

*Society for Students
with a Disability*

November 2025

ANNUAL

REPORT

MAY 2024 - APRIL 2025

Latest information and updates about the University of Victoria Students' Society (UVSS), Society for Students with a Disability (SSD).

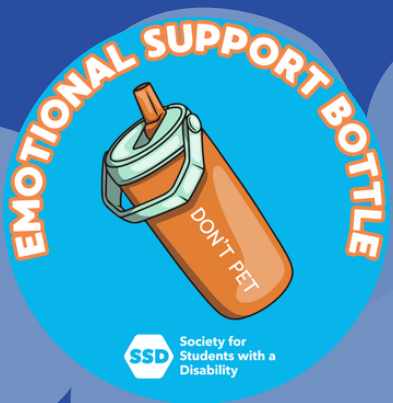
PREPARED BY:

*Bella Jacobs
Office Coordinator*



EDITED BY:

*Staff & Council
Members*



02	Territorial Acknowledgement
03	Greetings from Council
04	SSD Staff
05	Workstudy
06	SSD Council
07	Summary & Highlights
08	Events
14	Workshops
17	Programs
21	Advocacy & Outreach
25	Funding Opportunities
26	Community Relationships
29	By the Numbers
35	Challenges
36	Future Outlook
37	Acknowledgements

Table of Contents

Territorial Acknowledgement



We acknowledge and respect the ləkʷəŋən and W̱SÁNEĆ peoples on whose traditional unceded territory the Society of the Students with a Disability stands and the Songhees, xʷsepsəm and W̱SÁNEĆ peoples whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day. We seek to continually decolonize all forms of organizing structures and center Indigenous peoples when considering what accessibility looks like.



Greetings from Council

Hannah Brown (they/them) - Co-Chairperson

I am pleased and privileged to write this forward to our 2024-2025 annual report. Looking at the information in this annual report I am proud as always of the work the SSD continues to do to support disabled students in the social, emotional, and educational areas of student life. As someone who has been involved in the SSD council since 2021 it is always amazing to see the SSD continue to develop each year.

My hope is that we continue to build on our strong foundation and build capacity to support and expand the work we do. I look forward to looking back and reflecting in future years and seeing where the SSD goes next!

SSD Pets

Augie



Missy



Charlie



Thomas



Brody & Luna





SSD STAFF

Coordinators

2024-2025

Office Coordinator



Adrean Meuser (they/them)

Adrean is a non-binary uninherited settler born on the lands of the Okanagan people in the interior of British Columbia. They earned a Bachelor of Arts in Gender Studies from the University of Victoria and have aspirations to return to school in the future. After three incredible years with SSD, Adrean moved on to pursue new endeavors in April 2025. During their time with SSD, they left behind a lasting impact—most notably through the creation of SSD's first-ever colouring book and the development of the beloved office plant collection. Their contributions continue to enrich the space and community they helped nurture.

Education & Administrative Coordinator



Marissa Donaldson (she/they)

Marissa is an invisibly disabled and neurodivergent graduate student currently pursuing a Master of Arts in Educational Psychology. They joined SSD in October 2023 and remained a vital part of the team until May 2025. During their time at SSD, Marissa led numerous impactful workshops, including several successful collaborations with UVic Co-op and Career Services as well as the Centre for Accessible Learning (CAL). Before their departure, they also organized a highly successful Autism Week, which featured a range of engaging events such as workshops, panels, an open mic, and even puppy playtime. Marissa's thoughtful leadership and creativity left a lasting impression on the SSD community.

Communications & Research Coordinator



Diana Viáfara (she/her)

Diana is an Afro-Colombian, neurodiverse international student and Black woman who recently completed her studies in Business Administration. She previously earned both a Bachelor's and a Master's degree in Psychology. Diana was part of the SSD team until August 2025, when she returned to Colombia to pursue new job opportunities. During her time at SSD, Diana made a lasting impact through her creative branding and media work, helping shape the organization's visual identity. She also worked diligently to strengthen community connections, bringing warmth, inclusivity, and intention to everything she did.



Workstudy Student Coordinators

Events - (170 Hours)

This position was filled by both **Kush Gulati** and **Julia Denley**, who are SSD council members and active community members. Julia has been a workstudy previously.

Programs and Outreach - (170 Hours)

This position was filled by **Zoe Peterson** who is an SSD council member.

Media and Marketing - (160 Hours)

This position was filled by both **Acorn Wasserman** and **Julia Denley**, who are SSD council members and active community members. Julia has been a workstudy previously.





SSD Council

March 2024 to February 2025

Chairpersons

Julia & Hannah

Treasurer

Grace

Student Liaison

Acorn

Marten elected at October SGM

UVSS SSD Rep

Cate

Acorn elected at October SGM

International Student Rep

Kush

Grad Student Rep

Alison

Secretary

Anika

General Members at Large

Mya

Vanessa

Lola

Emma

Elected February 2025

Chairpersons

Julia & Hannah

Treasurer

Mya

Student Liaison

Valentine

UVSS SSD Rep

Acorn

Dacian *Elected in February term starts May 2025*

International Student Rep

Kush

Grad Student Rep

Jitendra

Secretary

Zoe

General Members at Large

Acorn

Lola

Kat

Gabi

Our council is elected/re-elected every year at our AGM held in February.



SUB Visit from George

2024-2025



The Beacon Hill Petting Zoo



Cooking Class



Summary & Highlights

The SSD has been on the move this year! We packed the calendar with field trips, kicked off our community dinners, published our first-ever colouring book, and hosted an amazing Autism Week. We also teamed up with the UVSS, AIR, the Campus Community Garden, Co-op & Careers, and many others to make it all happen.



The Bug Zoo

On May 30th, 2024, we visited the Victoria Bug Zoo with 15 participants, accompanied by staff members Adrean and Marissa. We took the bus downtown and spent the afternoon exploring the zoo's fascinating collection of little critters. We also livestreamed the visit on Instagram for our virtual community. The event was a great success, so much so that we continue to receive requests to go back, and we're already planning a return trip!



Beacon Hill Petting Zoo

For the past three years, the SSD has kept up a beloved summer tradition: visiting the Beacon Hill Farm and enjoying ice cream afterward. Last year was no exception! On Wednesday, June 19th, 2024, staff members Marissa and Diana joined 13 students for an afternoon at the petting zoo, where we caught the famous 5:00 pm goat stampede; livestreamed on our Instagram for everyone following along. Afterward, we wrapped up the day with a sweet treat from the Beacon Hill Drive-In. We look forward to keeping this summer tradition going for years to come!

Game Night

On October 31st, 2024, we hosted a hybrid Games Night where participants gathered both in person and online to play a variety of Jackbox titles and other spooky-themed games. The event was made possible thanks to our wonderful volunteers, who planned and ran the evening.



Mental Health Resource Fair

The SSD held its second Mental Health Resource Fair on Friday, September 13th, 2024, from 10:00 am to 4:00 pm. We booked the Michele Pujol Room in the Student Union Building and filled it with more than 20 vendors from across the UVic community, as well as external organizations, mental health support groups, counselling services, and many others. We're excited to grow this into an annual event, with the goal of helping UVic students discover and access the mental health resources available to them.

Community re-cap (Hannah Brown, Co-Chairperson):

Building on our inaugural event, the second annual Mental Health Resource Fair was a great success with student and community coming throughout the day to talk to the various vendors at the event. It was an enjoyable event to chat to folks (both attendees and vendors) and make some awesome connections for the SSD to continue into the future. I had fun and I know others in attendance did too, and I also found out more about some great resources and left with new information and swag.



International Student Roundtable

In collaboration with SOCC, we hosted an International Student Roundtable to discuss disability, inclusivity, and the unique experiences of international students in a supportive hybrid format. The in-person session took place on November 14th, 2024, and the online session was held on November 7th, 2024. We also offered door prizes for those who attended.

Each event welcomed approximately 15-20 international students. We learned a great deal about how disability is understood within different cultural contexts, as well as how we, as the SSD, can improve our efforts to create a more welcoming and accessible space for international students. This event was funded by ARC.



Indigenous Disability Awareness Month Round Table

On November 21st, 2024, from 5:30-6:30 pm, we partnered with the NSU to host a roundtable in recognition of Indigenous Disability Awareness Month. Over bowls of homemade chili, we engaged in intentional conversations about the disabling impacts of colonization, the intersections of Indigeneity and disability, and the importance of creating space for Indigenous folks to reflect on and define what disability means to them. It was a meaningful evening grounded in community, learning, and shared experiences. This event was funded by ARC.



The Clay Bake

We hosted a Clay Bake Afternoon on May 10th, 2024, in the SSD Lounge in the Student Union Building. This relaxed drop-in event invited participants to get creative using clay-baking kits from 4Cats, and it made for a fun and welcoming afternoon in community.

Mocktail Mixology

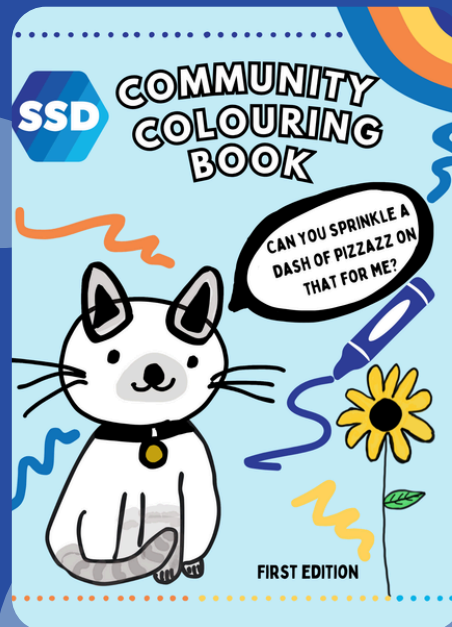
Originally planned for February, this event was rescheduled due to a room-booking miscommunication and was held on April 15th, 2025, from 6:00-9:00 pm. Together, we learned how to make delicious non-alcoholic drinks, met new friends, and enjoyed a relaxing evening filled with creativity and connection. The event was organized by SSD staff and council, and despite the initial scheduling hiccup, it was a great success.



Community Colouring Book Launch Party

After years in the making, we finally launched our first-ever colouring book! We celebrated with a launch party on December 5th, 2024, in Cinecenta from 3:00-4:00 pm. The event featured a panel discussion with the artists, where we explored creativity, self-care, and disability love. To keep everyone energized, we also provided pizza and popcorn for our community.

Since launching our colouring book fundraiser, the books have been available at SUBtext, the UVic Bookstore, and Camas Bookstore & Info Shop, as well as at many of our events. We're excited to continue selling and sharing them with our community, and we hope they inspire moments of calm, creativity, and connection through the simple, beautiful act of colouring.



Disability Conversation Cafe

In collaboration with the UVic Bureau of Sociology Students, we hosted a Conversation Café on disability in the SUB Upper Lounge on March 14th, 2025. With potluck snacks to share, participants gathered for a relaxed and open discussion about the disabled experience. It was a warm, community-oriented space that encouraged connection, reflection, and storytelling.



Autism Week

For the first time, the SSD hosted Autism Week, aligning with Autism Month in April 2025 and World Autism Day on April 2nd. The week ran from Tuesday, April 1st, to Friday, April 4th. Our goal was to offer a mix of fun, educational, and supportive events open to both autistic and non-autistic community members. Here is a recap of the week's activities:

Puppy Playtime

- Tuesday, April 1st • 11:30 am – 1:00 pm • SUB Upper Lounge
- This event was a huge success, with more than 150 students stopping by for some much-needed destressing time with therapy dogs. This event was held in partnership with the UVSS.

Open Mic and Art Night

- Tuesday, April 1st • 6:30 pm – 8:30 pm • Vertigo
- Participants contributed to a communal art piece, shared multimedia projects, and enjoyed some live music. About 15 students attended this cozy creative space.
- Facilitated by Workstudy Zoe and SSD staff.

Disability Tax Credit Workshop

- Wednesday, April 2nd • 11:00 am – 12:00 pm • Zoom
- In collaboration with the Victoria Disability Resource Centre, this workshop covered important information about the Disability Tax Credit. Attendance was lower, with around 5 participants, but the session provided valuable support and guidance to those who joined.

Neurodivergent Job-Seeking Workshop

- Wednesday, April 2nd • 3:00 pm – 4:00 pm • Career Centre Boardroom + Zoom
- This workshop, delivered in partnership with Co-op & Careers, offered practical tips for neurodivergent students on résumé building and interview strategies. Attendance was around 5 participants.

Autism Community Panel

- Thursday, April 3rd • 6:30 pm – 8:30 pm • Vertigo + Zoom
- The evening included a 30-minute presentation on resource mapping and academic supports, followed by a panel responding to pre-submitted community questions. Approximately 15 people attended.
- Facilitated by Kai, Valentine, Hannah, Acorn, and Marten.

Autism Self-Care and Advocacy Workshop

- Friday, April 4th • 3:00 pm – 5:00 pm • SUB B025 + Zoom
- This workshop focused on self-care strategies, navigating academic supports, and advocating for oneself in both academic and personal contexts. Around 10 participants joined us.
- Facilitated by Valentine.

Overall, our first Autism Week was an exciting milestone for the SSD. We look forward to continuing to grow and strengthen this initiative in future years.

Autism Week - Personal Reflections

Valentine Anderson - Student Liaison (SSD Council)

The Autism Week programming in April of 2025 included four main events: puppy playtime, a community art night, a community resource panel, and a self-care/advocacy workshop.

Puppy playtime was held in the SUB upper lounge with a sensory-safe area in the lounge's side room. This event was co-hosted by the UVSS. The event was well attended and the dogs were extremely cute. Information for the following events throughout the week was distributed at this event, as the dogs brought crowds that may not have otherwise interacted with the SSD.

The community art night included a large communal art piece on a large, table-length paper, as well as other multi-media projects. Participants shared their experiences with being autistic, and live music was provided by a council and staff member.

The resource panel was attended both in-person and virtually. Fidgets and colouring books were provided to in-person attendees for stimming throughout the event. The panel included a presentation by Kai Punt on UVic's existing resources, and opened to a panel discussion with Hannah Brown, Martin Becker, Valentine Anderson, Kai Punt, and was moderated by Marissa Donaldson. ASL interpreters were present for in-person attendees. Discussion was lively and panelists shared their experiences, resources, tips and tricks, etc.

The self-care and advocacy workshop had participants both in-person and virtually. Participants were given "self-care packages" including toothpaste, silicone straws, personal wipes, dry shampoo, and fidgets. The workshop focused on personal care (both physical and mental), accessing academic supports, and advocating for individual support needs in academic and personal life.



Kai Punt - Community Member

Due to my involvement with the autism peer support group, I was approached to facilitate a workshop during autism week by SSD staff (this was prior to my employment). I presented a workshop on mapping campus resources and services for autistic students, which was followed by a community panel discussion about being autistic both inside and outside the academic setting.

There are very few resources on campus specifically for autistic students, so I designed the workshop around the needs of autistic folks in the academic setting, based on research. I mapped out resources based on the following support needs: (1) academic and accessibility needs, (2) safe social spaces, (3) mental health and well-being. The panel discussion included topics around navigating the academic setting as an autistic student, getting a diagnosis versus self-identification, gender identity, and self care.

The lovely Hannah Brown turned the contents of the workshop into a brochure to be given to students as a physical resource!



Workshops

2024-2025

Mask Accessories Crafting Workshop

In collaboration with GEM and the UVSP, we helped host a Mask Accessories Workshop on July 25th, 2024. This drop-in creative session invited participants to make ear-savers, lanyards, and other fun accessories for their face masks using reclaimed materials. It was a relaxed, hands-on event that encouraged creativity and sustainable crafting.



Transferable Skills Workshop

In collaboration with Niels from Co-op & Careers, we hosted a workshop on transferable skills and how to highlight lived experience on a résumé. The session focused on identifying personal strengths and translating them into meaningful, marketable skills. We had around 15 participants sign up for the event, which took place on October 23rd, 2024, and was facilitated over Zoom.

CAL Accommodations Workshop

On September 26th, 2024, we hosted a workshop exploring CAL accommodations with Szymon, the CAL Exams Manager. The session covered what documentation is required, the types of accommodations CAL can provide, and how students can best navigate the process. We also facilitated a student roundtable where participants could share their own experiences with CAL. We had 20 students sign up for this workshop.

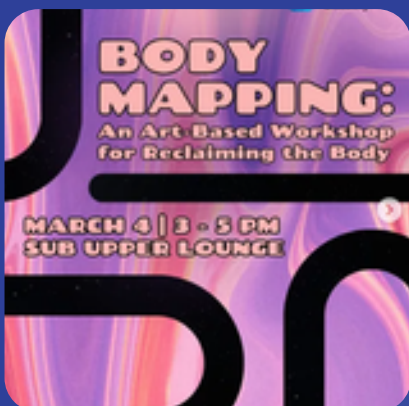


Mental Health on Holidays Workshop

For our December workshop, we wanted to host a Mental Health on the Holidays, designed to support folks in finding effective strategies to care for themselves, enhance their well-being, and navigate festive gatherings and social events with more ease. However, the workshop had low registration and we pivoted to a drop-in cookie decorating event. December is a hard time of the year to run workshops and events as students are very busy with exams.



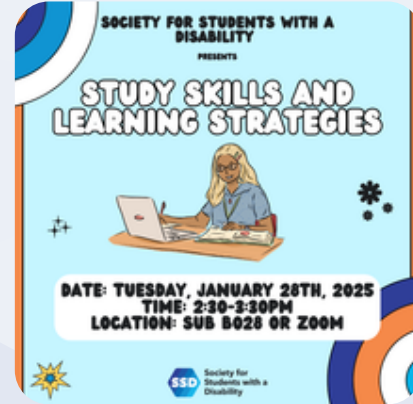
Body Mapping: An Art-Based Workshop for Reclaiming the Body



For the 2025 FEMEXPO, we hosted a Body Mapping Workshop as an act of body reclamation and resistance, inviting participants to express their visible and invisible lived experiences in ways that felt comfortable and freeing. We began with a short discussion about the history and purpose of body mapping, followed by a guided creative session where participants practiced the technique themselves. The workshop was held on March 4th in the SUB Upper Lounge and offered a powerful space for reflection, expression, and connection.

Study Skills and Learning Strategies

Marissa and Hannah hosted a workshop on study skills and learning strategies on January 28th, 2025. The session covered how to adapt study techniques, explored a variety of learning strategies, and introduced participants to UVic's Strategy Library. We had 25 people register for the workshop, making it a well-attended and engaging event.



Exploring Trichotillomania (Hair-Pulling Disorder)



The SSD invited Joyce, who has lived with compulsive hair-pulling for over 20 years, to share her journey and her mission to help others understand their compulsions and define healing in their own terms. The event was offered both in person and online on February 13th, 2025, and we had around 15 attendees. It was an insightful and compassionate session that resonated deeply with participants.

Accessibility Considerations in the Job Hunt

On March 3rd, we hosted a workshop on Accessibility Considerations in the Job Hunt. The session covered key topics such as deciding whether to self-identify or self-manage disabilities in the workplace, strategies for writing effective cover letters and résumés, how to find accessible employers, and what resources are available to job seekers. This workshop was a collaboration with Niels from Co-op & Careers and was offered both online and in person.





Garden Party

Throughout the year, in collaboration with the Campus Community Garden (CCG), the SSD hosted a series of Garden Parties at the CCG garden located at 2100 McKenzie Ave. These afternoons offered a relaxed space for socializing, enjoying nature, and engaging in gentle gardening activities. We also provided snacks to keep everyone fueled and comfortable.

Garden Party Dates:

- May 9 & 23
- June 6 & 20
- August 1 & 15



Button Making

To keep our button supply stocked, and to offer a fun creative outlet, we hosted several Collage Button-Making sessions throughout the year. This drop-in program took place in the SSD space, where participants could choose from our pre-made button designs or create their own unique collages.

Button-Making Dates:

- February 8
- March 22
- April 12
- April 26
- July 3



Craft Café and Crafting & Co-working

Over the summer of 2024 and into the school year, we hosted both Craft Cafés and Crafting & Co-Working sessions. Our Craft Cafés focused on creating space for creativity, conversation, and community, with each session themed around a specific topic. We hosted five Craft Cafés during the summer of 2024.

Throughout the semesters, we offered Crafting & Co-Working every Tuesday. These sessions provided a calm, welcoming environment where students could study, craft, and connect. Materials were provided, and the space encouraged relaxation, productivity, and community building.



Peer Support Groups

For the third year in a row we have run our Peer Support Groups and they have continued to serve as an opportunity for disabled students to build community with others with similar disabilities. They give our community members a chance to share resources, foster connections, and create a network of support. We ran groups on the topics of Autism, Chronic Pain, and Mental Health, and had over 20 students attend groups either online or in-person. We attempted to run a Racialized and Disabled Group, but registration was too low to run it for this year.

Our Peer Support Groups are organized by our Co-Chair Julia Denley and we are super grateful for all the hard work they put into it!



Peer Support Group - Personal Reflections

I really enjoyed the autism peer support group. It helped me meet new autistic people and also helped me understand that I'm not alone in my struggles in university that I thought I was the only one who dealt with, but turns out that they are just specific to autism. It helped me to be able to relate to people and learn how they manage the things they struggle with and get to try those coping mechanisms myself as well.

Zoe (SSD Workstudy and Council Member)

Myself and another individual in the community co-facilitated the autism peer support groups for the 2024-25 academic year.

While the attendance was inconsistent at times (some weeks we would get a lot of people, others we would get minimal), it was always a positive experience for us facilitators and attendees. Folks felt safe to express their difficulties and feel seen by their peers with similar lived experiences. We also talked about the positives of being autistic and had moments to share about our special interests.

Through the SSD and peer support groups, the UVic autistic community continues to grow. It is super important for autistic folks to have the space to be their authentic selves and connect with others without judgement.

Kai

Seed-Saving & Tea Making

We continued our wonderful collaboration with the Campus Community Garden by hosting bi-weekly seed-saving and tea-making sessions on Thursdays. These drop-in events taught participants how to collect and preserve seeds for future planting, as well as how to create their own tea blends. Together, we supported skill-sharing and helped grow a more sustainable campus community.

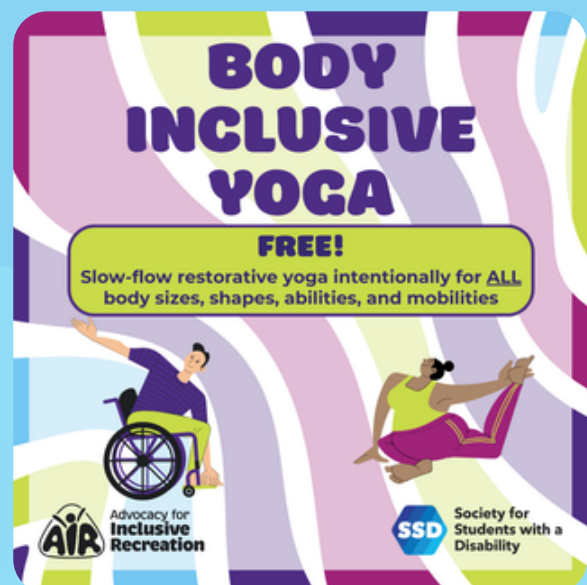


Body Doubling

Another drop-in session we continued this year was body-doubling! We held these toward the end of each semester to support students as they prepared for exams. Body doubling is all about having a companion, who helps you stay focused simply by being present. They're not there to assist directly, but their presence creates a supportive atmosphere that can make it easier to stay on task. We offered these sessions both online and in person.

Body Inclusive Yoga

AIR and the SSD launched Body-Inclusive Yoga, a class intentionally designed for people of all body sizes, shapes, abilities, and mobilities, and created as a fat-friendly, judgment-free space. Our instructor, Per, offered thoughtful modifications for participants with limited mobility and for those using mobility aids, ensuring the practice was accessible to everyone. The class was offered for free on Sunday evenings, and registration was consistently strong, with sessions regularly well attended. It was a warm, supportive environment where participants could move, stretch, and connect with their bodies in ways that felt good for them.





Puppy Playtime

For Puppy Playtime, we teamed up with PATS Pets and the UVSS to bring the most adorable pups to the Student Union Building. Each event offered a cozy mix of puppies, crafts, games, and quiet relaxation spaces; something for everyone's sensory needs. We hosted these sessions once a month from September to April, and they were always incredibly well attended! It was consistently one of our community's favourite ways to destress and take a mindful break.

Community Dinner - Personal Reflections

I really enjoyed attending the community dinners last year. I feel more confident in the kitchen preparing my own food thanks to the skills and task management steps I got to learn. I also got to learn about how to make cooking more accessible for myself, and it was really nice to see other people with different disabilities adapt cooking for themselves as well. I also enjoyed getting to make food together in a communal setting and then eat together and get to just have time with other disabled people in the Uvic community.

Zoe (SSD Workstudy and Council Member)

Accessible Cooking Class & Community Dinner

Building on the success of our cooking classes from the previous year, we were excited to continue, and expand, our Cooking Class Program. The classes were once again facilitated by Dan from the Health Food Bar, alongside our staff member Marissa, who together created a warm, hands-on, and accessible learning environment.

Last year's participant feedback highlighted how meaningful the communal aspect of the program was. Many folks shared that the opportunity to sit down together and enjoy a shared meal was just as impactful as the cooking skills themselves. In response, we expanded the program to include a dedicated community dinner component. This allowed participants not only to learn new recipes and kitchen skills, but also to build connections, share stories, and enjoy a nourishing meal in a supportive environment.

The expanded program was very well received, and we're thrilled with the sense of community it fostered. Looking ahead, we hope to continue offering these classes and community dinners in the coming year. We are also exploring additional funding opportunities to help sustain and grow this program so we can keep bringing accessible, affordable, and community-centered cooking opportunities to our students.



Advocacy & Outreach

Disability Awareness Day (DAD)

Disability Awareness Day is celebrated each year on July 14. The event is dedicated to increasing awareness, understanding, and acceptance of disabled people while highlighting ongoing challenges and promoting disability rights. This year, with the support of the UVSS, we hosted our celebration on July 12, 2024, outside the Student Union Building. The event featured treats like freezies, engaging activities, and prize giveaways. We were thrilled to welcome several partner organizations, including CanAssist, AIR, and CAL, who joined us in tabling and sharing resources. It was a vibrant, sunny day filled with community connection and learning. The event provided a valuable opportunity to promote disability awareness and foster an inclusive environment within the UVic community.

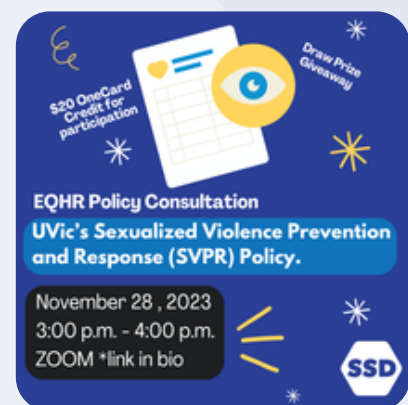


Truth & Reconciliation Day

In collaboration with the Anti-Violence Project (AVP), the University of Victoria Sustainability Project (UVSP), the Native Student Union (NSU), the Gender Empowerment Centre (GEM), the Pride Collective (PRIDE), The Students of Colour Collective (SOCC), the Campus Community Garden (CCG), and the University of Victoria Students' Society (UVSS), we released a letter to President Kevin Hall and the UVic Board of Governors. The letter called on the administration to cancel classes during the events taking place on September 27, 2024, in honour of the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. While students and instructors may choose to skip or cancel class as an act of solidarity, we believe that supporting attendance at these important events is something UVic should actively encourage, not hinder. We received a response from the University indicating that they will consider scheduling options for next year.

EQHR Policy Consultation

We held a consultation session with the UVic Equity and Human Rights Office to provide feedback on UVic's Sexualized Violence Prevention and Response Policy (GV0245). All non-staff students who attended received a \$20 ONECard credit, and the SSD hosted a prize draw giveaway as an additional thank-you for participating.



Joint Letter on Academic Accommodation Concerns

On April 16, 2025, the SSD, together with student, staff, and faculty groups, sent a letter to UVic Senior Administrators raising serious concerns about recent and proposed changes to academic accommodations. These changes are creating barriers for disabled students and placing additional strain on instructors, staff, and graduate supervisors. Equitable access to education must remain a University priority. Since Fall 2023, many CAL students have been required to write exams with OREM rather than CAL. Students report that OREM's exam rooms, regular classrooms, do not meet accommodation needs due to noise, distractions, and inadequate testing conditions. Rather than improving these spaces, the University has suggested removing OREM Accommodated Assessments entirely and shifting responsibility to instructors, supported by a Universal Extended Time (UET) approach. A 2024 pilot of UET in McKinnon Gym was widely viewed as unsuccessful, yet the model is still being considered.

UET cannot replace proper accommodated assessment spaces, nor does it reflect full implementation of Universal Design for Learning (UDL). Without structural changes, this shift risks further disadvantaging disabled students.

Our coalition outlined six key demands:

1. Immediate review and improvement of current OREM exam conditions.
2. A working group—including students, staff, and faculty—to guide decisions on accommodations.
3. Greater transparency and involvement of affected communities.
4. Better sharing of successful UDL practices.
5. More training and support for instructors implementing UDL.
6. Recognition of instructors and staff whose workloads or course formats cannot transition to UDL without continued accommodation supports.

Creating through Chaos

In collaboration with the Campus Community Garden (CCG), the Anti-Violence Project (AVP), the Gender Empowerment Centre (GEM), the Pride Collective (PRIDE), and the Students of Colour Collective (SOCC), we hosted a collage evening for trans and gender-diverse students. Supplies, drinks, and snacks were provided. In light of the disturbing rise in transphobic rhetoric across the western world, particularly surrounding the American election, our goal was to create a safe, supportive space where trans and gender-diverse students could share their feelings and express themselves through collage art. This event was held on November 26, 2024.



#A4A

What is #A4A?

#Access4All began in 2021 during the COVID-19 pandemic, sparked by a disabled, bedbound UVic student who feared they wouldn't be able to complete their degree due to the university's sudden return to in-person classes, with little to no online or hybrid options available. They were soon joined by other student advocates who recognized that this lack of flexibility affects a wide range of students: disabled students, international students, students who work part- or full-time, and those with caregiving responsibilities. Since our campaign launched in May 2021, UVic has continued to fall short in providing equitable access to education. #Access4All demands meaningful change. We advocate for accessible, inclusive learning at UVic and challenge the ableist structures that limit who can participate in higher education. We are pro in-person, pro-online, and pro-hybrid. We believe every student deserves the right to learn in the format that best fits their needs. Access isn't optional, it's a right.



This year's #A4A campaign focused on strengthening both capacity and connections. Throughout the campaign, the SSD held regular planning meetings to maintain momentum in our advocacy efforts. We also invested intentionally in building the skills and resilience of our student advocates, emphasizing self-care and strategies to prevent burnout, a persistent challenge in advocacy spaces.

In addition, we met twice with senior administration to request their support for our campaign. While those meetings were positive and supportive in tone, the concrete outcomes have been limited. We will therefore continue to push forward with renewed energy and work to build excitement for Access4All in the year ahead.

Looking ahead, our goals for the next phase of the campaign include updating our list of demands, securing a meeting with the President, and revitalizing our social media presence to strengthen engagement and visibility.

SWAG & Tabling

At the start of each semester, we order swag to help engage students and encourage them to get involved—and this year was no different. Although we did not receive the 4imprint grant we typically rely on for these items, we were still able to order stickers and provide #A4A-branded hand sanitizer to support our outreach efforts.

We also attended numerous tabling events throughout the year. With the help of volunteers, we were able to maintain a strong presence at the various Campus Kick-Off events in September and January, as well as disability-related events such as Disability Awareness Day. These opportunities allowed us to distribute swag, connect with students, and increase visibility for the SSD and our campaigns.



Individual Advocacy

We also provided individual advocacy support to several students throughout the year, offering assistance across a wide range of needs. This work remains a core part of the SSD’s mandate and continues to have meaningful, direct impact on students’ lives. Our advocacy efforts included helping students secure accessible housing, connecting them with resources to address food insecurity, and supporting them in navigating processes with the Centre for Accessible Learning (CAL). In several cases, we met directly with the CAL Director to advocate on behalf of students and ensure their accommodation needs were properly understood and addressed.

Additionally, we provided guidance in communicating with professors about accessibility-related concerns and helped students draft formal correspondence when navigating complex situations. This included writing letters in support of Human Rights Tribunal cases, ensuring students had documentation and advocacy backing as they pursued equitable treatment.

Through this individualized support, we helped students feel heard, validated, and empowered, reinforcing our commitment to creating a more accessible and inclusive campus environment.



Learning Assistance Program Bursary

Budget:
\$5,000 over the year.

Actuals:
\$1,000 in Summer 2024, \$2,000 in Fall 2024, \$2,000 in Spring 2025.

All funds were distributed by the Centre for Accessible Learning to disabled students who accessed the LAP's services.

Heather Macartney Memorial Bursary

Heather Macartney was a 3rd year student who passed away in 1994. At the time the Disabled Students Association raised funds to set up this bursary in Heather's honor.

This endowment bursary is ongoing awarded each year from the interest on the endowment fund. This means that SSD does not directly fund this bursary.

Total Awarded: \$200

Grants

BC Rehab Grant:
Received: \$1000

This grant supports the development of an arts-based program designed to showcase the creative work of disabled students at UVic. The initiative aims to celebrate disability artistry, strengthen community, and increase visibility for disabled creators on campus.

UVic Alumni Association:
Received: \$8,500

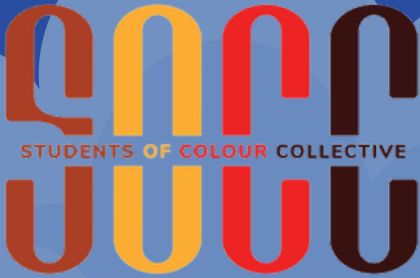
This funding is designated to establish a Wheelchair Access Program, allowing students to borrow wheelchairs on campus for any reason—whether for temporary injury, mobility support, or day-to-day accessibility needs. The program is intended to reduce barriers and enhance campus-wide accessibility.

Program Readiness and Next Steps:

At the time these grants were received, the SSD did not have the capacity or infrastructure in place to launch these programs effectively. As a result, progress was slower than anticipated. However, the current staff team is committed to revitalizing both initiatives and bringing them fully off the ground. Work is now underway to develop the operational plans, logistics, and student outreach necessary to ensure these programs become sustainable, impactful resources for our community.



2024-2025



Community Relationships

The SSD has partnered with multiple internal and external organizations this year for events, education, and collaborative efforts. We are excited to continue these partnerships as we expand our outreach capacity over the next year. As can be seen throughout this report we collaborated with many groups, organizations, and people throughout the year. The next pages are reminders of the connections that we made and maintained!



Internal Organizations

UVSS Organizations

This year, we had the privilege of partnering with a wide range of outstanding internal organizations whose dedication and creativity greatly enriched our programming. Our ongoing collaboration with the CCG continued to thrive through bi-weekly events that fostered community engagement and consistent student involvement. In addition, we worked with SOCC, GEM, and NSU to deliver a number of successful one-off events that broadened our reach and offered new opportunities for connection and learning.

We also strengthened our relationships with various advocacy and affiliate groups across campus, joining forces on several large-scale initiatives that advanced shared goals and amplified diverse voices. These collaborations not only enhanced the quality of our events but also helped build a more interconnected and supportive campus environment. We also worked directly with the Board of Directors on several special events, including the always-popular Puppy Playtime, which provided a fun, much-needed moment of stress relief for our community.

Below, we have included the names and contact information of the internal collaborator organizations so that you, too, can connect with them and access the incredible resources they offer.

Native Students Union (NSU)

- SUB B023 & FPH 126
- contact@uvicnsu.ca
- uvicnsu.ca

Anti-Violence Project (AVP)

- SUB B027
- info@antiviolenceproject.org
- antiviolenceproject.org

Gender Empowerment Centre (GEM)

- SUB B107
- gemcentre@uvss.ca
- genderempowermentcentre.ca

Campus Community Garden (CCG)

- SUB B020
- ccgarden@uvic.ca
- communitygardenuvic.weebly.com

Students of Colour Collective (SOCC)

- SUB B120 & B122
- socc@uvss.ca
- socccollective.com

University of Victoria Sustainability Project (UVSP)

- SUB B020
- sustainability@uvic.ca
- uvsp.ca

Pride Collective (PRIDE)

- SUB B010
- pride@uvic.ca
- pridecollective.ca

University of Victoria

UVic Co-op and Careers

- This year, we continued to strengthen our relationship with Co-op and Career Services through their Accessibility Coordinator, Niels De-Lamper. Niels facilitated several workshops for our community and has been an invaluable partner in our programming and outreach efforts.

Centre for Accessible Learning (CAL)

- We also continued our collaboration with CAL, supporting students through one-on-one advocacy and welcoming CAL staff to co-facilitate a workshop with us. We look forward to further strengthening this partnership and creating more opportunities to share knowledge and resources.

Learning Assistance Program (LAP)

- In their role as a Learning Strategist with LAP, our Co-Chair Hannah led a workshop on study skills and learning strategies. Moving forward, we hope to deepen our collaboration with LAP and reintroduce our drop-in learning strategy sessions to better support students' academic success.



Equity and Human Rights (EQHR)

- This year, as in previous years, we collaborated with EQHR to provide consultation on the Sexualized Violence Prevention and Response Policy. We value this ongoing relationship and anticipate continuing this important work in the coming year.

Advocacy for Inclusive Recreation (AIR)

- This year we partnered with AIR to launch our Body Inclusive Yoga program. The sessions were very well attended, and we look forward to continuing this collaboration and expanding inclusive recreation opportunities next year.

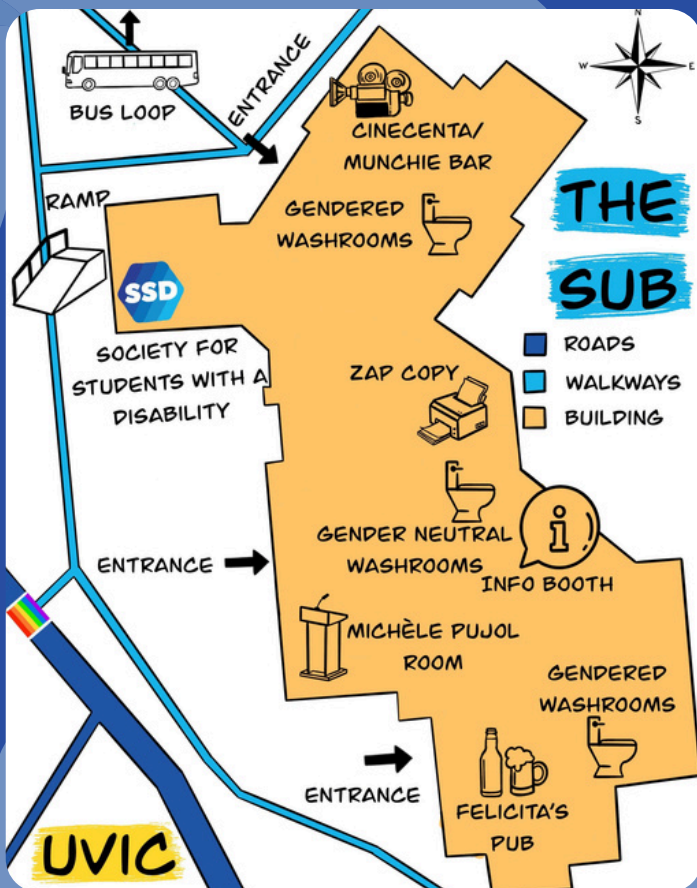
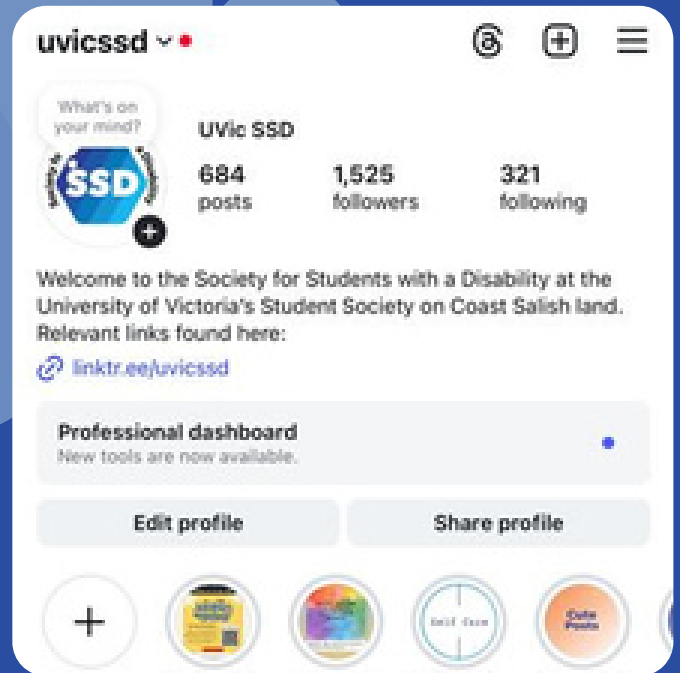
External Organizations

This year, our primary external engagement came through hosting our annual Mental Health Resource Fair. It is always a pleasure to welcome community organizations to UVic and showcase the resources they can offer to students. Looking ahead, we hope to collaborate with external organizations more frequently throughout the year to further strengthen our community connections. Although we operate primarily for UVic students with disabilities, building relationships with outside services enables us to better support our members and provide more comprehensive resources.



By the Numbers

This section highlights our key metrics from the year, including student engagement, survey responses, and a summary of our annual financials. These numbers help us understand our impact, identify areas for growth, and ensure transparency in how we operate.





Website

This year, we made ongoing efforts to keep our website updated; however, limited capacity meant that we were unable to complete all of the updates we had hoped to achieve. Despite these challenges, we ensured that the most essential components remained current such as agendas, meeting minutes, and information on available Council positions.

We also continued to maintain our highly used respite room booking system, which remains one of our most popular online pages. By prioritizing these key elements, we were able to keep students informed and ensure continued access to the supports they rely on, even during periods of reduced capacity.

Instagram & Facebook

Instagram and Facebook remain our primary platforms for connecting with students and sharing updates. Last year, we set a goal of reaching 1,000 Instagram followers, and this year we surpassed it—growing our audience to 1,500 followers. This growth reflects our ongoing commitment to building community and increasing visibility for our work.

Our posts continue to reach a wide audience through both paid advertisements and organic engagement. We also exceeded our previous record for most engagement on a post: our top individual post this year received 125 likes, and our joint post about OREM accommodations reached an outstanding 526 likes, making it our most successful post to date.

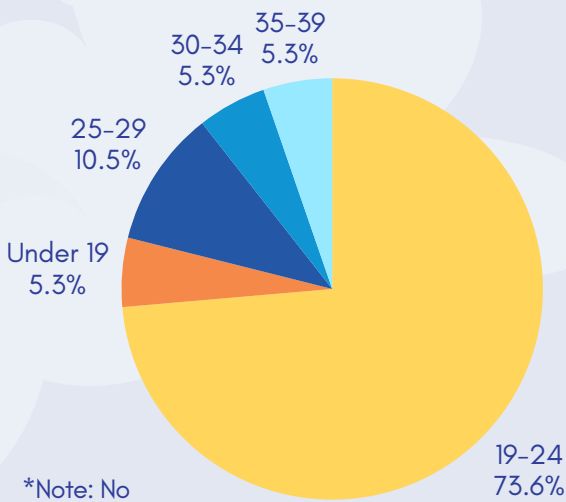
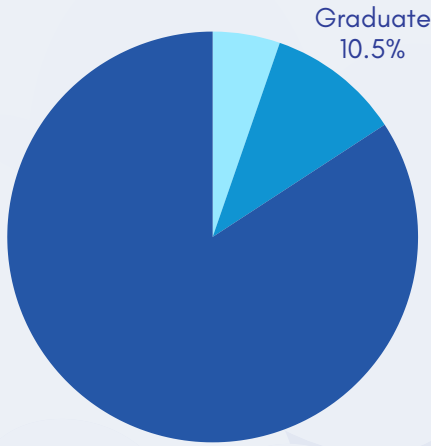
Although engagement on Facebook remains relatively low, we continue to cross-post from Instagram to ensure that members of our community who rely on Facebook still receive updates and feel included in our outreach efforts.



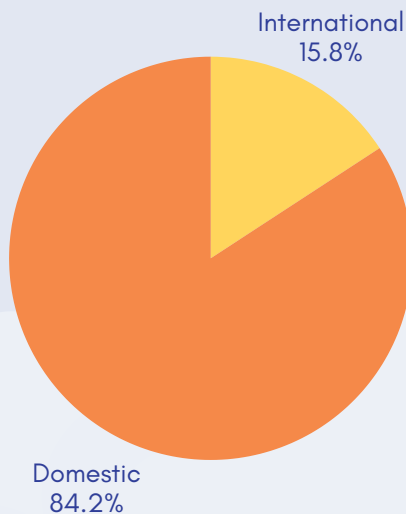
Demographics

2024-2025

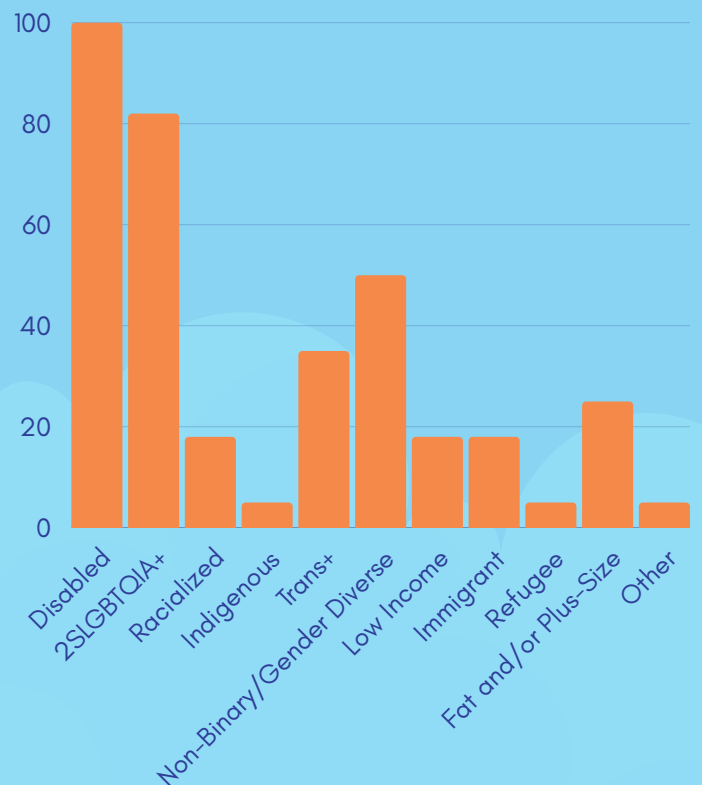
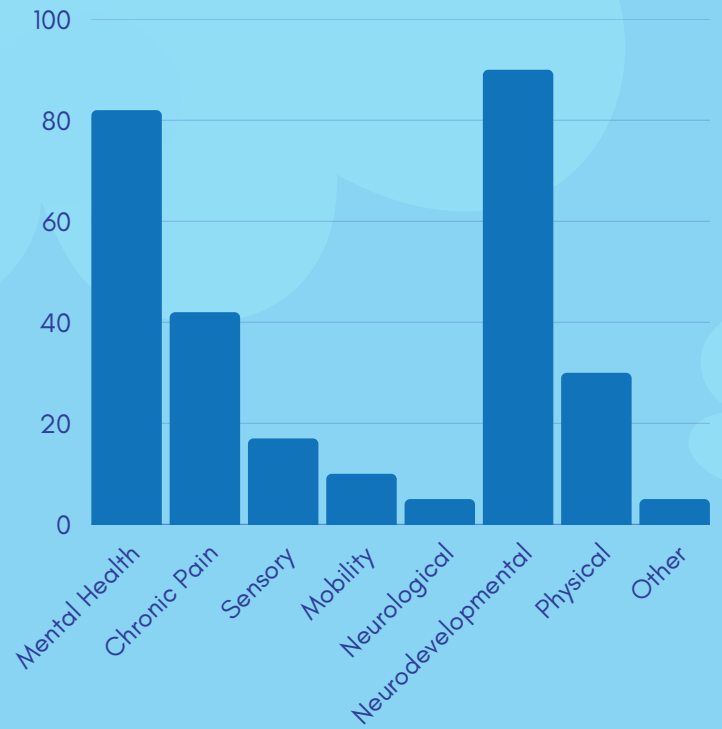
Students Status



*Note: No responses for 40 or older



Disability & Intersectionality



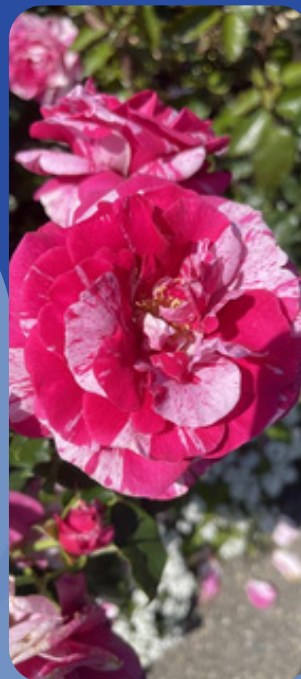


Community Building

As shown in the previous page, the majority of our students are undergraduate students between the ages of 19 and 24, most commonly identifying as having mental health or neurodevelopmental disabilities, and many identifying as 2SLGBTQIA+. These demographic insights help us understand not only who we are currently reaching, but also which communities are underrepresented in our events, workshops, programs, and broader community spaces.

A key priority moving forward is to strengthen our outreach to racialized and Indigenous students. The disability community has historically been predominantly white, and it is essential for us to actively create inclusive spaces for racialized people who have been excluded from disability studies, disability communities, and disability representation. Our goal is to continue expanding and diversifying our community by intentionally collaborating with equity-seeking groups, building culturally informed programming, and inviting students into spaces where they are seen, supported, and valued.

The SSD has also continued to experience an increase in the use of our services. More students are accessing our space, and bookings for the respite room have grown steadily. We are encouraged by this consistent rise in engagement and hope to see this positive trend continue into the next fiscal year.





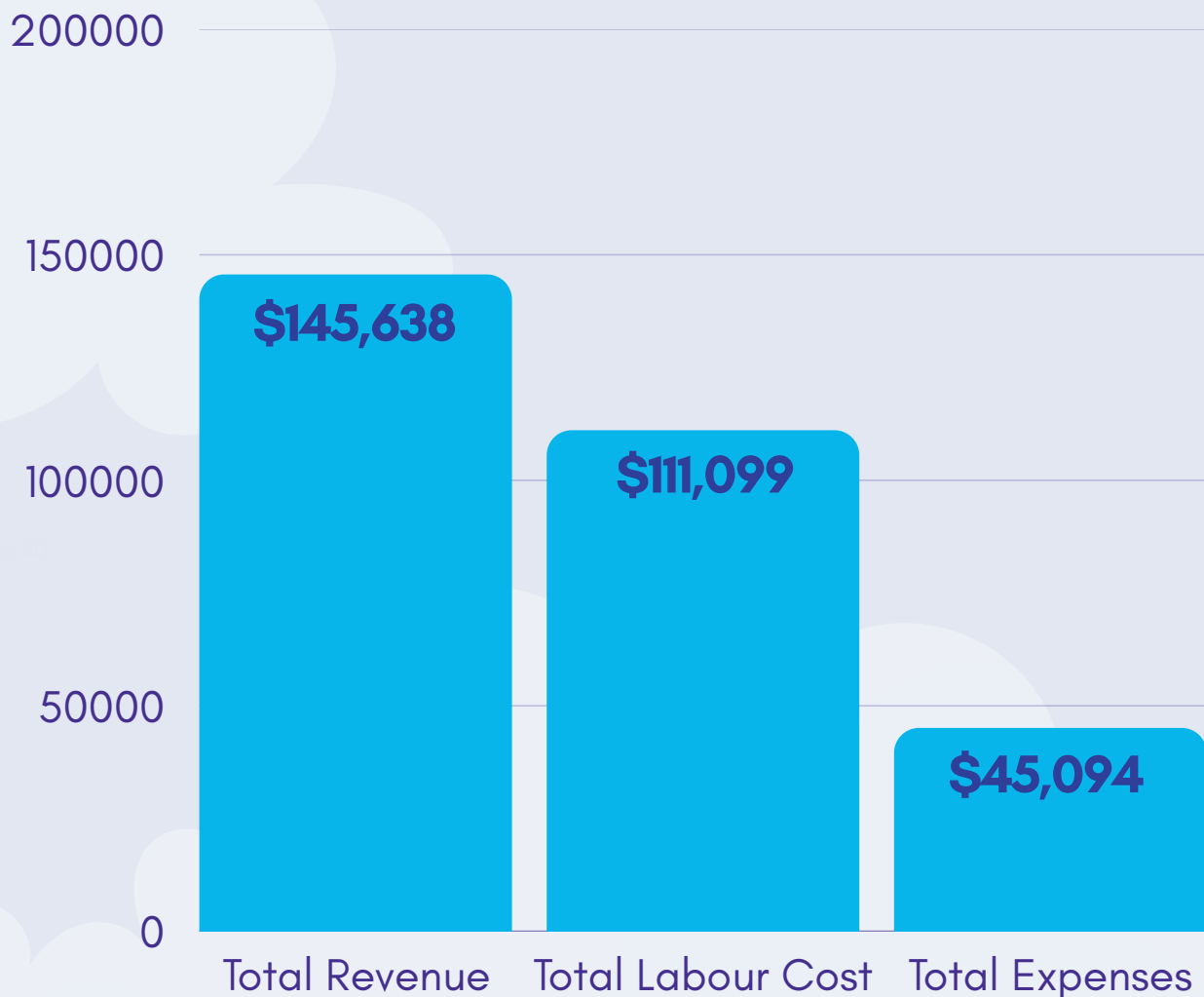
Financials

2024-2025

Overview

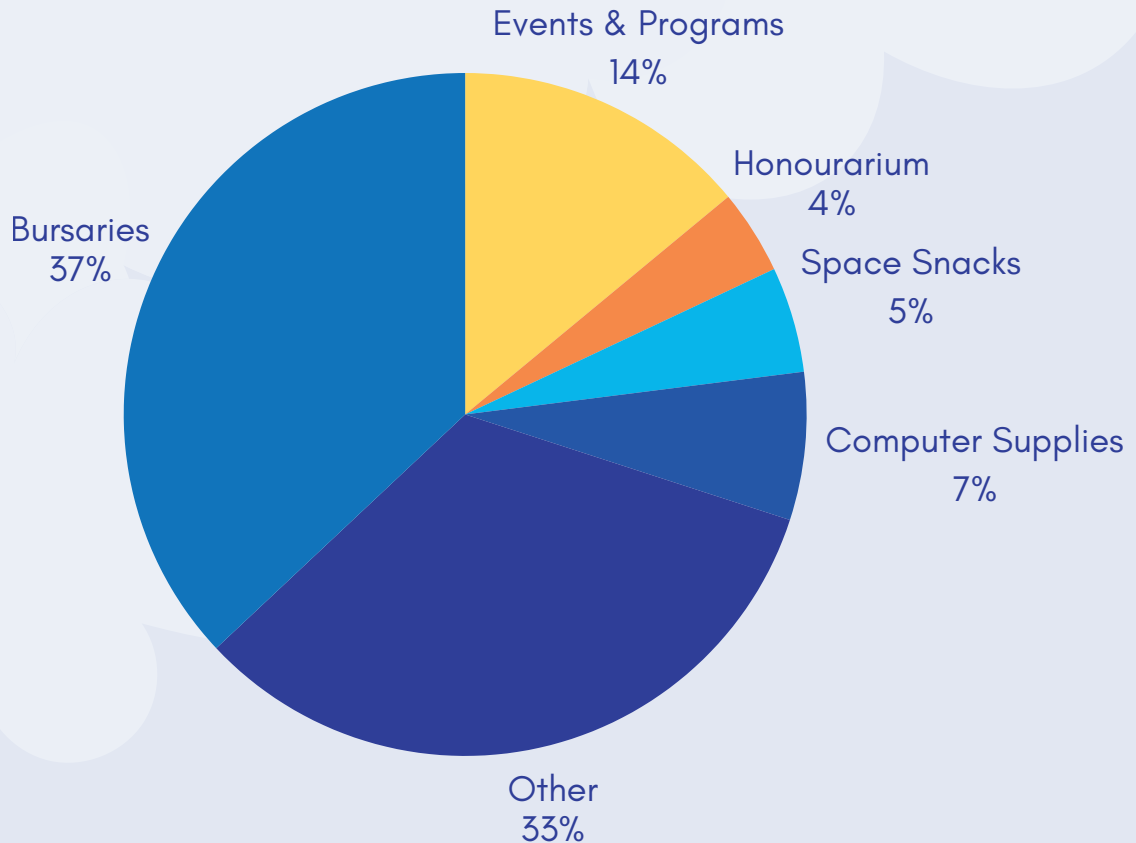
The bar graph below illustrates SSD's total revenue, labour costs, and overall expenses for the 2024-2025 fiscal year (May 2024 to April 2025). While we drew \$10,555 from our trust this year, this amount is substantially lower than the originally budgeted deficit of \$36,439.66. Looking ahead, we plan to pursue additional grant opportunities to help sustain and expand the high-quality events and services we offer to our community.

We have also planned to go from three staff members down to two so we can have lower labour costs as they currently take up 76% of our budget.



Expenses Breakdown

The below pie chart details our spending outside of our labour costs.



Bursaries:

This bursary supports CAL in providing students with affordable tutoring and learning strategy services. The expense appears high this year because it includes both the current and previous year's bursary payments. In future years, this line item will represent a much smaller share of our budget.

Events & Programs:

One off events ran by council and long term programs like community dinner and cooking classes.

Other:

This includes things like telephone, advertising, zap charges, IT programs, equipment maintenance, operational fees, etc.

Honourarium:

This expense supports guest speakers for our workshops and events, as well as our peer support group facilitators.

Space Snacks:

The cost of food for the lounge and respite room. This funding has always been a priority for us at the SSD.

Computer Supplies:

This expense line is high this year as we had to replace the Mac computer and sit stand desk in our space. In future years this line will hopefully not be as high.



Challenges

2024-2025

Over the past several years, and continuing into this year, our most significant challenge has been maintaining adequate staff capacity. Periods of understaffing, combined with several unexpected staff transitions, required us to make emergency hires to ensure continuity of our programs and daily operations. While these rapid adjustments were essential, they made it difficult to maintain consistency and placed additional pressure on our existing team.

This year, we were fortunate to receive an increase of 120 additional work-study hours. This support made a meaningful difference in our ability to manage workloads and maintain service levels, and we deeply appreciate the dedication and contributions of our work-study team.

In addition to staff capacity, sustaining council capacity has also been an ongoing challenge. Our council members are incredibly hardworking students who balance many competing priorities, and we recognize the demands on their time. Moving forward, we are committed to exploring ways to make council participation more rewarding, engaging, and accessible. Our goal is to encourage stronger attendance, active involvement in meetings, and consistent participation in votes that shape the important motions and future direction of the SSD.

Although our events were more well-attended than in previous years, increasing overall participation remains an ongoing challenge. We know there is still significant potential to reach more of our community, and improving event accessibility and visibility continues to be a priority for us. In the coming year, we aim to strengthen our outreach by utilizing more hybrid event models, offering convenient drop-in formats, implementing more targeted and strategic promotion, and incorporating participant feedback into event design. We believe these approaches will help us create more engaging experiences and better meet the diverse needs of our members.



Future Outlook

Looking ahead, we have many exciting plans for the coming year. Guided by insights from our community survey, along with valuable input from staff and council, we have developed a workplan that prioritizes several key goals.

Our community expressed strong interest in more accessible, drop-in style spaces rather than pre-registered events. In response, we plan to focus on programming that aligns with community needs, including arts-based activities, opportunities for peer connection, and more informal, low-barrier gatherings.

We also aim to properly relaunch #A4A and begin actively advancing our demands to the university in a more coordinated and strategic way. Given our constrained budget, we will be prioritizing grant applications this year to support a more robust event schedule and develop a grant-enhanced budget that allows us to better serve our members. Strengthening community partnerships and hosting more collaborative events will also be central to our approach.

Our programming goal is to host one major event and one workshop each month, supplemented with additional drop-in or low-cost activities in between. We also plan to increase our campus presence by tabling more frequently and engaging with students directly. In addition, we are committed to continuing our peer-support groups and ensuring they remain a reliable, welcoming resource for our community.



Acknowledgements

A heartfelt thank-you to everyone who supported me in creating this annual report. As this is my first report as Office Coordinator, I am deeply grateful to our staff, council, and work-study team for taking on additional responsibilities so that I could complete this project. Joining the SSD near the end of the year presented its challenges, and your encouragement and assistance meant so much.

Thank you to Valentine, Kai, Zoe, Julia, Hannah, and Allie for your contributions and editing support.

I would also like to extend my appreciation to all our partners and collaborators this year, as well as to our wonderful community for their ongoing support as we continue to grow the SSD. We are truly grateful for each and every one of you.

With many thanks,
Bella Jacobs
Office Coordinator

Contact Us



Society for Students with a Disability
3800 Finnerty Road
Student Union Building Room B111
Victoria, BC V8W 2Y2



General Email
uvicssd@uvic.ca



SSD Office (landline)
250-472-5397



Instagram
[@uvicssd](https://www.instagram.com/uvicssd)