



THE ARTS & SCIENCE UNDERGRADUATE SOCIETY
GOVERNANCE | STRATEGIC PLAN | 2017-18

INTRODUCTION

OPERATING STATEMENT

The Governance Office shall be concerned with matters relating to the internal administration and operation of the Society. The Governance Office shall always remain an unbiased Office and resource for information and the operation of the Society. The Governance Office shall oversee all governance matters relating to the Assembly, the Advisory Board, and committees related either directly or indirectly to the Assembly or Advisory Board.

INTRODUCTION

This year the Governance Office will work to innovate, collaborate, and revitalize the way it approaches its work to both better serve students and to increase the value of its contribution to the Society. Developing the proposed archival system will be a major initiative the Governance Office takes on this year. The first and most pressing component of this task is to introduce a records keeping policy to ensure that no material is lost in annual turnovers and the day to day recycling of documents. This will strengthen the society's institutional memory through stronger preservation practices. This will be followed by a search to recover as much lost material related to institutional memory as possible in collaboration with the Queen's Archives. This entire process will eventually culminate in a digital system to store documents and make them accessible to those who wish to view them. In short, this project aims to connect students with a resource on the history of their student government and its ever-developing format.

The Governance Office will also aim to increase the transparency and accessibility of ASUS Assembly. A major pillar of this will include the introduction of a committee system requiring the introduction of, removal of, or major changes to an initiative to go through a consultation process. This process will increase the consultation on policy initiatives, allowing for increased involvement from assembly members and the broader student body. It will also ensure major decisions reached at Assembly truly reflect the opinion of the widespread and diverse student body.

Finally, through the development of the Governance Hub, the Office hopes to engage students both in elections and governance more broadly. The Governance Hub will make it easier to provide the student body with a direct line to the Elections Team and encourage them to participate in the electoral process. Overall, the hub will seek to provide relevant information as well as materials which seek to further engage students. This is essential to ensure students feel as though they have full use and access to the representation they are allotted through ASUS. Materials will include everything from regular Assembly and elections updates to videos on the importance of governance.

In short, Governance Office aims to revitalize itself this year. Through the aforementioned measures the office will better serve students, ASUS volunteers, and the society as a whole.

OFFICE GOALS

Revitalizing the Archives

The ASUS archives serve to preserve records and items of interest from the work ASUS has done throughout its history. Unfortunately, the preservation of records has become less frequent and the Queen's Archives collection from ASUS in the 21st century has significantly depleted. Through a lack of clear archival policy and limited investment over the years, the archives have fallen into a state of disarray. This year the hope is to restore order to the archives. There exist three main problems to address related to this initiative. First, how can we recover as much material from previous years as possible. Second, what is a new system which could be implemented to store the archives. Third, what policy can be introduced to cement the role of the archives for years to come. Addressing these will ensure the future success of the archives which in turn will better preserve ASUS' institutional memory. Documents kept in the archives will help future Assemblies and Councils make decisions on the direction they wish to take the organization. In short, the archives serve as an excellent resource on the success and challenges the organization has faced throughout history. Making them accessible to students will also allow for students to engage in a learning opportunity and learn from previous decisions made by the Society.

- **Queen's University Archives-** Right now, the only archival material ASUS itself has is a mixture of loose papers and books with many gaps in terms of the years covered. Not only is it not organized, but it also does not provide a clear timeline of institutional memory. We will need to work with the staff at the University Archives to retrieve copies of all ASUS records currently held. This will require meeting with the Archives and determining their retained materials on ASUS. It will then require reprographing them to be able to bring such materials back to ASUS. When this step is complete ASUS should have more accurate records spread out over its history giving those who access it a clearer view into the society's past.
- **Archival System-** Determine through consultation the best way to keep both digital and physical records with an aim for both security and accessibility. This will require further discussions with both the Executive and the University Archives to determine where the best place to keep physical copies of the material is. On the digital side, we need to ensure that the archives are kept in an easy to manage format which will not deteriorate over time. This system also needs to be accessible for use for students.

Including a form of portal on the website to such a digital system would likely be the best solution. We could utilize the computing skills of students to create this system as it would not be easy to navigate. In short, the goal would be to find a system which focuses on digital access but provides physical access if needed.

- **Archival Policy-** Develop and implement policy which will govern ASUS' record keeping requirements going forward. Creating and maintaining an archival system is pointless if there are no policy requirements for members to keep records and contribute them to the archives. Constitutionally mandating record retention will ensure the longevity of the archives. The current archival policy is not firm and is out of date. It also arguably places emphasis on the retention of less important records such as program participant statistics and not actual documents, such as the planning documents of such events. Clarifying it will ensure records are kept, and going forward no more material is lost.

Improving our Governing Principles

ASUS is an organization governed by policy amounting to several hundred pages of rules and regulations. However, it is often the case that policy is formulated in a reactionary manner. That is, members of ASUS craft policy to address specific issues as they arise. What tends not to happen, however, is the proactive production of policy to further instill governing principles within ASUS. This goal is to further develop such principles through increasing the transparency and accessibility of the elected branch of ASUS. The hope is to connect Assembly members directly with more students both through proposed committee hearings on policy as well as increased ease of contact. The end aim of this goal is to transform the elected branch of ASUS into a body which more closely resembles the governing structures of our country. Instilling key principles embodied in our national and sub-national governments will ensure ASUS remains the most accountable organization possible. This also has the benefit of helping students become familiar with these institutions and their format prior to leaving the university environment.

- **Committee System-** Currently ASUS policy only has the ability to form committees with relatively vague mandates and have them consult internally and come to a recommendation/report. If this were made more public and included the wider student body in the process, ASUS Assembly would be able to solicit input from students more effectively. Introducing committee hearings of Assembly members to hear from stakeholders on large policy projects would go a long way in doing this. When a program is created or disbanded Assembly would be mandated to hold a committee hearing prior to voting to hear concerns from those with a vested interest on campus. This would ensure interested students feel their voice is heard and that

they have access to decision making structures. Additionally, it would also help to ensure no major policy is rushed.

- **Connecting Assembly Members-** In the past, very few students have reached out to Assembly members about the issues that they are passionate about and most impact them. This needs to change to ensure a more open dialogue on student issues. The hope is to make it easier for students to contact assembly members through facilitating and encouraging a “meet with your elected representative session” in the 30 minutes prior to Assembly. This will allow students to consult with their elected representatives on a more regular basis. I am also hoping to be able to Facebook live this segment on the Governance Hub, so students can ask questions online and hear responses from members. This will allow those who can’t physically attend to be still have the opportunity to be involved.
- **Policy Transparency-** In the past, minutes from Assembly meetings have had mandatory turnaround times but never has there been a timeline on the publishing of policy updates in the Constitution and Policy Manuals. This has created a barrier for students in terms of accessing the most recent ASUS policy. Introducing mandatory timelines for the updating and publishing of ASUS policy documents is essential in removing this barrier. This will be accompanied by publishing Assembly items on Facebook so the student body more broadly can see what is happening with the elected side of ASUS. This increases the accountability of Assembly and provides students with more direct access. In short, this serves to better improve the democratic representation ASUS offers.

Streamlining the Electoral Process

The Governance Office is responsible for conducting the elections which determine the ASUS student representatives for each academic year. Year after year this remains an ongoing process of attempting to further improve things such as poor voter turnout, complicated rules, and tensions which arise from complaints. Conducting elections is an essential part of the Society’s democratic functions but does not lack aspects which make it difficult to coordinate. The unpredictable nature of candidate’s campaigns especially, leads to situations which can ultimately only be handled on a case by case basis. In an attempt to address these problematic areas the focus should always be on clarifying the policy and related processes. To increase awareness and participation in ASUS Elections we will implement new strategies to engage students. By increasing our social media presence and more frequently engaging students on broader governance topics, one hopes that it may become easier to open up a dialogue and foster interest.

- **Clarify the Complaint Process-** Clarify the role of a standalone Chief Electoral Officer (CEO). This will result in greater clarity in the process in which complaints are filed. Traditionally the CEO has simply ruled on elections complaints which have been appealed after the initial ruling by the CRO. In the past, the role of CEO has been filled by the same volunteer who is the Chair of the Policy and Election Review Committee (PERC). Due to policy changes at the end of last year, this is no longer the case. Now that they are separate roles which makes allows the CEO to hear complaints, instead of the CRO. This will ensure the most efficient process for handling elections complaints.
- **Rethink Campaign Financing-** Consult and develop campaign finance policy which allows rules to be enforced but is fairer to candidates financially. What is meant by this is that the current system penalizes candidates solely through financial means. This does not account for the adverse impact this could have on some candidates. To counteract this, several factors need to be considered. Firstly, this means ensuring that elections rules can be enforced in a way which does not easily take away candidate's actual money. Secondly, this means having campaign financing which acknowledges more money is needed to run against more people and accounts accordingly depending on how many people contest a position.
- **Increased Engagement-** Build a governance hub Facebook page by transforming the existing ASUS elections page. This will allow us to tie in elections engagement with more consistent engagement such as weekly assembly updates and short videos about the importance of governance.

COMMITTEE GOALS

Elections Team

“The Elections Team shall ensure the smooth running of all Society elections and promote awareness about the elections and that ASUS Assembly members are elected.”

The elections team oversees the election process for elected members of ASUS Assembly and the Department Student Councils. They organize debates, candidate information sessions, enforce election campaign rules, and execute the actual voting. Ultimately, the student representatives elected during the elections they oversee will go on to represent Arts and Science Students at bodies such as the AMS and University Senate.

- **Engage Voters More Broadly-** Through a governance hub seek to engage voters and increased investment in student government and government in general, not just voting. What is meant by this is that often the elections has been advertised independently of any other governance initiatives. By combining this marketing, it should make elections and ASUS governance a more well-rounded and approachable brand than it has been in the past.
- **Increased Dialogue-** Increase the speed, efficiency, and openness of inquiries and complaints filed by candidates or voters with the Elections Team. In the past there have been long turnaround times on elections rule violation complaints, which can reduce campaigning time available for candidates while adding undue stress for all involved. Through increased dialogue between the Elections Team and candidates the Governance Office expects to see a more accessible and welcoming elections environment for candidates.
- **Further Improve the Livestream-** Last year the livestream of the debate reached nearly 6500 viewers, and was not formally advertised in advance. The livestream of the debate is imperative in increasing accessibility of the candidates and their ideas, so a focus on improving the quality and marketing of the livestream will be a primary goal of the Elections Team.

Policy and Elections Review Committee

The ASUS Policy and Elections Review Committee shall act as the adjudicative panel of the Society. The ASUS Policy and Elections Review Committee may exercise jurisdiction over the following, as per Part 9 of the ASUS Constitution- i) any breach of the ASUS Constitution; ii) all

matter of Constitutional interpretation; iii) maintaining and revising ASUS Policy and Constitution. All matters of Non-Academic Discipline, should they be brought to the attention of the ASUS Policy and Elections Review Committee, shall be referred to the AMS Internal Affairs Commissioner. The sole exceptions include grievances regarding the ASUS Board of Directors or ASUS Assembly, ASUS Elections and Referenda, and breaches of the ASUS Constitution or Policy.

- **Proactively Review-** Set biweekly goals for the amount of policy reviewed by the committee. This prevents a situation where all policy changes made by PERC go through in mass at the end of the academic year. Having a piece by piece review should produce more reasonably sized policy proposals for Assembly to review and vote on. This will by consequence also ensure that all of the policy is being more closely and critically assessed.
- **Ask Questions on Policy-** Seek to occasionally provide policy suggestions as questions about policy for Assembly members to answer. (e.g. policy X is problematic and needs to be changed rather than policy X should be changed like this.) In the past PERC has recommended specific changes to policy, this year PERC will focus on highlighting issues for the elected members to propose solutions to. After all, it should be the elected members who shape the governing structures of ASUS to ensure it fits the vision of all students. Although this happens with all policy proposals through the means of voting, having the elected members' voices at the forefront will ensure the most representative policy.
- **Propose Something New-** Propose some new form of policy separate from anything existing in ASUS policy already. PERC has always reviewed what's currently in policy; for ASUS to grow as an organization, PERC needs to consider new unheard of policy ideas. This will also allow PERC to at times function as an ASUS policy thinktank. This will hopefully help further engage students in volunteering with PERC. It should also serve to provide more improvements to the governing structures of ASUS to consider.

Archives Team

The Archives Team will serve to maintain, coordinate, and promote record keeping within ASUS. Record keeping is one of the most difficult challenges ASUS faces as an organization. With initiatives involving hundreds of students and yearly turnover across all positions it is easy for documents to get lost in the day to day bustle of the office. With this challenge in mind, the Archives Team will work closely with the Governance Officer to ensure that appropriate record keeping policy exists and that it is being fully executed. Additionally, the Archives Team is encouraged to take on the responsibility when time permits, of finding creative ways to display archival material and ASUS' history to the student body as a whole.

- **Preserve-** Recover and consolidate all available ASUS archival material where possible. This will involve reaching out to the Queen's University Archives and other holders of ASUS materials. It will also require consulting ASUS alumni to determine where such materials may be held around campus or even outside campus. Following this, relationships will need to be built with those who possess such material to be able to reprograph it.
- **Renew-** Implement a system and policy for more effective preservation of the ASUS archives. Essentially, find a way in policy to ensure records are kept and taken seriously. Whether this is creating a specific procedure for retention of every major document when use is complete or determining a test to determine if a document should be kept, policy will ensure a system is codified and permanent.
- **Showcase-** Find a way to show students some amazing work ASUS has done throughout history. Details will be determined with those on the Archives Team once formed. This will ensure the archives are not only an excellent resource but also something interesting for all students to engage with.

SWOT ANALYSIS

STRENGTHS

- **Low Cost-** Comparatively low operating cost for a lot of impact compared to other offices/commissions. This means any initiatives bearing additional costs should not be burdensome.
- **Facebook Page-** ASUS Elections page has a significant following (will be changed to ASUS Governance Hub). This means the hub will have a strong foundation to share updates during election season and make assembly more accessible to students online.
- **Access to Previous Officers-** Strong relationship with former Governance has allowed for consistent contact and consultation. This will help to fill in gaps in institutional memory which currently exist.

WEAKNESSES

- **Apathy-** Student apathy related to elections/student government. This can be clearly seen in the number of position without sufficient candidates in previous elections. This is what the Governance Hub hopes to address by engaging students in a more meaningful way.
- **Simply Voting Access-** Lack of direct access to the Simply Voting system as it is fully controlled by the Alma Mater Society. This can be overcome through a strong relationship with the AMS Secretariat, leading to fast turnaround.
- **Current state of Advisory Board-** The Advisory Board has several mandatory functions in terms of the governance of the society. Its current state prevents it from fulfilling such roles as reviewing the coming general operating budget. Moves to fill the Advisory Board must be made soon and within the bounds of the constitution.

OPPORTUNITIES

- **More Volunteers-** An increase in volunteers in the Office will broaden opportunities for students to get involved in the Governance Office, while allowing the Office to strengthen its mandate.
- **Increased Interest-** A higher than previous level of interest in governance positions. We know this is the case as we had over three times as many applicants to chair level governance positions in spring hiring compared to the year before. This means potential archives positions should be easier to fill when posted.

- **Increasing Awareness and Understanding of ASUS Assembly-** There is currently very few students outside those who are elected members who attend Assembly on a regular basis. Addressing this by also using the Governance Hub to push Assembly updates to the general student body will ensure everyone is aware of how their voice is being represented.
- **Record keeping policy-** There is the opportunity to introduce policy stating record keeping expectations going forward. This will ensure we don't lose the opportunity to keep as many records as possible for the ASUS Archives moving forward.

THREATS

- **AMS and ASUS-** Student government can be challenging to navigate. Often ASUS and the AMS are conflated and confused by students. The Governance Office needs to differentiate ASUS and the AMS, to clarify for arts and science students the role each serve, and how their interests are represented in both forums.
- **Perceived Inaccessibility of Student Elections-** Last year ASUS elections received a "dart" in the Queen's Journal for inaccessibility. The hope is that the proposed ASUS Governance Hub will ensure complete transparency and accessibility of student elections,
- **Candidates only interested in highest level positions-** Last year's executive elections were contested by 3 teams whereas nearly 10 elected seats on Assembly were left vacant due to lack of interest. If there is not an effort to market positions in a way which generates candidates for all positions, vacancies will persist on Assembly.

TIMELINE

SEPTEMBER

- **Fall Hiring**- Hire Deputy Returning Officers, Archives Team, and First Year Intern.
- **Assembly Meetings**- Assembly meetings a per usual.
- **Introduction of Chief Archivist Position**- Hire a Chief Archivist to manage and collaborate with the Governance Officer on the ASUS Archives. Look at potentially more volunteers as the vision for their structure begins to take further shape.
- **Introduction of Pressing Policy Changes**- The introduction at Assembly of any policy reforms needed to address policy which will prevent the Society from moving forward with operations for the year.

OCTOBER

- **Fall Elections**- Candidate recruitment, candidate debate, and campaigning.
- **Assembly Meetings**- Assembly meetings a per usual.
- **Governance Hub Launch**- The initial transition from the ASUS Elections page to the ASUS Governance Hub to be complete. Posts and regular updates to begin.
- **Governance Reforms 1st Set**- Introduction of policy surrounding proposed Campaign Finance Reform (starting in the winter election) and the new Assembly committee system.

NOVEMBER

- **Fall Elections**- Voting period.
- **Winter Elections**- Candidate recruitment begins.
- **Assembly Meetings**- Assembly meetings a per usual.
- **Archives Policy**- Final version of the new ASUS record keeping policies will be tabled at Assembly to ensure archival material is kept moving forward.

JANUARY

- **Winter Elections**- Campaigning, candidate debate, and election.
- **Assembly Meetings**- Assembly meetings a per usual.

FEBRUARY

- **Elections Debrief**- Elections team review the year.
- **Assembly Meetings**- Assembly meetings a per usual.

MARCH

- **Release Governance Series Finale-** Short documentary series on the importance of policy and governance concludes with a longer episode wrapping it up.
- **Governance Reforms 2nd Set-** Introduction of policy relating to any major PERC proposals as well as any feedback from the elections or archives team.
- **ASUS Annual General Meeting-** March 12th, 2018 – all ASUS members welcome.
- **Assembly Meetings-** Assembly meetings as per usual.
- **Transition Assembly-** Incoming Council hosts first Assembly.
- **Archives Launch-** The final system for accessing the archives online as well as any related projects developed are fully launched.

APRIL

- **Transition – Final Steps-** Finish off transition hours with incoming Governance Officer.

CLOSING THOUGHTS

CLOSING THOUGHTS

Thank you to all those who have taken the time to read this strategic plan outlining the revitalization of the ASUS Governance Office. Additionally, there is a hope in my mind that out of all the new initiatives being undertaken the archives, given their essential nature, will be able to remain for the years to come as a legacy of this year's Governance Office team.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nicholas Thompson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

Nicholas Thompson

Governance Officer 2017-2018