UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA GRADUATE STUDENTS' SOCIETY

EXECUTIVE BOARD

MEMBER REPORT TO GRADUATE REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL

From: Jason Stewart Walters, Director of Student Affairs

To: Graduate Representative Council

Date: 15 October 2013

TIME PERIOD COVERED IN THE REPORT

APRIL 1 - OCT 15 2013

INTRODUCTION

Summary of most important work done, what Grad Council should be aware of, and contents of report.

BILL C-35

Discussion:

Bill C-35 is a federal law intended to eliminate the problem of 'crooked consultants' in Canada. Unfortunately the way it was written, academic workers are currently considered to be affected by these rules as well. Universities across campus were required to send workers through a long training process, hire outside consultants or lawyers, or stop offering immigration help to students. Through my connections in the UVic international office, I learned that UVic decided to stop offering the service, which will have a huge impact on current and future students as well as likely affecting enrollment and the budget of the University.

Actions:

I immediately took the issue to the Board, which has been in total support of the cause to get the University to make some arrangements to still provide the service. I have discussed the issue with the Dean, and an Associate Dean and tried to setup a meeting with the AVP International, but have been unsuccessful thus far. However, as a result of Colleen Clement's connections with CFUV, both the AVP International and myself were interviewed for one of the ongoing programs and a blog post was also written. I have kept continuous contact with the International Office to get updates on the issue from their perspective. In addition, I have been in discussions with the GSS at SFU and we are working toward communicating with an MP regarding this issue to try to push for change. I have also spoken with the UVic
UVSS to partner on the issue. Depending on the results of our various activities, it may also be possible to involve the full force of the Association of British Columbia Schools.

Stacy Chappel has been working on the legal side of the issue and identified a lawyer that would be available to provide support for a reduced fee. The Board voted to move forward with a Legal Clinic Day for International Graduate Students following the Annual Pancake Breakfast. We also voted to have Stacy pursue a legal opinion to determine if we also fall under this ruling as GSS Staff and Board Members. If so, we can formally challenge the interpretation.

Time:
10 hours

RESEARCH ASSISTANTS

Discussion:

The status of Research Assistants on the UVic campus is not well understood by either the administration or the students. RAs are typically not considered employees of the University, but rather those of the professor, despite the fact that they are paid through the University. Issues have arisen for students lately such as not having the option for direct deposit even when away for research, liability and responsibility for employees' rights, professors making financial promises and then withdrawing them, students receiving pay late or not at all, etc. In addition, even though even professors on campus are moving toward unionization, this has not been possible for RAs.

Actions:

Both Stacy and myself have been gathering information from students that have been impacted by these various issues. We have both met with the Dean and will continue to press for a formal University policy with respect to RAs. In addition, Stacy has been seeking a legal opinion on the matter and the Board has been in support. I have also been discussing the issue with GSS groups at other Canadian universities and the issue is handled differently in other provinces. I am interested to gain the support of the Association of British Columbia Schools to get MLAs to support a BC-wide resolution on the matter.

Time:
6 hours

Discussion:

DEPARTMENT FUNDING CUTS
Department funding cuts was one of the Action Plan items for this year. This has been a difficult topic to tackle. The University is following the instructions of the Provincial Government, as it always has with respect to enrollment and budget. This is likely to need to be worked through the Minister of Advanced Education and other MLAs.

Actions:

I hosted an action plan meeting, and we basically came to the above conclusions. I also spoke with the Dean to further my understanding of how money is distributed both through the FGS and for TAs. In addition, several of us attended a University Budget Meeting to hear about the plan going forward. As this is a provincial issue that affects the other universities, I am interested to work with the Association of British Columbia Schools to advance the budget priority of post-secondary education among the Provincial Government. From a UVic perspective, we will continue to try to be involved in decisions that will affect the quality of education that graduate students receive and their well-being on campus.

Time:

6 hours

COORDINATION WITH OTHER STUDENT UNIONS

Discussion:

As budget cuts and other issues have begun to impact students across the province, the universities have begun to organize to invoke power in numbers. This has led to the creation of the Association of British Columbia Schools, which is in the process of being registered as an official society. The Board is currently in the process of reviewing the final constitution and bylaws for a vote to recommend joining or not to our AGM.

In addition, UBC hosted the second Student Union Development Summit in recent years, which provided the opportunity to discuss lessons-learned and hear about what other student unions are doing across Canada.

Actions:

I attended the SUDS event and have had several conversations regarding the ABCS with other student unions. I am in favor of further collaboration and would like to promote it as an opportunity to learn from other organizations, as well as join together to resolve larger issues of common interest.

Time:

40 hours
MEETINGS ATTENDED

GSS MEETINGS

Exec Board Meeting (11 April, 17 April, 1 May, 15 May, 19 June, 3 July, 17 July, 1 August, 15 August, 4 September, 18 September, 2 October) - 2 hours each

GSS Exec / Student Affairs (July 29) - 1 hour

GSS Exec / Dean of Graduate Studies (September?) - 2 hours

GSS Exec / President of UVic (July 17) - 1 hour

GSS Exec / University Mental Health Advisement (April?) - 1 hour

GSS Orientations (September) - 2 hours

Action Plan Meeting (8 August) - 2 hours

GSS Social Events - Canoe Trip, Wednesday Coffee, Trivia Night - 1 hour/week

EXTERNAL MEETINGS

UVic Global Community Advisory Council (August - Present) 1 hour per week

Distance Education Members Committee (October) - 1 hour

Senate Committee on Planning (not attended yet)

Ombudsperson Committee (not attended yet)

UVic One Card Meeting - (May?) 1 hour

Student Union Development Summit (8-11 August) - 35 hours

BC University/College Health Services Forum (12-13 June) - 20 hours

International Student Welcome (September) 3 hours

Graduate Student Welcome - (September) 3 hours

BC Open Forum on Post-Secondary Education - (4-5 April) - 12 hours

Meetings With SFU GSS, 4 April and 12 June - 6 hours

Meetings With Students (Variable) - 1 hour per month (not counting other activities)

GSS Staff/Exec events (June 22 and other) - 6 hours

International Commons Meetings (April - June) - 6 hours

University Budget Presentation (12 September) - 1.5 hours

Email Review and Response - 1 hour per week
Initial Orientation - 5 hours

**TIME SUMMARY**

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EXECUTIVE BOARD

MEMBER REPORT TO GRADUATE REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL

From: Jason Stewart Walters, Director of Student Affairs

To: Graduate Representative Council

Date: 26 November 2013

15 OCTOBER - 26 NOVEMBER 2013

INTRODUCTION

The primary duties of this position include serving as an advocate for and supporting the well-being of graduate students, external affairs, and Primary activities since the beginning of the 2013-2014 term are discussed below.

BILL C-35

Discussion:

Bill C-35 is a federal law intended to eliminate the problem of 'crooked consultants' in Canada. Unfortunately the way it was written, academic workers are currently considered to be affected by these rules as well. Universities across campus were required to send workers through a long training process, hire outside consultants or lawyers, or stop offering immigration help to students. Through my connections in the UVic international office, I learned that UVic decided to stop offering the service, which will have a huge impact on current and future students as well as likely affecting enrollment and the budget of the University.

Actions:

I immediately took the issue to the Board, which has been in total support of the cause to get the University to make some arrangements to still provide the service. I have discussed the issue with the Dean, and an Associate Dean and tried to setup a meeting with the AVP International, but have been unsuccessful thus far. However, as a result of Colleen Clement’s connections with CFUV, both the AVP International and myself were interviewed for one of the ongoing programs and a blog post was also written. I have kept continuous contact with the International Office to get updates on the issue from their perspective. In addition, I have been in discussions with the GSS at
SFU and we are working toward communicating with an MP regarding this issue to try to push for change. I have also spoken with the UVic UVSS to partner on the issue. Depending on the results of our various activities, it may also be possible to involve the full force of the Association of British Columbia Schools.

Stacy Chappel has been working on the legal side of the issue and identified a lawyer that would be available to provide support for a reduced fee. The Board voted to move forward with a Legal Clinic Day for International Graduate Students following the Annual Pancake Breakfast. We also voted to have Stacy pursue a legal opinion to determine if we also fall under this ruling as GSS Staff and Board Members. If so, we can formally challenge the interpretation.

Update (26/11) - The University has agreed to take steps to remedy this situation. We received a letter from President Cassels that stated that the University will be training a few staff members to be able to provide this service. In the interim, a qualified consultant will be retained to hire the service. We expect action by mid-December. The Associate Vice President - International was invited to speak to the Board on 6/11 and provided this information along with some additional background regarding these services on campus and possible communication disconnects that may have resulted in delays.

The Legal Clinic Day was a success and we had quite a backlog of student interest, which is evidence for the need of the service for current graduate students. The legal opinion indicates that we are possibly subject to these rules, but a legal interpretation by the courts would be required. As such, I will continue to pursue this issue along with other student societies in BC to attempt to have this rule reversed, so that we are not at risk.

Time:

20 hours

RESEARCH ASSISTANTS

Discussion:

The status of Research Assistants on the UVic campus is not well understood by either the administration or the students. RAs are typically not considered employees of the University, but rather those of the professor, despite the fact that they are paid through the University. Issues have arisen for students lately such as not having the option for direct deposit even when away for research, liability and responsibility for employees' rights, professors making financial promises and then withdrawing them, students receiving pay late or not at all, etc. In addition, even though even professors on campus are moving toward unionization, this has not been possible for RAs.

Actions:

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interested to gain the support of the Association of British Columbia Schools to get MLAs to support a BC-wide resolution on the matter.

Update (26/11) - We have some information regarding this matter that will be provided to the GRC that will not be discussed here by vote of the Board. However, I will mention that we will be having a meeting with Dean Capson on 22/11 to discuss the issue further and additional actions will be based on the 26/11 GRC meeting.

Time:
15 hours

DEPARTMENT FUNDING CUTS

Discussion:

Department funding cuts was one of the Action Plan items for this year. This has been a difficult topic to tackle. The University is following the instructions of the Provincial Government, as it always has with respect to enrollment and budget. This is likely to need to be worked through the Minister of Advanced Education and other MLAs.

Actions:

I hosted an action plan meeting, and we basically came to the above conclusions. I also spoke with the Dean to further my understanding of how money is distributed both through the FGS and for TAs. In addition, several of us attended a University Budget Meeting to hear about the plan going forward. As this is a provincial issue that affects the other universities, I am interested to work with the Association of British Columbia Schools to advance the budget priority of post-secondary education among the Provincial Government. From a UVic perspective, we will continue to try to be involved in decisions that will affect the quality of education that graduate students receive and their well-being on campus.

Update (26/11) - We will be meeting with AVP - Academic/Provost Trembley in the very near future and will discuss this issue and ask for any updates. As well, we have a meeting scheduled in December with the University administration in December and will continue to press for support.

I am planning to continue my work in coordination with other BC student societies to push the issue at the Provincial government level.

Time:
10 hours

COORDINATION WITH OTHER STUDENT UNIONS

Discussion:
As budget cuts and other issues have begun to impact students across the province, the universities have begun to organize to invoke power in numbers. This has led to the creation of the Association of British Columbia Schools, which is in the process of being registered as an official society. The Board is currently in the process of reviewing the final constitution and bylaws for a vote to recommend joining or not to our AGM.

In addition, UBC hosted the second Student Union Development Summit in recent years, which provided the opportunity to discuss lessons-learned and hear about what other student unions are doing across Canada.

Actions:

I attended the SUDS event and have had several conversations regarding the ABCS with other student unions. I am in favor of further collaboration and would like to promote it as an opportunity to learn from other organizations, as well as join together to resolve larger issues of common interest.

Update (26/11) - The Association of British Columbia Schools is still in the process of becoming a society. An AGM should be scheduled in the near future and I will attempt to attend and keep up with other meetings to track the progress.

Other coordination efforts outside of ABCS are continuing, as discussed under other specific activities in this report.

Time:

40 hours

GSS SUPPORT AND REPRESENTATION FOR DISTANCE STUDENTS

Discussion:

It is difficult to communicate and identify issues for distance students that are not on campus. It is important for us to find new and innovative ways to connect with these students, include them in University activities and decision-making, and extend relevant services to them.

Actions:

I have been exploring creative ways to connect with these students and obtain feedback regarding concerns and interests. We also are exploring ways to provide more opportunities for involvement in the GSS. I am connected with the Graduate Students' Association at Athabasca University (online university) and I will continue my discussions with them to see how they function and if there are some technologies or other lessons that we can learn from them.

Time:

5 hours
GSS MEETINGS

Exec Board Meeting (6/11, 20/11)

GSS Exec / Dean of Graduate Studies (22/11)

GSS Social Events - Wednesday Coffees, Pancake Breakfast (22/10)

GRC (15/10)

*See previous report for past meetings attended

EXTERNAL MEETINGS

Distance Education Members Committee (17/10)

Senate Committee on Planning (6/11)

International Students' Breakfast w/ Trembley/Marton (28/10)

Meetings With SFU GSS External Affairs (1/11)

*See previous report for past meetings attended
## TIME SUMMARY

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