



## THE ALLIANCE OF NOVA SCOTIA STUDENT ASSOCIATIONS

SUITE 233, 1657 BARRINGTON ST. \* HALIFAX, NS \* B3J 2A1 \* (902) 422-4068 \* ED@ANSSA.CA

### ACTION PLAN 2009-2010

**TO:** ANSSA BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND STUDENT ASSEMBLY

**FROM:** THE ALLIANCE OF NOVA SCOTIA STUDENT ASSOCIATIONS (ANSSA)

**DATE:** OCTOBER 1<sup>ST</sup> 2009

**RE:** ACTION PLAN 2009-2010

### SUMMARY OF PROPOSED ACTIVITIES

#### INTERNAL AFFAIRS

- INSTITUTIONALIZE FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY
- CREATE A RECORDS KEEPING SYSTEM FOR HOME OFFICE
- INCREASE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE STUDENT ASSEMBLY
- IMPLEMENT STRATEGIES FOR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR RETENTION
- DEVELOP RELEVANT AND RESPONSIVE POLICY AS PRIORITIZED BY THE MEMBERSHIP
- UPDATE EXISTING POLICIES AND DEVELOP A COMPREHENSIVE POLICY BOOK

#### EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

- CONDUCT AN EFFECTIVE PROVINCIAL ELECTION CAMPAIGN
- ADVOCATE ON AND EFFECTIVELY COMMUNICATE OUR PRIORITIES TO GOVERNMENT
- COMMISSION A NATIONAL STUDENT SURVEY TO FILL NATIONAL DATA GAPS
- CONDUCT PRIMARY RESEARCH TO FILL EXISTING LOCAL DATA GAPS
- SEEK AND NURTURE PARTNERSHIPS WITH ORGANIZATIONS OF COMMON INTEREST

## INTRODUCTION

This report outlines the activities that ANSSA intends to undertake in the upcoming year. New activities that have not been completed in years past, or activities that have not been successfully completed, are divided into external and internal affairs. Annual activities – such as council visits are not discussed in this plan. The recommended activities stem from discussions had during the ANSSA board planning retreat held in August of this summer.

## INTERNAL AFFAIRS

Last year was one of the most difficult years on record for ANSSA. Within less than a year the organization employed three different executive directors, while only two of those executive directors received a transition at the start of their terms. This frequent turnover of staff also led to unnoticed financial mismanagement, which has not only consumed a significant amount of staff time but has also caused ANSSA to run a deficit we had not planned for. With these considerations in mind, many of the internal activities suggested for the upcoming year deal with instituting practices that ensure such things do not happen again.

### INSTITUTIONALIZE FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY

Our by-laws and internal policy stipulate several procedures to ensure financial accountability that have not customarily been followed by Executive Directors and Officers. This has resulted in financial mismanagement and a lack of accountability to our membership. To create this culture of accountability, we will do the following

- In 2009 ANSSA will keep detailed records of all expenses and revenues consistent with the financial review delivered to the Board of Directors in September of 2009.
- ANSSA will undergo an audit of books at the end of this fiscal year
- The treasurer will submit monthly financial reports to the Board,
- The treasurer will review expenses from home office monthly

PROJECT LEAD: MATT ANDERSON, TREASURER

MARK COFFIN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

TIMELINE: OCTOBER 2009 BOARD MEETING - ONGOING

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## CREATE A RECORDS KEEPING SYSTEM FOR HOME OFFICE

In previous years, there have been no consistent records keeping systems in the ANSSA office. Meeting minutes, financial records, research and correspondence with government and partners were haphazardly stored, making it difficult for anyone trying to make sense of ANSSA's history and past activity. A digital file management system (backed up online daily) along with a hard-copy file management system for most of these types of files will be established to ensure institutional memory is preserved as much as it can be.

PROJECT LEAD: MARK COFFIN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

TIMELINE: COMPLETE

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## INCREASE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE STUDENT ASSEMBLY

The effectiveness of previous student assemblies has been questionable. At the 2009 Planning Retreat the Board of Directors struck a working group to consider the options for making the student assembly more effective. Issues that are being addressed by the committee include: Differentiation between fall and winter assemblies, preparing delegates for assemblies, role of delegates between assemblies, ensuring continuity of delegates, delegate involvement in policy development and direction and more.

PROJECT LEAD: ALEXA MINICHELLO (ST. FX) CHAIR OF WORKING GROUP AND HOST OF FALL ASSEMBLY

TIMELINE: RECOMMENDATIONS TO BOARD AT OCTOBER MEETING

IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS AT FALL AND WINTER ASSEMBLIES

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## IMPLEMENT STRATEGIES FOR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR RETENTION

ANSSA's current strategic plan places heavy emphasis on retention of executive directors. This has included a salary raise to market standards, a retention bonus for second year and a health plan. This year is the first year for the implementation of these activities. Additionally, ANSSA has moved our home office to The Hub a location that provides a much more attractive workplace environment for Executive Directors of ANSSA.

PROJECT LEAD: MARK COFFIN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

TIMELINE:

IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS AT FALL AND WINTER ASSEMBLIES

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## DEVELOP RELEVANT AND RESPONSIVE POLICY AS PRIORITIZED BY THE MEMBERSHIP

At the August planning conference, the Board resolved that the following areas should be made policy development priorities for the upcoming year:

- Knowledge Economy and Research Funding
- System Design (Including tuition, university funding, differentiation and university rationalization)
- Students with Dependents and Mature Students
- Holistic Education Policy

- Rural Students
- Tax Credits

Policies will be developed and brought to the fall and winter assemblies for feedback and approval. Several board members are involved in policy development, which will allow for the timely completion of policy drafts.

PROJECT PARTICIPANTS: MARK COFFIN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

ROB LEFORTE, BOARD MEMBER – KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY AND SYSTEM DESIGN

EMMA CULLEN, BOARD CHAIR – TAX CREDITS, RURAL STUDENTS

MATT ANDERSON, TREASURER – KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY

SHANNON ZIMMERMAN, BOARD MEMBER – HOLISTIC EDUCATION POLICY (ABORIGINAL ISSUES)

TIMELINE: POLICIES TO BE PRESENTED TO STUDENT ASSEMBLY AT FALL STUDENT ASSEMBLY (EXCEPT FOR HOLISTIC AND SYSTEM DESIGN)

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#### UPDATE EXISTING POLICIES AND DEVELOP A COMPREHENSIVE POLICY BOOK

Most ANSSA policies have not been revised for two or three years. While many of our policy positions remain relevant, most of the data used in those policies is out of date, and many of the policies reference political circumstances that are no longer current. Our existing policies will be updated with current statistics, and where necessary the Board will consider a change in policy position.

PROJECT LEAD: MARK COFFIN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

TIMELINE: OCTOBER BOARD MEETING

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#### RUN AN AWARENESS CAMPAIGN TO PUBLICIZE OUR ACHIEVEMENTS AND ACTIVITIES TO MEMBERS AND SOLICIT FEEDBACK

ANSSA hasn't done much in the past to advertise our successes or solicit feedback from students at institutions. At the ANSSA planning retreat a breakout group decided that an ANSSA branding initiative and campaign would be useful on member campuses. The student assembly working group has also decided that such an initiative would be a useful means of involving assembly delegates during the campaign.

PROJECT LEAD:

TIMELINE: BETWEEN FALL AND WINTER ASSEMBLIES

## EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

### CONDUCT AN EFFECTIVE PROVINCIAL ELECTION CAMPAIGN

The 2009 provincial election marked an exciting opportunity for ANSSA to communicate our message to the public and political candidates. ANSSA was active through the use of bought media (TV ads), earned media coverage (press releases and press conferences), meetings with candidates and party leaders, and public critique of the party's education platforms.

PROJECT LEAD: MARK COFFIN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

BOARD MEMBERS

TIMELINE: COMPLETE MAY 4<sup>TH</sup> – JUNE 9<sup>TH</sup>

### ADVOCATE ON PRIORITIES SET BY MEMBERSHIP AT THE SUMMER PLANNING CONFERENCE

At the summer planning conference, the ANSSA board set the following advocacy priorities for the upcoming year:

- Advocate for a Comprehensive Review of Post-Secondary Education in Nova Scotia
- Advocate for the development of a knowledge economy and increase in research funding in Nova Scotia
- Advocate for lower tuition consistent with existing and revised tuition policies
- Advocate for an access guarantee for all Nova Scotians
- Advocate for a per-student federal funding distribution and for the elimination of differential tuition fees

### EMPLOY EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES TO COMMUNICATE OUR PRIORITIES TO GOVERNMENT

ANSSA will employ several tactics to communicate our priorities to government and influence decision making over the next year.

- Regular meetings with appropriate ministers and critics
- Regular meetings with department bureaucrats
- Regular meetings with ANSSA Ally MLAs in all parties
- A winter lobby conference that will allow student assembly delegates to communicate with government directly
- A summer constituency tour around the province of Nova Scotia in the summer of 2010
- Persistent and strategic press releases and media advocacy

### COMMISSION A NATIONAL STUDENT SURVEY TO FILL NATIONAL DATA GAPS

ANSSA has partnered with the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations (CASA) the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance (OUSA) the Council of Alberta University Students (CAUS) and several independent student unions across Canada to commission a National Student Survey from the Education Policy Institute (EPI). This survey will target students currently in university and gather valuable data on issues including student debt, summer

employment, policy opinions and demographic information. This will give ANSSA and our partners a much clearer picture of student needs and opinions, and will allow us to access data that has previously been kept confidential to many student associations (for example data from the NSSE survey). Once the survey is complete a national report will be produced, and ANSSA will have the ownership of the provincial data and will be able to use it in our advocacy efforts or craft a unique provincial report.

PROJECT LEAD: VICE PRESIDENT FROM EACH MEMBER SCHOOL

TIMELINE: EARLY NOVEMBER – SURVEY LAUNCH

LATE JANUARY – REPORT RELEASED TO PUBLIC

### CONDUCT PRIMARY RESEARCH TO FILL EXISTING LOCAL DATA GAPS

Along with the National Student Survey of university students ANSSA will partner with a public administration research methods class at Dalhousie University to conduct surveys that will fill some of the remaining PSE data gaps in Nova Scotia and engage students in the activities of ANSSA. This is a low-cost opportunity for ANSSA and will give us the potential to gather valuable data that would otherwise be difficult to deliver. ANSSA's role in this project will be in providing organizational and situational background to the research teams and professor and articulating clear research questions for each project.

Projects under consideration include:

- A survey of Nova Scotia High School students on their intentions for study, expectations from government and institutions, anticipated responses to new programs and literacy on SFA programs available
- A survey of first and final year university students that gauges the difference between both groups in opinions on post-secondary education, expectations and opinions on government and institutions and literacy with student financial assistance programs, as well as intentions after graduation.
- A household survey of parents of children pursuing (or expecting to pursue) post-secondary education.

PROJECT LEAD: PROFESSOR DOMINIKA WRANIK, DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY

TIMELINE: CLASS DATES – JANUARY – APRIL

### SEEK AND NURTURE PARTNERSHIPS WITH ORGANIZATIONS OF COMMON INTEREST

Between the transitions of executive directors, some of the contacts in organizations with which ANSSA has partnered in the past have been lost in the shuffle. ANSSA should work to recreate and nurture these partnerships to ensure channels of communication remain open. Additionally, there are several partnership areas that remain unexplored that could prove valuable if ANSSA were to explore them. ANSSA should also explore the possibility of hosting a Partners' Dinner (as has been intended in previous years) or Golf Tournament in the coming year in order to actively but informally engage partners and government.

PROJECT LEAD: MARK COFFIN

TIMELINE: ONGOING

## IMPORTANT DATES 2009/10

October 1<sup>st</sup> – Board Meeting (CBU)

October 23 – 25<sup>th</sup> – Fall Student Assembly (St. FX)

November 26<sup>th</sup> – Board Meeting (Dal)

February 6<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup>: Winter Assembly and Lobby Days (SMU/Halifax)

March 18<sup>th</sup> – Board Meeting (Acadia)