

MINUTES – 16th UNBSU Council Meeting

UNB Student Union 2020/21

March 21, 2021; 7:00 PM via Zoom

Absent: Lidia Shibre, Nihla Houssain



1. Call to Order

Aodhan Murphy, Council Chair, calls the meeting to order at 7:02 PM.

1.1 Roll Call

Aodhan Murphy performs roll call.

2. Approval of Agenda

Resolution 109-20

That Council adopts the agenda for March 21, 2021.

Mover: Abhiiraj Nikam, Engineering Councillor

Seconder: Jharana Luitel, Computer Science Councillor

The motion is carried.

3. Chair's Remarks

4. Approval of Previous Minutes

Resolution 110-20

That Council approves the minutes for March 14, 2021, with two amendments. The first, changing Jharana's councillor update to reflect her and Abhiiraj's councillor project. The second, the alter Téa's executive update to reflect the BAE project she is working on.

Mover: Adriana Lefort, VP Finance & Operations

Seconder: Abhiiraj Nikam, Engineering Councillor

The motion is carried.

5. Substantive Business

5.1 Councillor Updates

Annaka Roscoe and Breana Andrews are absent.

Brennan Marks reports that he attended the NBSA meeting.

Katelynn Pickel-Macdonald also attended the NBSA meeting. She updates that the Women's Centre had a board meeting that she could not participate in due to the Winter Carnival.

Mia Scalabrin reports no update.

Mridul Sharma met with Deanna to speak about his councillor project. He states that his project is complete; however, he is waiting for Deanna to find the right time to post it on social media.

Nihla Houssain shares that last week, the first-ever International Week was held. She notes some hiccups along the way and gives a shoutout to Deanna, Téa, and Adriana for helping out along the way. Nihla also touches on Global Gala's success, describes the importance of multicultural initiatives such as those, and thanks everyone for their participation.

Fareeha Quayyam reports that she met with Angela from the Human Rights Office to discuss her councillor project. She also apologizes for not being able to attend the last few Policy Committee meetings.

5.2 UNBSU Statement re Anti-Asian Racism

Jharana Luitel, Computer Science Councillor: "I was wondering if we could discuss a statement from UNBSU regarding racism towards the Asian community. I know we are talking about microaggression in the Breaking Stereotype video; however, I'm wondering if there will be an independent statement from UNBSU."

Téa Fazio, VP Advocacy: "Yeah, I can respond to that. I had a meeting with Xiuming and Sohan earlier today. Jharana and I are set to meet tomorrow. The intention right now is definitely to put something out to recognize what's going on in the form of a statement. Something I would like us to discuss is what you guys, especially you, Jharana, are looking to see for this (what your expectations are)."

Jharana Luitel: “I didn’t have anything in particular, but a good example is the ISAO statement, which included anti-racism messaging and resources. I envisioned our statement could be informative and include similar resources.”

Téa Fazio: “Okay, sounds good. You have a say here, and I will simply do the work. At the meeting with Xiuming, we agreed that we want to put out a statement by the SU, and we want to create some further projects in terms of ongoing work to combat anti-Asian racism in our community. So, to answer your initial question. Jharana, yes.”

Aodhan Murphy, Council Chair: “Does anyone know off the top of their head the number of students attending UNB from an Asian background?”

Téa Fazio: “I will say UNB is notoriously bad for having specific demographic information.”

Sean MacKenzie, President: “I just pulled it up here. I sent the document in the chat where demographic information is broken down every which way. I don’t have the number right off. I think I would have to add them up because it goes by country.”

Vishnu Vardhan, VP Student Life: “I did want to ask something so that we’re not limiting ourselves to just a statement. Does anyone in Council have any sort of vague skeleton idea of an initiative that they could incorporate in their roles or that executives could incorporate in their roles to create change? Off the top of my head, I think of the Breaking Stereotype campaign where we’re talking about microaggressions, which I think is important. I’ll be taking part in this, and I have a funny one that people keep telling me, and I think it’s going to open a lot of eyes. At the same time, I think there are many other roles that could implement some sort of initiative with the jobs that other councillors do. So, quickly, if anyone wants to talk about some projects they’d like to see, I think that would help us build a framework of what the fight against racism for UNBSU looks like as a whole.”

Jharana Luitel: “I think we could highlight the entrepreneurs, such as Khanh, and highlight their achievements.”

Fareeha Quayyum: “This is very much, as Vishnu said, a super skeleton idea. Going off of what Jharana said, I’ve heard some people of Asian background say that they find the content on social media on the recent hate crimes to be triggering. The main reason is that there’s so much of it going around, and if that’s something that personally impacts you, it’s hard to deal with, especially when you’re seeing it all the time. I think that it’s important to highlight how UNBSU is anti-racist, but also highlight positive stories.”

Téa Fazio: “What we did for Black History Month is we had an education and a celebration component. It’s essential to get the awareness and message across, but also, we don’t want the entire rhetoric about these communities to surround racism and negativity. Let’s all recognize that these communities are under-recognized. Let’s celebrate them too. I appreciate you bringing this up, Fareeha, and that’s an essential component in pursuing these projects. A lot of this will be encompassed in the EDI plan too. So, when I give the plan out for everyone to look at, then we have to look at how we’re addressing anti-Asian racism and racism in general in our community.”

Abhiiraj Nikam, Engineering Councillor: “I got this idea while Vishnu was speaking. What if we had different days dedicated to Asians where each day highlights a different culture in Asian countries? For example, one day could highlight Indian culture, cuisine, clothes, etc. It would also be awareness for Asians. Like we are not all just Asians. If you see a Bangladeshi, he is a Bangladeshi. An Indian is an Indian. A Chinese is a Chinese. A Korean is a Korean, etc. That was my perspective on this topic. Each day could highlight what is good about each community.”

Vishnu Vardhan, VP Student Life: “This is echoing what Abhiiraj said. Celebration of diversity is significant. I don’t think I’ve done enough of that in my role, and I want to do more; however, I don’t think it’s just up to myself and the rest of the executive members. You could easily pull it out from any of the councillor projects. Maybe something to look at next year is to challenge councillors to explore diversity in their councillor projects. I think, and I know I’m biased, doing something like that would be helpful. Normalizing differences and celebrating that

is important in not looking at them as different but celebrating how they live. I think that's the first step towards combating racism."

Fareeha Quayyum: "I feel like UNB compared to other universities has a massive gap in the number of spaces for international or racialized students to come together as advocates or even as a safe space. Even though the Human Rights office is great, Angela is great. There is a gap. I think creating more spaces like that will not only help with normalizing diversity but will also provide a space to students who don't feel heard or feel swept under the carpet."

Madeleine Smith, Nursing Councillor: "I can't give you specific details because it's not my story to tell, but it came to my attention recently that there have been some blatantly racist actions from clinical nursing instructors towards students. I know in one case that a student reached out to a student advocate and was told that because they weren't failed, there's no process for a resolution. A process happened, but no formality to it supports the student. I'm sure that there are similar situations that have occurred in other co-op-style programs. I'm not sure how it would look, but I believe that it is vital for the Student Union to have a clear process of advocacy for students."

Grace Pelkey, VP Internal: "Sadly, the university's way of reporting any of this is a mess. There's no straight pathway to go through with any of this. The student advocate has only to do with academics. If the student is experiencing racism, the Human Rights Office would probably be the best people to get involved. Something we should be advocating for is easier ways for students to reach out to the university when stuff like this is happening so that they don't feel as though they need to deal with it on their own."

Fareeha Quayyum: "I know that people have made chatbots for navigating through the complaint process, so that could maybe be one way to make this process very accessible to students who may not know where to go. Maybe even a flowchart or something streamline like that."

Grace Pelkey: “I think that is a wonderful idea. We won’t complete it this year but will try to pass it on to next year’s team. There are things we can do on our end to make it easier for students.”

Abhiiraj Nikam: “My suggestion for helping any international community would be also to include the International Student Society and include them/have them be more active in these activities so that students know that there is a society to represent international students and help them if they go through something (like the situation mentioned above by Madeleine).”

Xiuming Shi, Renaissance College Councillor: “I’d like to go more in-depth into the conversation with Téa and Sohan. We were thinking of creating videos for people of Asian descent, especially in light of recent events. If anyone wants to be a part of that, then reach out to Sohan, Khaleem or me. The video structure will probably be a question and answer, so people will have something to discuss. We plan to expand this, so other minority groups are included.”

Anna Lee Leblanc, Kinesiology Representative: “Would it be possible to put resources on the UNBSU website? Does that go against any policies? I find people go through social media and kind of dismiss it because they’re going through all of these stories, but to have a concrete and long-term resource page is a bit more concrete.”

Deanna Merriam, VP Communications: “We do have a campus-wide resource page on our website, but I do think that given this discussion, we should give some effort into making a racialized resource section as soon as possible. Does that sound good to you guys?”

Grace Pelkey: “Yeah. I think something that was planned on going along with the statement was a resource section. I’ve already sent Téa some Asian mental health resources. We can put those on the website, and they can be included in the statement.”

Aodhan Murphy: “Thank you for adding this agenda item, Jharana. That was a good discussion.”

6. Reports to Council

6.1 Vice President – Communications

- Deanna Merriam, VP Communications: “It was a busy week. The biggest thing I worked on was hiring for the incoming VP of Communications. The applications have gone out, and we will be extending that deadline to March 26, 2021. We’d like to collaborate with Sean to send that to students so that as many students as possible get the opportunity to apply.”
- A lot of work on International Week was done. For the website, about seven pages had to be created. There was also a Facebook event and captioning for the videos. All the contests were being monitored as well. There was an issue with the voting for International Week, so I had to run through all of the votes by hand.
- I met with Melissa to work on the weekly wellness tips initiative. We collaborated with some of our coordinators for this.
- I answered some inquiries about the VP Communications job.
- I’ve been working on the ACE page of our website, that’s TBA.
- I captioned Jharana’s videos to go out this week. We had to move those due to International Week’s promotions being heavy.
- I met with Mridul to discuss his councillor project.
- The rest of the year will be spent organizing the remaining events and initiatives. As per this list, we have: the RED Awards nominations and voting, SURAS, De-stress Fest, Jharana and Abhiiraj’s workshop, Breaking Stereotypes campaign, (hoping to have) casual black-tie night for students to attend, Grace’s passion project (the study packs), the new brand book announcement, executive transitions such as the VP Communications, and more.
- Liz, I received your email, so that will be included relatively soon.

6.2 Vice President – Student Life

- Vishnu Vardhan, VP Student Life: “Hey everyone, sorry I wasn’t at Council last week. Katelynn and I were hosting the watch parties.

- We closed the Typeform for the Taste Breaker Bundles. Thank you to everyone who signed up for one. I'm so sorry if we didn't get you one. We got an overwhelming response for this. I believe we got over 80 orders, and those weren't even single orders. They were double. So, we turned it into a raffle, and since Swarna and I saw a massive demand for it, we will release another Typeform where people have the chance to pay for the bundles. We'd like to make this a longstanding thing not to be temporary and exclusive to International Week. Thank you for taking part in these. Right now, we're collecting the assets we need to make more of these. People should be able to pick them up on March 25 and 26.
- For SafeRide, we are getting the accessibility grant together. It's a lot more expensive than I anticipated. Adriana and I sat down to look over a couple of provincial and federal grants. It's looking promising. Oddly enough, the application timeline is in July, and they're all very skewed, so we're working on it. We will try to have that figured out for when the next team comes on so that it's much simpler for them to get this process going.
- Fredericton Hyundai offered to re-decal all of the vans, and we sent them new graphics with the new logos and unique font. We hope to get that done before the new year of operation.
- Winter Carnival was a great success, in my opinion. Katelynn and I worked hard on it. Whoever attended, thank you so much. We appreciate it. The event at The CAP was easily our most attended event. It was packed. Crabbe Mountain was also very popular. We were able to give out a lot of passes and subsidize a lot of passes. Hopefully, next year, Winter Carnival could be an actual week-long event instead of a few days. Lots of takeaways from Winter Carnival, but overall a success.
- As Deanna mentioned, we are trying to figure out the logistics to make the Black Tie event a stand-alone event.

6.2 Vice President – Finance & Operations

- Adriana Lefort, VP of Finance & Operations: “This week, I took part in a Good Neighbours discussion, led by Sara Rothman. It’s a program that helps the residents who live in the College Hill area. We’re looking at revamping this program.
- I attended a Postsecondary Student Relations Committee where we proposed the old Good Neighbours program’s changes and other agenda items.
- I had a meeting with Bhavya. I started his transition to VPFO for next year. I genuinely want to see him succeed next year and the rest of the Council grow next year, so I’m planning on meeting with him often to ensure the best transition possible.
- I have also been catching up on some emails as my inbox is flooding.
- Grace and I are working on SORAS since we’re hoping to have part of the event in person at the Delta, following public health guidelines.
- I also met with two first-year students from STU to help provide insights into clubs and societies joint between UNB and STU.
- I attended the NBSA Review Committee, where we looked over their report.
- I attended the Policy Committee in-person yesterday.
- I had to coordinate logistics with Delta.
- I set up a time for Bhavya and Kordell to discuss the VP Communication’s role and look at the budget.
- I have also been working heavily on the transition for the incoming and outgoing team.”

6.3 Vice President – Internal

- Grace Pelkey, VP Internal: “This week, I’ve spent a lot of time working on the SURAS, which is the Student Union Recognition Awards. Our tentative date is April 9th. We plan to have this in-person with the option of joining virtually. So, if you aren’t around, you can still participate effectively. The team and I sat down to discuss the awards for this event.
- On Monday, I had an interview with CBC about the invigilation software.

- I met with the students who are starting the textbook dropbox initiative. I also wrote them a letter for the company, Textbook Change, to partner with them.
- I attended another SSNP meeting.
- I've been working on another Breaking Stereotypes campaign and sent that info out to Deanna.
- I've been working on the study packs, which will hopefully go out the week before exams. If things go smoothly, these will be available in the libraries."

6.4 Vice-President – Advocacy

- Téa Fazio, VP Advocacy: "I have been sick these last few weeks as you may have noticed my absence from Council last Sunday. However, I still managed to get a few things going.
- I worked on the BAE video and made a draft script for that. I worked with Maggie from CESASA to talk about being specific with certain content, etc. I will meet with Vishnu about the project, and we hope to get it rolling soon.
- International Week happened, and that ate up a lot of my time. Massive shoutout to our Multicultural Initiatives Coordinator, Mehak, and Nihla, Bhavya, Khaleem, who were helping out from the International Students Society and Student Services side of things. This entire team put so much work into this week, and it was a bumpy road because it's the first time we've done it. The Global Gala we had yesterday went well, so I'm thrilled with the general outcome of this. I'm hopeful that we get to do it again in future years.
- I met with Melissa and Deanna to go over the plan for the weekly wellness tips series. The first one will be going out this Wednesday. It will be an introduction to the series and highlight a lot of coordinators. From there, Melissa will plan out the themes for each Wednesday for the rest of the term. Keep an eye out for those. Major shoutout to Melissa as she's been working hard on this initiative. They are fantastic. I'm so jazzed for them to come out.

- I also met with Melissa to talk about De-stress Fest, which will be April 6-12. It will be very similar to Wellness Week. We'll be looking into fun events and wellness, especially with exams. We need to ensure there's an emphasis on mental health during that time.
- I reviewed the NBSA report and put a ton of comments in there.”

6.5 President

- Sean Mackenzie, President: “I also took an interview with CBC on invigilation, but I passed most of it off to Grace. Another discussion I discussed in the Fall and what students are hoping for the school year.
- I spent some time catching up on things that I had fallen behind on, including some emails.
- I attended a CASA Board meeting and reviewed their monthly finances. I also checked their budget, which will be made available to the public in, I believe, two weeks.
- I reviewed the policies and bylaws to prepare them for the Policy Committee.
- I attended the NBSA review committee meeting. I met with Darcy and Patrick from the UNB SRC. We met to discuss the Review Committee.
- The Policy Committee met for four hours on Saturday. It was nice to meet folks in person, finally.
- Shoutout to Deanna as she's been accommodating with the RED awards as a lot of this has been last minute. I had a family emergency at the end of the week that delayed a couple of things. The RED awards are ongoing, and the nomination form should be up online tomorrow, and the awards will all be on there and everything. I'm very excited about this initiative. I have three coordinators that I'm working with, so I'm thrilled to work with them.”

6.6 Status of Executive Review Recommendations

Aodhan Murphy, Council Chair: “Okay, we pretty much went over all of the executive review recommendations last week, so I don’t have much to grill you guys on. Does the executive have any updates? I’ll start with the executives, and then we can move to the rest of the council. ”

Adriana Lefort, VP Finance & Operations: “I’ve been transitioning towards the next team and making sure they’re well-prepared for next year. My focus has been towards the future as I know we don’t have much time left in these roles.”

Deanna Merriam, VP Communications: “I spent three extra hours in office hours just in case anyone had any questions about the VP Communications job.”

7. Announcements

Jharana Luitel, Computer Science Councillor: “This Saturday, Abhiiraj and I will have our Computer Science Workshop. If anyone has any questions about it, don’t hesitate to reach out to either of us.”

Abhiiraj Nikam, Engineering Councillor: “Yeah, there is going to be NB Power and a lot of other companies present as well. For Engineering and Computer Science, if anyone is interested, please attend. All Engineering and Computer Science students will be receiving an email soon for registration.”

Téa Fazio, VP Advocacy: “I just wanted to note that Nowruz was yesterday and that is essentially New Years’ for a lot of people in the Middle East. Happy belated new year. I’d like to recognize this celebration and that it’s been ongoing for the past week.”

Molly Pittman, Management Councillor: “This isn’t serious, but I just wanted to acknowledge that it’s Katelynn’s birthday, so everyone should go say happy birthday to her.”

Aodhan Murphy, Council Chair: “I had Lidia send me an email as she had an announcement. Lidia wanted me to tell you, folks, that the Arts Matter 2021 Conference is happening from March 25 - 27. The conference schedule is already out. The panellist schedule will be on our website soon. She’d love to see you, folks, there.”

8. Question Period

Jharana Luitel, Computer Science Councillor: “I have a question for Deanna. In your update, you mentioned that there was some kind of cheating in Global Gala nominations. Usually, we see the number of people who voted for us, but in this one, we did not. How did you make it fair?”

Deanna Merriam, VP Communications: “Through Typeform, we had it automatically fill in spreadsheets. We had the student number and names. There were a few instances where someone would fill in a student number and then have the number adjusted by one each time, and then they’d have like ten of those. So, for every nomination that the person did that for, it was reduced to one vote. When we went through all of the candidates, each probably had a difference of about ten votes. So, it wasn’t as close because there were probably 80 votes total for the award. I talked to the group, and reducing those seemingly suspicious votes to one vote per instance would have been the fairest thing to do; however, looking forward, we will reach out to IT services to see if they can host it. If not, we will have to require that people include their UNB email to avoid that happening in the future.”

9. Other Business

10. Adjournment

Resolution 111-20

That Council adjourns the meeting.

Mover: Abhiiraj Nikam, Engineering Councillor

Seconder: Vishnu Vardhan, VP Student Life

The motion is carried.

The meeting is adjourned at 8:00 PM.

Secretary: _____

President: _____