Updates:

1) **PEP-AH Western Regional Symposium**

   Last week I attended the PEP-AH (Post-secondary Partnership on Alcohol Harms) AGM as their Western Regional Representative to present our work, set priorities for the year and plan the Western Regional Symposium. The Western Symposium will take place this March and will be aimed at bringing together students, administration and community members to talk about alcohol harms, with a theme of sexual violence. Currently in the process of securing funding and reaching out to schools in the western region to gauge levels of interest in participation. This event will take place over one full day and consist of student-led panels, speakers, breakout/brainstorm sessions and research presentations.

   If you’re interested in participating as a delegate, speaker or panel member, please reach out (vpa@umsu.ca) and we can discuss further!

2) **HUB Staff Training 2.0**

   I am working with UMSU’s HR Manager to do a second round of training in Consent Culture and Bringing in the Bystander from HUB staff and management. This fall we held the first session which was well received and helped our staff better understand their role as an active bystander and further discuss consent and sexual violence as it relates to drinking environments. Moving forward I’ll be working with HR to develop a feedback mechanism and plan continue expansion of this training in upcoming years.

3) **UCRU International Student Brief**

   Currently President Jakob Sanderson and I are prepping for our UCRU lobby week this February 3-7. Key priorities will be Indigenous student support, Financial Aid and International Student support, which the advocacy team are in the process of developing. Right now we are still in the drafting phase but will update the board once we have more finalized asks.
Conference Report:

CASA Policy Strategy Conference (PSC) 2019:

This past November UMSU President, Jakob Sanderson, and I attended CASA’s Policy Strategy Conference (PSC) in Vancouver. Over the course of three days, both members and observers took part in a number of sessions beginning with an opening plenary, followed by a variety of group discussions, presentations, and breakout and feedback sessions. More specifically, this included a presentation on CASA’s Indigenous Member Sponsorship Program (IMSP), a discussion surrounding CASA’s National Advocacy Strategic Plan and upcoming federal lobby week priorities, and a Feedback session on an exchange program that has been nationally funded. The conference wrapped in a closed session of the membership, followed by closing plenary. In summary, the purpose of PSC is to overview lobby week priority key areas, discuss how these priorities were determines and to get feedback on what specific asks within these key areas should be moving forward. This year, priority areas included International students, Indigenous Students and Financial Aid.

Many topics such as sexual violence prevention, mental health, OERs, student research etc. were all originally considered but ultimately did not make it into the lobby brief given that only a select few priorities can be focused on each year. That being said, in effort to still address this important issue, CASA has ensured that they are still addressing these issues either via publishing policy papers, representation of government panels and/or through other campaigns or initiatives. I.e. Students Let’s Act Mental Health Campaign.

In summary, I had a positive experience at CASA PSC and was pleased to have the opportunity to work first-hand with the organization. Overall, I was encouraged by the way CASA functions – from the environment they create for their members, to the lobby development process and comprehensiveness of the research supporting asks – I was left thoroughly impressed. I appreciated the organizations openness to feedback and constructive criticism, as well as their transparency and wiliness to acknowledge their own mistakes or weaknesses and work to improve. After working with the organization up-close and seeing the way they operate, it is evident that CASA’s relationship with the federal government is unmatched. This influence is demonstrated through the large number of meetings they have secured over the years allusion to CASA’s lobby asks in party platforms in this past election. CASA put forward than those of any other federal student lobbying organization when taken as a whole. In my opinion, if UMSU were become members, we would substantially increase our potential to make a significant and direct impact at the federal level compared to other federal advocacy groups. It is for these reasons that it is my recommendation that UMSU Join CASA for the upcoming 2020-2021 term.