student, Lu lacks some experience, and while she talked about CampusBase's deficiencies more than any other candidate, she has knowledge gaps in other areas of the role. Lu also questioned the necessity of some clubs, saying that some were taking up resources that would be better-used by other clubs.

Anuoluwapo Awotunde

Awotunde clearly has a passion for improving the student experience. But her platform lacks some specifics, showing a potential misunderstanding of the VP admin role. She does have some relevant experience from serving in student leadership of an undergraduate club or serving as a youth mentor for the UN Association in Canada. But these experiences seem best suited for external student advocacy — and the VP admin role is inward facing. While Awotunde could learn about the VP admin role if elected, there might not be enough time in a one-year term to complete everything on her to-do list.

Jake Sawatzky

Sawatzky's platform focuses mainly on reviving campus life with "fun and engaging events." Sawatzky shows a willingness to learn more about the VP admin portfolio and wants to advocate for clubs to reduce reimbursement processing times, something that former VP admins and VP finances have strived toward. But, Sawatzky's limited experience with clubs is reflected in his platform, which has fewer specifics on administrative aspects of the job. He might have challenges when it comes to the management side of this portfolio, but if you want a candidate that cares about fun, he's the guy for you.

Ian Caguiat

Caguiat has extensive student leadership experience, from Arts Undergraduate Society VP administration to AMS AVP academic and university affairs. Although his ideas seem to be building off of existing initiatives, it is clear he knows the inner workings of the AMS, and possesses the operational knowledge to execute his platform. Expanding the Nest's accessibility is a guiding force for his campaign — from improving room booking requests to revitalizing the Commons Lounge into an upper-year collegium. He also has had the most to say about sustainability and Indigenous coordination during the debates, which is something the current VP administration portfolio is lacking.

VP FINANCE

Abhi Mishra

Mishra seems passionate about working as the VP finance and has experience working with the AMS as the events coordinator and the events ambassador for AMS Events. His platform focuses on improving communication and accountability, securing long-term funding for the AMS Food Bank and supporting students with off-campus housing. He is also keen on clearing the backlogs of club reimbursements. He has some new ideas like raising funds for the AMS Food Bank through AMS Events, but their feasibility remains to be seen. However, he has some knowledge gaps on the AMS Indigenous Finance Guidelines, the AMS/GSS Health & Dental plan referenda and the AMS's deficit.

Linda Zheng

Zheng, the current AMS associate VP finance and former Arts Undergraduate Society VP finance, brings a lot of experience with the finance portfolio. She seems to have realistic goals and was able to answer most questions during the VP finance debate in a concrete manner. However, most of her ideas have been explored by past candidates. Also, she lacked a concrete plan to financially help students with housing. Nevertheless, it seems that her knowledge would help her assume the role at a time when AMS is dealing with budget deficits, club reimbursement backlogs and the depleting health and dental reserve.

VP ACADEMIC & UNIVERSITY AFFAIRS

Kamil Kanji

Kanji has extensive experience within the AMS and VP academic and university affairs office, thanks to his time on the AMS Advocacy Committee and as the strategy and governance lead. Kanji seems passionate about advocating for students, and he aims to address pressing issues like affordability, equity and open educational resources. Notably, he lacked details on how he would advocate for sexual violence policies, which he was also criticized for when he ran last year. If Kanji accomplishes his goals, he could deliver for students, but his platform does not bring many new ideas.

VP EXTERNAL

Tina Tong

Tong is running uncontested for VP external. While Tong is aware of many of key issues like food security, housing and affordability, her lack of advocacy experience will likely be a challenge if she is elected. During the campaign she demonstrated a lack of familiarity with public administration, and during the debate she seemed to be unaware of police violence faced by marginalized communities (although she has since issued an apology), among other knowledge gaps regarding housing and provincial sexual violence policy. Her platform indicates a misunderstanding of the difference between VP external and other roles on the AMS executive, and her being out of touch with social justice demands means she would likely be unable to advocate for the interests of all students if elected.

BOARD OF GOVERNORS

Eshana Bhangu

After two years as an AMS executive and three years as student senator, Bhangu knows her policy. She distinguishes herself from the other candidates with specific, realistic plans for the Board and would likely perform similarly to this year's representatives. Bhangu has championed affordabilty for students as a member of the Student Affordability Task Force. However, it's unclear whether Bhangu could improve student engagement. She has had difficulty consulting with student groups in her time as president, leading to several public confrontations at AMS Council. Bhangu says she wants to engage students through constituency channels, the ones she knows best, but that seems to leave out the students who have been protesting at Board meetings this year.

Kareem Hassib

Hassib is a passionate advocate on social justice issues, but still has some learning to do on UBC policy. He has clear positions on increasing housing supply and divesting from companies involved in human rights violations, but he seemed to fall back on these points during debates when he couldn't directly respond to questions. His background as an activist means the structure of the Board will likely limit his goals no matter what, but he would be a strong advocate for his positions. It's easy to be skeptical about plans for social media engagement, but Hassib has a micro-influencer amount of Instagram followers that could make it work.

Sultana Razia

Razia has realistic plans on affordability and food security. She also has passion for community work, demonstrated by her leadership roles in several clubs. But Razia lacks some specific policy knowledge and made some factual errors in debates. Her Senate and Board platforms are also quite similar. Other ideas of Razia's may not succeed in a single term — in particular her plan to increase student seats on Board, considering it would require amending the University Act. It's also unclear how Razia's plan to implement informal polling will increase engagement as students are already saying they face survey fatigue from UBC.

Leonard Wang

Wang brings UBC knowledge from his time as a student senator, but lacks understanding of what the Board does outside of its finance committee. He wants to bring more equity, diversity and inclusion to UBC through his work on the Board, but it's unclear how he would represent a majority of students while supporting incremental tuition increases — which 92 per cent of students opposed in this year's tuition engagement survey. Wang also does not have a public platform and could not attend either debate, leaving us with questions about who he is and what he stands for.

Onyekachukwu Odenigbo

As a PhD student, Odenigbo has a unique vantage point on university governance, and he was the only candidate to discuss graduate research funding unprompted. He also has experience in the GSS which informs his proposals for housing aid and gives him financial experience the other governance newcomers lack. Beyond financials though, Odenigbo's platform lacks some specific policy knowledge and awareness of the limits of the Board's power. Also, his plan to get the Board to forcibly follow general student opinion shows ambition, but realistically it's unlikely he could get this done.

SENATE

Romina Hajizadeh

Hajizadeh is a qualified candidate not only as an incumbent, but through her roles last year as co-chair of the Student Senate Caucus and vice-chair of the Agenda Committee — which showed in her confidence during the debates. Experience and institutional knowledge may count for a lot in an election cycle when there will be many new faces elected. While much of her campaign borrows heavily from what she promised last year in terms of student engagement and increased equity, diversity and inclusion initiatives, she brings a strong track record of engaging with and advocating for student issues.

Kareem Hassib

Hassib is a fresh face to student governance, although he has a background in political organizing and is clearly passionate about his values. He brings a progressive and action-focused lens to the Senate race, focusing on issues of accessibility and reconciliation through platform points like making it compulsory for all professors to record their lectures and pushing for mandatory Indigenous courses in all degree programs. Delivering on these ambitious promises could prove to be challenging as Hassib may be hindered by UBC's commitment to academic freedom and his lack of experience in a slow-moving body that relies on procedure and bureaucracy.

Mathew Ho

Ho brings years of experience in different student governance roles, like serving as an AMS councillor, and has clearly engaged with the materials and issues presented in these positions. Ho has a history of identifying and understanding the type of work that can be done under the Senate portfolio, and his platform is well-researched and achievable. While Ho's answers at the debate were sometimes circuitous, their substance demonstrated a strong understanding of the issues behind the questions being asked. Student senators work as a team, and Ho would contribute valuable institutional and policy knowledge to the caucus.

Ayesha Irfan

Irfan has considerable experience with student governance in her previous role as the AMS representative for the Faculty of Arts, as well as a position in the Arts Undergraduate Society as a BIPOC coordinator. Like her previous work, her campaign has a specific focus on equity-based initiatives, like recognizing more religious holidays in the UBC academic calendar and including a mandatory Indigenous course. Her adamance for consistent communication with UBC's numerous BIPOC and religious organizations, as well as the improvement of the Senate's transparency, are foundational to her platform and she seems to have a strong understanding of where and how the Senate could improve on these things.

Kamil Kanji

Kanji is running to continue his appointed position on the Senate. He has experience within the AMS from his time on its Advocacy Committee and as the strategy and governance lead. His platform has an abundance of policy change goals — like advocating for more open education resources and adjusting Campus Vision 2050 to include more quiet spaces on campus — but provided little information on how he would achieve this. He also has specific plans to improve communication with the student body. However, he didn't achieve this goal in the last term — on the basis that he did not have enough time to do so.

Davey Li

With his background in student advocacy, Li has the toolkit to complete a smooth jump from the Science Undergraduate Society to the Senate. While he isn't proposing transformative ideas, his platform demonstrates a good grasp of student concerns, like increased lecture accessibility and lowering the cost of learning. During the debate, Li's newcomer status showed when he could not recall particular details of specific Senate policies. However, he has demonstrated an ability and a willingness to learn. Overall, Li is a candidate who acknowledges his strengths and weaknesses which could be a solid asset in the Senate.

Sultana Razia

Razia has the passion and the desire to advocate for her peers for years to come and has served as the first-year representative for the Science Undergraduate Society. However, she only displayed a surface-level understanding of Senate workings, often stumbling over policies and their contents. Razia's platform is very student-focused with affordability, education and student engagement as core ideas, demonstrating her enthusiasm for improving student life. But, her lack of experience in student governance may hinder her ability to deliver on her promises. Overall, Razia is a promising candidate but may face too steep of a learning curve this year.

REFERENDUM QUESTIONS

Indigenous Constituency and other bylaw changes

The most visible bylaw change is the proposed creation of an Indigenous Constituency. According to Indigenous students, this would allow for them to unite Indigenous groups under one unit and allow for better self-governance, since the existing Indigenous Committee is bound to follow the AMS's committee structure. The bylaw changes also include the elimination of some AMS Council seats, a change to the number of active members a constituency must have to have a Council seat or additional seats, a change to how Council can remove executives and power to the president to liaise with constituencies. The most troubling is the consolidation of affiliate school seats — all religious affiliate schools operate under different agreements with the province, making it tricky for one person to represent them all. However, it's worth voting 'yes' for these changes to ensure the creation of the Indigenous constituency.

AMS/GSS Health & Dental Plan fee increase

This referendum proposes an increase of $52.50 to the current $277.50 AMS/GSS Health & Dental Plan fee. In the last two years, the AMS health plan has seen significant claim increases, with students claiming $6.96 million last year, compared to $4.32 million in 2020/21. This fee increase plans to address the increasing number of student claims while ensuring students receive the same level of coverage. It is important to note that the gender-affirming care referendum is contingent on this referendum passing. Thus, this deserves a 'yes' vote to guarantee extended coverage for students.

Gender-affirming care coverage

Trans students at UBC are dangerously under-insured by the current AMS/GSS Health & Dental Plan, posing significant financial barriers for gender-affirming care. Despite councillors hearing personal testimonies regarding transphobic harassment at the February 13 AMS Council meeting, councillors voted to separate the $8 gender-affirming care fee increase from the general $52.50 fee increase. This act demonstrated the councillors' disregard for the Trans community, effectively increasing their visibility and heightening the chances of Trans violence. This is worth a 'yes' vote and serves as your opportunity to protect the health care rights of the campus Trans community.

The Ubyssey *released an editorial in support of the Trans Coalition's efforts on March 3.*

Bike Kitchen fee increase

This is the second time the Bike Kitchen has filed a referendum to raise its fee, after last year's failed to meet quorum. The non-profit bike repair and education shop has accumulated over $50,000 in debt since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, limiting its ability to run free programs. In order to allow it to refocus on accessible community events, the Bike Kitchen said it needs a $3 increase to its existing $1.17. While the details on how the Bike Kitchen got into such a dire financial situation are a bit fuzzy, the fee increase is fairly small and worth it for such a valuable community resource.

IN JOKES:
AMS Elections 2023

Ubyssey Blog
@UbysseyBlog

Dang my man got a bitly

Ubyssey Blog
@UbysseyBlog

If the SkyTrain project is such a big file, why don't we just pdf it? We can use the notes app or whatever.

Ubyssey Blog
@UbysseyBlog

"I will have your back" says student politician

Ubyssey Blog
@UbysseyBlog

I heard Ferris wheel and went to make this now they're yelling at each other what happened.

Ubyssey Blog
@UbysseyBlog

Question: do you believe in life after love? *moves in camera*

Ubyssey Blog
@UbysseyBlog

Take a sip every time a candidate says "transparency". Finish your drink if that same answer didn't say anything concrete.

4:53 PM · Mar 3, 2023 · **114** Views

View Tweet analytics

2 Likes

Tweet your reply Reply

Ubyssey Blog @UbysseyBlog · Mar 3
Replying to @UbysseyBlog and @UbysseyNews
Anyone have a good kidney guy?

1 117

IN PHOTOS:
The Great Debate

Your vote has power — use it

words by **Nathan Bawaan & Anabella McElroy**

"Disillusioned."

Along with buzzwords like "transparency" and "engagement," this word seems to always come up during AMS Elections, and this year is no different.

We vote for our student government and pay our university tuition, and expect fair treatment from both in return. In a year when it feels like these institutions didn't listen to students on issues like food security, health care or tuition, it can seem like voting doesn't produce real change.

But, your vote has the power to solve, or at least reduce, discontent with UBC and the AMS.

Students have a choice to make this year: either stick it through with status quo votes and incumbents or pick a new path paved by first-time "outsider" candidates who outnumber returning candidates in this year's elections.

In the races for AMS exec positions, three of the five races have a candidate who is currently working in the AMS. And in some of these races, the non-AMS candidate could win.

Over in the Senate races, few incumbents are running for reelection. For the Board of Governors, no incumbents are running.

And though there is the potential for fresh blood in the governance bodies at UBC, there's also the potential for stagnation, with some incumbents jumping from one governing body to another.

But the point still stands: students will be electing a wave of fresh faces this year.

And a single vote can sway an election — we've seen underdog candidates come close to winning thanks to students coming out to vote in the past.

While uncontested candidates might seem like a shoo-in — and this year there are a few after a bunch of candidates dropped — students have the power to vote 'no' if they don't believe these candidates will represent them well or are up to the job.

Though voting 'no' seems counterintuitive since it would mean having a by-election at a later date, it could create opportunities for more qualified candidates to enter the race, for candidates who represent you to enter the race.

This year's elections are all about pushing for change — change that your vote has a major stake in. And the strength of your vote doesn't just end with electing your representatives, but with referenda items that will impact students across campus for decades to come.

Two referendum questions are related to the AMS/GSS Health & Dental Plan: one asking to raise the fee by around $52 to maintain the same level of coverage and another to raise the fee by $8 to include gender-affirming care under the plan. The gender-affirming care item is conditional on the other increase passing.

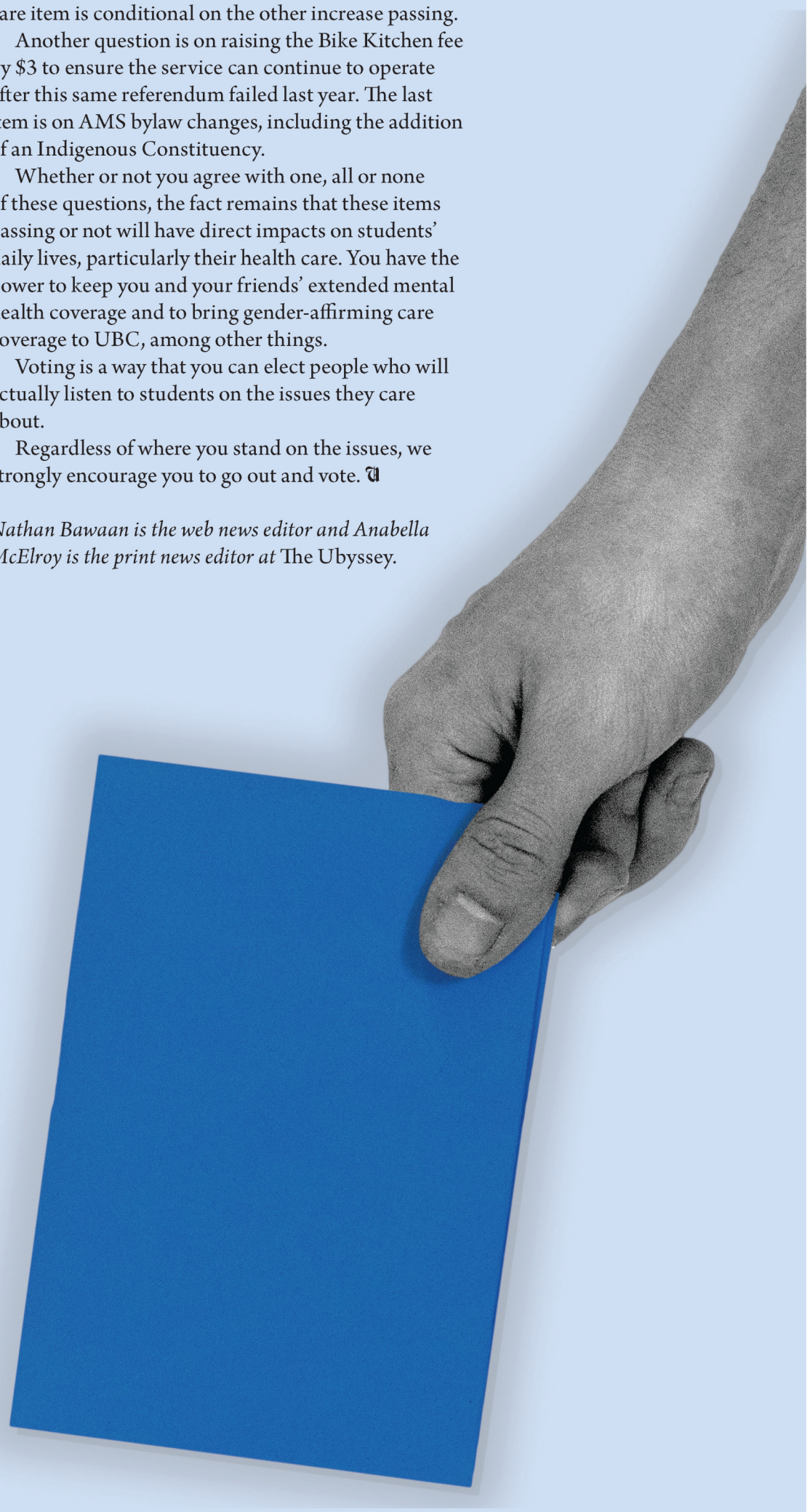
Another question is on raising the Bike Kitchen fee by $3 to ensure the service can continue to operate after this same referendum failed last year. The last item is on AMS bylaw changes, including the addition of an Indigenous Constituency.

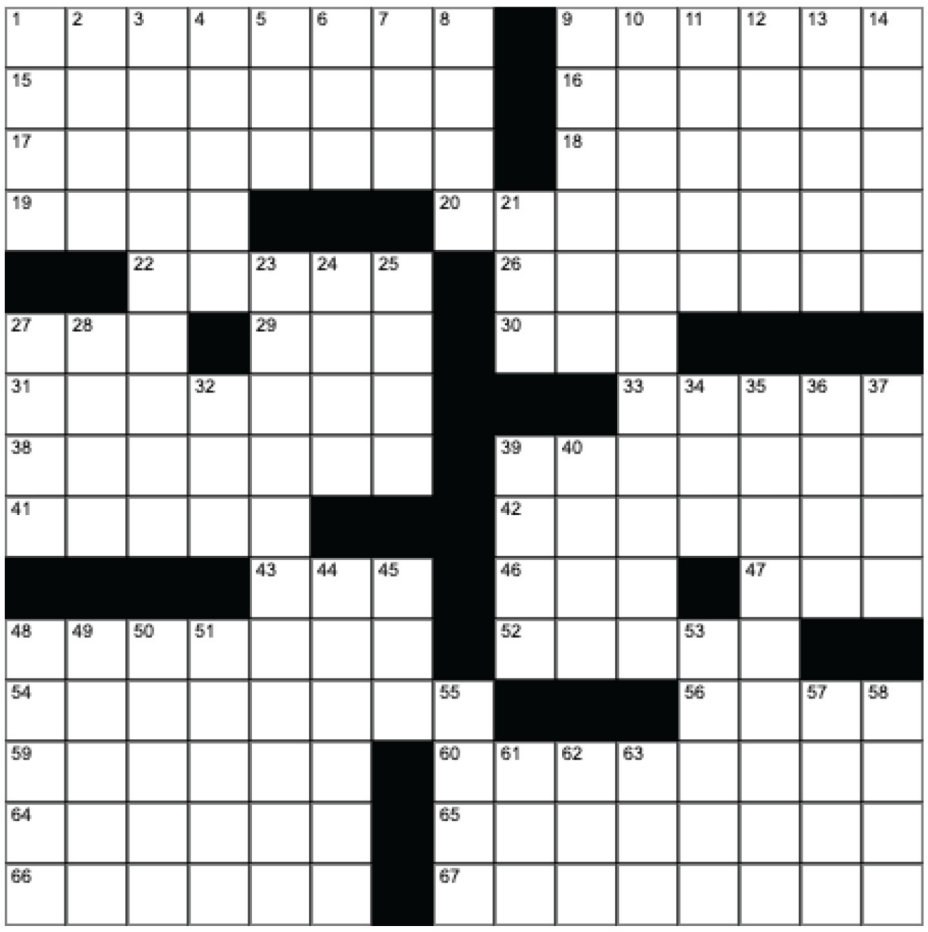
Whether or not you agree with one, all or none of these questions, the fact remains that these items passing or not will have direct impacts on students' daily lives, particularly their health care. You have the power to keep you and your friends' extended mental health coverage and to bring gender-affirming care coverage to UBC, among other things.

Voting is a way that you can elect people who will actually listen to students on the issues they care about.

Regardless of where you stand on the issues, we strongly encourage you to go out and vote.

Nathan Bawaan is the web news editor and Anabella McElroy is the print news editor at The Ubyssey.





COURTESY BESTCROSSWORDS.COM

CROSSWORD PUZZLE

ACROSS

1. Statue support
9. Iago's wife
15. Agreeable
16. Poe maiden
17. Destroy by fire
18. Did penance
19. Actor Julia
20. Native of Osaka
22. Trademark
26. Puts forward
27. Anatomical pouch
29. Suffix with fail
30. Like Gen. Schwarzkopf
31. Lattice
33. Lower a sail
38. Small ring
39. Merit
41. Comedienne Fields
42. Asmara is its capital
43. ___ in turkey
46. Designer Claiborne
47. Subj. for immigrants
48. Monetary unit of Egypt
52. End of ___
54. One who seeks advancement
56. Goddess of discord
59. Try again
60. Certain salt
64. Trifles
65. One who lives in a small cozy house
66. Seated
67. Young children

DOWN

1. Duo
2. Madame Bovary
3. Mollifying
4. ___ Gay
5. Actor Mineo
6. TV listings abbr.
7. Cockpit abbr.
8. Actor Cobb
9. Go by
10. Spread injuriously
11. Combined
12. Hermit
13. ___ my case
14. Dreaded mosquito
21. Swiss river
23. High.speed rail transport
24. A Great Lake
25. In case
27. ERA, for one
28. River under the Ponte Vecchio
32. Him, to Henri
34. Ran into
35. The amount overdue
36. Folk singer Burl
37. Oscar winner Patricia
39. Poet Walter ___ Mare
40. Poetic name for Ireland
44. Turkey's highest peak
45. One hundred of these equals one Japanese yen
48. Components
49. Grenoble's river
50. Sap sucker
51. Sift
53. Related to the kidneys
55. Mediator's skill
57. Anatomical passage
58. Sun-speeches
61. Hundred Acre Wood denizen
62. Avg.
63. Airport abbr.

SUDOKU

		7	4			2		
	8				9			
3			8	5			7	
8							2	7
		2				9		
7	4							3
	2			3	4			5
			5				1	
		6			7	4		

			5					
8			2		3			9
	7	2		8				
1	5					6		
	2	7				4	3	
		4					1	7
				4		9	2	
2			1		9			6
					6			

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SOLUTIONS — **FEBRUARY 14**

Crossword #1

	1 G	2 L	3 O	
4 I	R	U	L	5 E
6 M	E	S	S	Y
7 U	T	T	E	R
8 P	A	Y	N	E

Crossword #2

		1 A	2 I	3 D
4 L	5 A	S	S	O
6 U	N	C	L	E
7 B	O	O	E	R
8 E	N	T		

Sudoku #1

1	3	8	6	9	4	5	7	2
4	9	7	8	2	5	3	1	6
2	5	6	1	3	7	8	9	4
9	6	1	4	8	3	7	2	5
7	4	3	2	5	1	9	6	8
8	2	5	7	6	9	1	4	3
6	8	9	3	1	2	4	5	7
3	1	4	5	7	6	2	8	9
5	7	2	9	4	8	6	3	1

Sudoku #2

2	5	4	3	1	9	7	8	6
3	1	9	6	8	7	5	2	4
8	7	6	2	5	4	3	1	9
5	4	3	9	6	1	8	7	2
7	2	1	8	4	3	6	9	5
6	9	8	7	2	5	4	3	1
4	3	5	1	7	2	9	6	8
9	6	2	4	3	8	1	5	7
1	8	7	5	9	6	2	4	3

THE UBYSSEY'S CAPTION CONTEST

March 6

JASPER DOBBIN / THE UBYSSEY

Welcome back to *The Ubyssey*'s caption contest. This cartoon, drawn by Jasper Dobbin, is inspired by the ongoing AMS Elections and needs a caption! Submit your caption idea by filling out this form. All UBC community members are eligible to participate. Our *Ubyssey* editorial's Subcommittee of the Sillier and Goofier By the Day Collective will pick the top three finalists, which will appear in our March 21 issue. Happy captioning!

Scan here to enter your captions!

stressed?

impressed?

possessed?

Send vibes, hot takes and more to *opinion@ubyssey.ca*.

AMS ELECTIONS 2023

ELECTIONS BINGO

Candidate talks about a ferris wheel	David. Suzuki. Pit. Nights.	You laugh at a *@UbysseyNews* tweet	You learn what the SLFS is	Candidate hands you candy
You laugh at a *@UbysseyBlog* tweet	A candidate forgets which position they're currently running for	Candidate does a mime performance	"Consultation," "engagement," "transparency," "disillusionment," "[insert any other buzzword]."	Candidate spells out the full URL to their website
A joke candidate is unfunny	Karaoke	VOTE	Everything is a priority	AMS ELECTIONS STICKERS AMS ELECTIONS STICKERS AMS ELECTIONS STICKERS
You get a migraine from listening to the Senate debate	None of the candidates show up for a race	Candidate taps mic	Every candidate has the same answer	Candidate mentions *The Ubyssey* (meta!)
"Rap god!"	Serious candidate does something funny	Fact check!	Policy shoutout with no elaboration	Every candidate asks for a question to be repeated