GSS Graduate Representative Council

Meeting Minutes

January 13, 2009, 5pm

Present:
Melissa Ray, Child & Youth Care
James Freeman, Sociology
Gianmarco Biasone, Political Science
Lauren Chance, Psychology
Gholam Reza Emad, Curriculum & Instruction
Yifan Wang, Pacific & Asian Studies
Clay Lindsay, Physics & Astronomy
Kathleen Perkin, Anthropology
Adrienne Canning, Philosophy
Ashley Cumming, Music
Jennifer Flower, Social Work
Becky Littlechilds, Greek & Roman Studies
Laura Duncanson, Geography
Jon Chui, Chemistry
Andrea Porritt, Art History
Megan Kirk, EDPE
Kelsie Laing, CUPE 4163
Annie Bourbonnais, Earth & Ocean Sciences

Thomas Chisholm, Visual Arts
Sara Duncan, Environmental Studies
Colleen Allen, Germanic & Slavic Studies
Nick Fitterer, Nursing
Elly Carlson, Anthropology
Alison DuBols, Interdisciplinary
Eric Ellis, Business Administration
Agata Stypka, Educational Psychology & Leadership Studies
Emily Pearson, Hispanic & Italian Studies
Ashleigh Weeden, Public Administration
Nicole O’Byrne, Chair
Takuto Shiota, Director of Finance
Joe Koltthammer, Director of Communications
Brandy Sistilli, Director of Services
Jing Qian, Director of Student Affairs
Stacy Chappel, Executive Director (ex-officio)

Regrets:
Josh Johnston, History
Emma Sharkey, Dispute Resolution
Jennifer Wong, Computer Science
Yan Cao, Economics
Arunwadi “Nui” Leewananthawet, Theatre
Eric Anderson, History in Art
Amanda Cruise, French

1. Call to order

The meeting was called to order at 5:10 pm with O’Byrne in the chair.

2. Approval of agenda
   M/S Shiota/Qian
Agenda approved with addition of Human Rights Committee representative election.

CARRIED

3. **Approval of minutes from last meeting**
   M/S Cumming/Chui
   Minutes from November 25, 2008 GRC approved with corrections.
   CARRIED

4. **Standing items**
   a) Executive Board reports

   Student Affairs: Qian referred to written report. Focus was on representation campaign, where progress has been made and orientation, which happened yesterday. About 50 people came to the social.

   Finance: Shiota referred to written report. Working on budget, work on referendum question finance issue.

   Communications: Kolthammer referred to written reports. Noted committee to redesign bulletin, webpage, and source has been meeting.

   O’Byrne asked when Kolthammer expected a final product.

   Kolthammer said he would expect it to be done in March and would have a progress report at the next January Graduate Representative Council meeting.

   Services: Sistili referred to written report. Noted Good Food Box program won’t be operational this semester as she still hasn’t heard back from them. She noted she is following up with Gayle Gorril, VP Finance about the office space discussion started at the last meeting with the President and Senior Administration and concerns raised at the same meeting about the sustainability policy.

   b) Departmental Reports
   Nursing: Fitterer reported he had introduced himself to the department.

   Greek and Roman Studies: Littlechilds reported grad students in permanent office now, which is awesome! Dept has helped obtain needed supplies.

   Psychology: Chance reported continuing concern is issue of transfer fees from MA to PhD

   Child & Youth Care: Ray reports only current issue is bookstore didn’t order enough books as more people registered for classes than expected.
Social Work: Flower reported social work had the same problems with the bookstore ordering. HSD and Indigenous Faculty Caucus are putting on a graduate student caucus. Call for abstracts is Feb 2. Please contact her for info.

Geography: Duncanson reported there is a new dept chair in Fall so transition is ongoing right now. Department review of curriculum ongoing, new courses are being tried out.

SEOS: Bourbonnais reported lots of activities organized—including guest speakers, workshops. In regards to the new building all issues with keys are resolved. She will apply for dept grant. Department is having twice weekly coffee break.

Philosophy: Canning reported the chair search is ongoing, and the department is interviewing for new faculty, colloquiaums and meeting with candidates ongoing. Office space issue from last meeting now resolved (keys, desks… seeking computer/printer). Student representation: she met with grad advisor, and delivered letter. He suggested getting faculty on board instead of petitioning. What implications does grad student enrollment in the faculty of graduate studies have on representation?

O’Byrne reported Grad Executive Committee met and she was in the meeting to speak to representation, and from all the discussion, it seems there is a gap between the departments and what kind of representation each dept has, so this seems to be in discussion right now. Her presentation was tabled to next GEC meeting.

Canning said reps in dept will be interested to see outcome of GEC meeting.

O’Byrne says she can see changes are coming.

Anthropology: Perkin reported the dept office moved down hall.

Carlson reported the Anthropology program is now through all levels within university—changes are passed at the University approval, now at the BC ministry level.

Business Administration: Ellis reported the regular rep not here. Very busy. Just had clothing line release. New logo ideas are being sought.

Interdisciplinary Studies: Dubois said this is her first meeting. She reported she sent out introductory email to all interdisciplinary students, there is lots of confusion and isolation for interdisciplinary studies. The faculty is organizing a social for INTD students in spring.
History in Art: Porritt reported there will be student run conference 21-24th Jan called Visual Impetus. Eric has been successful in getting guaranteed seat for graduate students in History in Art.

Public Administration: Weeden introduced herself and said the normal MPA rep is in Ottawa on co-op and due to co-op, 2/3 of the MPA class is across country. Director of MPA is up for renewal. Committees on curriculum and planning are getting spicy!

Germanic & Slavic Studies: Allen had nothing to report.

Educational Psychology and Leadership Studies: Stypka reported all moving smoothly, get together Friday.

Environmental Studies: Duncan had nothing big to report. Lots of students doing work on marine work, are out in field.

Physics & Astronomy: Lindsay reported there is a solid scheme for transfer from MA to PHD with clear timeline and requirements, exam structure, grade requirements.

Visual Arts: Chisholm reported Visual Arts has selected a chair and things are going smoothly now. A concern is there is pressure on dept to conform to a definition of human subject research that doesn’t necessarily fit with visual arts. The problem is students may be forced to apply for human research ethics to use figure model. Doesn’t make sense for what they are doing.

Chisholm said it doesn’t seem to be circulated, doesn’t have a copy right now. Will ask for a copy. Faculty seems opposed—issue seems to come from the Tricouncil granting agencies requirements.

O’Byrne asked Chisholm to send her a copy of the proposal.

CUPE 4163: Laing introduced herself as the new CUPE rep! Right now CUPE is getting ready for 2010 bargaining phase. Multiple representatives from all three CUPE units are going to a large conference for all of BC CUPE dealing with bargaining in February. CUPE is surveying members about what they seek for bargaining.

O’Byrne asked for an update on CUPE 3903 for the next meeting.

Chemistry: Chui reports the department has a new chair and he is very happy because his boss is no longer the chair! If you are in a science and are a woman, science venture is looking for speakers on women and science for upcoming events.
Pacific and Asian Studies: Wang reports the department had meeting Friday, no pressing issues. There is a new position for teaching Chinese language.

Music: Cumming says Music has exciting news. Over the last several years had problems with facility and tools and old pianos. 80% of pianos were listed in poor condition. Now UVIC is receiving 64 brand new Steinway pianos—1st Canadian all-Steinway school, and one of only 79 such schools in the world. Very lucky! Steinway is flying potential donors to New York! Profs actually wept with joy!

Curriculum & Instruction Reza reported all grad students in department had to write progress report for first time, signed by supervisor. Seems this was an effort to reduce workload on graduate secretary who had previously assisted with progress tracking.

Exercise Science Physical Health and Education: Kirk reported there is more space in McKinnon basement for grad students. Success for students with conference abstracts being accepted nationally and provincially. In faculty can only do PhD through special arrangement. Department head has indicated will look at defining a PhD but students have not heard back on progress. Athletics is looking to build new athletics facility and this has met mixed reviews from grad students and is happy to speak to the issue.

O’Byrne reported she met with Clint Hamilton and refused to put a referendum forward to increase $55, declined. Due to grad students already pay 3 fee semesters which puts grad students almost at the rate they seek annually from undergraduates.

Kirk said main issue for her is McKinnon building is one of the worst on campus in terms of accessibility for students with a disability. Health research in facility regarding disabled athletes is very good and needs support.

O’Byrne noted there is an option of grad students petitioning to force a referendum.

Canning asked whether the additional fees to use the weight room and aerobics would change as additional fees after already paying the Athletics Fee was an issue.

Kirk didn’t know if the referendum would mean lowering the additional fees.

O’Byrne suggested Kirk, Chappel and O’Byrne meet to discuss issue of supporting the research and education departments in phys ed who shouldn’t need to pass a student referendum to get a facility.
Sociology: Freeman reported the Sociology course union meeting is Thursday. Faculty meeting was held but there was no business. Move is almost done, new offices continuing to be installed, looked good.

Political Science: Biasone mentioned last year External Review suggested not have the 1 year stream as a stand alone, instead offer 2 streams (2 yr or 1 year). Department didn’t like and issued official response. Grad students are also seeking a means to respond officially.

b) Committee reports

Search Committee for President: Shiota noted he will be the grad student representative on the committee. If anyone has opinions or thoughts about the president’s role please email him at gssfinan@uvic.ca.

Services Committee: Sistili reported work studies are on the committee, but grad reps didn’t have time until January. Next meeting is this week.

**TASK** Chappel to send email list for GRC members of Services Committee.

VP Research search committee: O’Byrne reported new VP research hiring is ongoing.

Senate Committee on Planning: Wang reported on Dec 10 the committee discussed professor specialization in teaching French immersion, certificate in communication and education, graduate specialization in middle years language and literacy, changes to Anthropology, a minor in climate change. Most proposals have passed.

5. **New Business**

a. Guest presentation on increase in fees to transfer from MA to PhD

Chace reported fees changed for students transferring mid program from MA to PhD.

Before, students filled out re-registration form, paid $25, moved to new program.

Now it is $100, $125 for international, need to reapply for graduate school, even though you still have your GRE and all other applications from your initial application 1 year previous, on file with UVic.

A student in dept is working on figuring out a reason for the fee increase, but to date hasn’t found a justification. All they have been told is the increase is approved by the BoG. They have been told the increase represents actual cost and say the fee is comparable to other schools.
Chappel asked whether students in Chace’s department are accepted with expectation of PhD.

Chace confirmed this is how students are invited. An MA students’ committee asks you to apply as a standard stage.

Chace said students aren’t seriously considered for admission to Anthropology if they are only interested in an MA program. The fee change is for every dept. But perhaps the admission system is only of consequence in the Anthropology situation.

**TASK** O’Byrne referred the issue to student affairs committee to come back with a recommendation.

b. **Student Affairs report**
Josh referred to report of Student Affairs Committee dated January 8, 2009.

Johnston reported the committee felt it would be wise to hold a referendum on raising the GSS operating fee by $5. This proposal was not taken lightly. Met twice, referred to a briefing prepared by Chappel and Shiota.

New moneys would be allocated at the direction of the membership.

Noted issue of contingency fund reduced due to expansion.

O’Byrne reported that over the last year of meetings, seems that organization is running on band-aid solution mode. A lot of executive time gets spent balancing the books. There has not been a significant increase in fees for a decade. Left the CFS, not longer pay the $7.60—resulted in fee being lowered. Students would still be paying less than last year as increase would only be $5.00 per semester.

Not having a contingency fund is very problematic, no room for risks.

Nicole read the motion:

**Moved by the Student Affairs Committee**

`WHEREAS` the GSS as an organization is facing serious cutbacks to member services if there is no increase in student fees;

`WHEREAS` there has been no increase to the GSS membership dues beyond the Consumer Price Index is more than ten years and this small increase has not offset increased operating costs such as staff salaries;
WHEREAS the GSS membership has seen a decrease in the amount of its total student fees in the amount of $7.65/semester ($22.95) per year due to the defederation from the Canadian Federation of Students and the proposed increase will still result in the GSS members paying less fees ($7.95 less) than they did during the 2007-2008 academic year;

WHEREAS it has been recommended by the external auditor (Barry Obara of Obara, Lee & Co.) that a non-profit organization such as the GSS should have in reserve a contingency of approximately 10% of its operating budget and that the GSS currently has no funds put aside for this purpose (the operating budget is over $250,000 so there should be a $25,000 contingency fund in place);

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the following referendum question be put to the GSS membership as soon as possible –

Are you in favour of a $5.00 increase per semester to the GSS membership fee?

Shiota asked for clarification of process to set referendum question.

O’Byrne referred to Bylaws. 2/3 vote of GRC can cause a referendum to be held.

Bylaws state the referendum question is set by the Executive board when the GSS receives a petition, but doesn’t specify for cases where GRC calls referendum.

Shiota advocated having options for fee increases at different levels (such as $2.50 to keep things as they are and $5 to improve) such as in the case of tiered Health and Dental referenda.

O’Byrne suggested the question was not as clear when tiered.

Shiota felt an option of $2.50 or $5.00 should be given.

Biasone thought $5 was the best financial situation for the GSS. $2.50 is not a great option for GSS for long term.

Bourbonnais asked whether an increase of 5$ will go only to contingency or will it improve services.

O’Byrne says this is determined by the budget vote at the SGM in March.

Bourbonnais suggested the GSS should avoid holding annual fee increases, and avoid all the work of doing the referenda. If people have choice didn’t think everyone would choose the $2.50.
Johnston thought it was simpler to ask one amount. Role of GSS reps to go to departments and explain the rationale.

Sistili raised concerns about wording the question at GRC, more efficient at exec once issue determined. Health and dental has had good results with tiered referenda. Sistili noted most GSS funds are doing fine, not all are in dire situation, only the operating had a deficit, but overall there was no deficit.

Qian said he see this from three points. The GRC is deciding whether to put question to students, not deciding what students will say. This is a good time to ask as the student fees just went down due to CFS referendum. A referendum is good for organizational sustainability: this year we have achieved a lot, have all worked more than hours paid to executive. For future, need to consider how to grow, guarantee more time to contribute to events and campaigns. Consider paying grad reps? Want to create a community.

Weeden said she thought the wording is a problem. In MPA students not as likely to vote for $5 if not going to do something for them. Would be careful not to ask for too much. She noted some program are not on campus as much, and can’t use as many of the on campus services.

O’Byrne this kind of conundrum is what causes the GSS not to move forward with referendum.

Chui asked if, when the GSS defederate from the CFS, there were services left we need to spend our own money.

Chappel reported that the handbook cost the GSS slightly more, which was offset with better advertising sales this year. There might be a desire, probably some years more than others, to invest more in lobby campaigns also.

Allen said if the GSS decide to hold a referendum, should include fact savings were made by leaving the CFS.

Gianmarco argued comparison with dental plan is not a fair comparison as it affects students health so it is not surprised students are willing to pay more for it. GSS funds may not be seen as directly impacted. Event interest—perhaps the events being planned are not as interesting, could do more to attract our membership.

Lindsay suggested it is important to consider likelihood will get yes with a tiered option. He noted there was not support at the last meeting for paying grad reps an honorarium.

O’Byrne clarified that paying grad reps was not on table.
Lindsay noted it is not as hard to convince GRC members about the need to increase a fee for the GSS, but options may help with general students. Down the road a new referendum would likely be successful.

Canning said the referendum should note the allocation of the fees is decided by the members at the AGM.

Chui noted he strongly object to limited options on the ballot if the sole purpose is to make it more likely to pass at the higher amount. Is there an option to ask for a maximum of five dollars?

Kolthammer: recommended tabling to the next meeting.

Weeden suggested given amount of debate at GRC, should give options to members.

**MOVED MOTION by ???.**

to change question to offer students the option of $2.50 or $5

O’Byrne said she would carry on with the speaker list first.

Lindsay suggested it is far more powerful to bring option of “up to $5”.

Maximum of $5 increase in fees with final amount

**MOVED Shiota**

Change the motion to a referendum asking students to raise fees to a maximum of $5 with the final amount determined by the budget approved.

O’Byrne asked Shiota to draft language for the next meeting.

c. **Apostrophe**

Chappel reported approval of changes to bylaws had been delayed as they were submitted with the name of the GSS correctly punctuated, and it turns out our legal name is: University of Victoria Graduate Student’s Society, meaning we represent only one grad student.

With permission of the GRC, the first 5 minutes of the February Grad Rep Council will be a Special General Meeting to correct the apostrophe.

d. **Human rights committee**

O’Byrne reported the current rep to the Human Rights Committee had resigned and the GSS needs a new representative

**M/S Blasone/Sistilli**
Elly Carlson is elected the GSS representative to the Human Rights Committee.

**CARRIED**

O’Byrne noted an elections calendar was circulated with the agenda and noted the GSS will elect electoral officer at the next Grad Rep Council meeting.

6. **6. Other Business**

O’Byrne announced there is an ongoing series of talks about ethics in governance series being held Wednesdays in conjunction with ACCESS UVIC.

Approved, GSS Chair ___________________________________________
Approved, GSS Executive Director

SC/sc
File: 2009-01-13 GRC Minutes