MEETING MINUTES
MONDAY, JANUARY 21, 2013

The meeting was called to order at 5:06 pm with Hermanson in the Chair

PRESENT:

Anthropology: Sarah-Louise Decrausaz
Business Administration: Lisa Doetzl
Chemistry: Chiara Valsecchi
Community Development: Barbara West
Computer Science: Sardar Ali
English: Kevin Elliot
Environmental Studies: Audrey Steedman
French: Katrina Biermann
Geography: Maral Sotoudehnia
Biochemistry & Microbiology: Kaleigh Giles
Math & Statistics: Jane Wodlinger
Pacific & Asian Studies: Madeline Holden
Physics & Astronomy: Cory Shankman
Physics & Astronomy: Sara Sadavoy

Political Science: Michael Carpenter
Psychology: Angel Chen
Social Dimensions of Health: Mary Clare Kennedy
Sociology: Nadia Ouellet
Theatre: Kathy Bishop

GSS Chair: Dallas Hermanson
GSS Director of Finance: Brian Pollick
GSS Director of Communications: Colleen Clement
GSS Director of Student Affairs: Pål Skar
GSS Director of Services: Jon Potter
GSS Executive Director: Stacy Chappel (ex-officio)
GSS Operations & Relations Manager: Brandy Sisitli (guest)

REGRETS:

Earth & Ocean Science: David Janssen
Electrical & Computer Engineering: Ming Lee
Exercise Science, Physical Health & Education: Jon Buxcey

Hispanic & Italian Studies, Estelle Kurier
Law, Mark Zion
Nursing, Betty Poag

TASKS ASSIGNED AT THE MEETING

TASK: Chappel to post the power point presentation of the financial update on the website
STANDING ITEMS

AGENDA

The Agenda was approved with the addition of the Director of Finance Report, and election of Electoral Officer.

Hermanson noted the added items were in the original agenda circulated in the week prior to the meeting, but omitted on the printed agenda.

MINUTES

Minutes from the November Graduate Representative Council meeting were approved as presented.

BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

Chappel asked if Physics had signed a variance.

Sadavoy reported a variance agreement had been signed, and it has a time limit so the parties can re-assess it after a few years.

Due to funding cut backs, the department will be losing money for incoming students, as now there are only three people receiving the fellowships. Remaining students will get the remaining funding with TA positions. The concern in the department is the possible effect on enrolment. External funding is available, but it might not always work out that way.

Sadavoy also said she would have to step down as Physics & Astronomy rep. She introduced Cory Shankman as the new department rep from Physics & Astronomy. She noted Cory has been on the GSS council at UBC for two years.

EXECUTIVE REPORTS

Chair: Hermanson referred to his written report. He noted the big items were the President’s Search committee – Dr. Jamie Cassells has been appointed. Hermanson said he has met with the incoming president and will ask him to meet with the Grad Council when his term begins. He has been working with the food back on the funding proposal. He has been working with the other BCGSS executives, and went to a joint meeting with the Minister of Advanced Education. Minister Yap said he is not yet willing to dedicate funding for a graduate scholarship. The goal now is to move into a campaign during the election.

Student Affairs: Skar reported the subcommittees he chairs have now met. On international issues, committee member and Psychology rep Chen is here for the group discussion. Unfortunately, the other committee member, Lei, Grad Rep for Electrical and Computer Engineering cannot attend tonight. The committee on GSS structure met. There were no current issues to report on distance learning.

Communications: Clement reported Beyond the Jargon co-host Baldassari has had a couple of his interviews air and they are available as podcasts. CFUV has a new community news staffer, she will be helping bring in new interviewers. Clement has been circulating links to podcasts to various UVIC administrators. The Senate Library Committee meet was
cancelled. She confirmed that rumours of making the law library exclusive to Law students are not true. The Library is currently undertaking a major review.

**Services:** Potter referred to his written report. He has continued working on relationships with the Alumni Association. He is sitting on the committee organizing Pathways to Success, which will be held during reading week. He also has been working with the group organizing the “What you can do with a [fill in your field] degree” speaker series. Chris Duffy is the new events coordinator, and has already organized the upcoming events: a trip to Goldstream Park, Trivia Nights and Board Game nights. Wine Wednesdays, where graduate students can bring their own wine and pay no corking fee at the Grad House on Wednesdays, have also started.

**Finance:** Pollick thanked everyone for their flexibility in changing the meeting time. He will report on his financial work later in the agenda. Pollick reports he sits on the Senate Academic Standards committee, which has been reworking the Academic Integrity policy. This policy deals with issues like plagiarism and cheating. The problem he is finding is the policy doesn’t differentiate between graduate students and first year undergraduates. He knew he would have to miss the meeting, so he and Potter raised concerns in a meeting with the committee secretary, who would bring the concerns forward. He is currently waiting for the minutes and next draft of the policy. If you are interested in giving some input, please be in touch with him.

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**FINANCIAL REPORT**

Pollick said he will have the power point of the presentation posted.

**TASK:** Chappel to post the power point presentation of the financial update on the website

**Funds**

Pollick reported the Operating Fund is projecting a surplus of $32,000. The original budget planned for no increase in enrolment, but it is up 3%. There were also delays in replacing staff, which meant some of the staffing budget is not spent. This different will cover the cost of collective agreement increase over 3 years.

Pollick reported the Health and dental fund is projecting a surplus over $40,000, as planned. Pollick proposes this is used to create a stabilization fund for the Health and Dental Plan. The plan is stabilizing, and he will discuss that later.

The Grad House is also projecting a small profit, but in reality the Grad House is subsidized in several ways. For the coming budget, he will make the subsidy clear. For example, 75% of utilities are paid by the Operating Fund, but the restaurant is the major user of utilities. Clarifying the subsidy would enable the GSS to wipe off the old debt. Pollick would like it to be clear what the restaurant costs each member—but also to acknowledge it is the place where community happens.

In the capital Fund, there is a project costing request out to the University to build storage, but this looks like it might not be completed during this year, meaning this project will carry over. There will be easily enough to invest $30,000 in the Building Fund as planned in the budget.

The Building Fund has no activity and currently has $90,000 invested.

**Collective Bargaining**
Pollick reported the collective bargaining is complete. He thanked Sistili and Chappel for their work preparing the necessary information for the process.

Pollick said the GSS is a significant employer with two management staff, and the remaining—about 24 staff—unionized. The collective agreement expired April 1, 2012, but bargaining was delayed (at the union’s request). The bargaining process was a very positive experience, more than a financial conversation, but also a way to affirm our values as an employer and as an organization. The representative from the union and the staff representatives were great. We have settled a three year deal, expiring March 31, 2015, which will include a 2% retroactive increase from April 1, 2012, a 2% increase at April 1, 2013 and a 1.5% increase on April 1, 2014. There will also be a $0.10 increase per hour for kitchen staff.

This agreement was ratified unanimously by both parties.

Pollick said he would like to have a Labour Relations Committee.

Wodlinger asked what the role of the committee would be.

Pollick said it would be for personnel, and meetings with the union, but also for management review on compensation and performance. It would be good experience in labour relations. If anyone is interested, please contact him.

Issues for the future

Pollick said he will be recommending the GSS move Health and Dental insurance to retention accounting, which would mean the GSS takes on the risk and the benefit of the plan. This is possible because of plan stabilization and the fact that we will have the funds to provide a stabilization fund as a guarantee.

Restaurant goals for the future will include increasing sales volume and reducing costs.

Adequate staffing for the society will continue to be a concern as the membership grows.

We are also working on a formal fee remittance schedule for remittance of fees from UVIC to the GSS.

Shankman asked why there was a difference between the undergraduate and graduate plan cost.

Chappel said the undergraduate included a younger membership pool. The plans were previously joined, but the undergraduates decided to remove the GSS from their plan as a cost savings.

The reports of the Executive Board and the financial report were approved.

INTERNAL BUSINESS

ELECTIONS OFFICER ELECTIONS

Chappel reported the Executive Board had set the election dates as follows:

Nominations open January 30 and close February 25 at 4pm.

Voting will be on webvote at https://webvote.uvic.ca from March 6 at 9 am to March 8 at 4:30 pm.
She said the GSS needs an electoral officer to oversee the process, and an Electoral Committee who will decide on any appeals of the Electoral Officer’s decisions in the event of a dispute.

Shankman was elected as the GSS Electoral Officer.

Giles and Sotoudehnia were elected as the Electoral oversight Committee.

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GROUP DISCUSSION

Hermanson introduced the discussion session topics: International student services at the GSS; GSS Governance; and Multi-Year Funding. He noted each table was marked by topic, and asked each person to move to a table that included their topic of interest.

Hermanson passed the chair to Chappel for the group discussion process.

Discussion summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>International Students and the GSS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>GROUP 1</strong></td>
<td><strong>GROUP 2</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Topics: the first few months present after arrival present the main challenges:</td>
<td>General student living in Canada info</td>
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<td>- Finding accommodation</td>
<td>- Student bank accounts</td>
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<td>- Connecting with other international students</td>
<td>- Taxes</td>
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<td>- Acclimatizing to Canadian systems</td>
<td>- Social Insurance Number</td>
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<tr>
<td>Solutions</td>
<td>- Canadian grad student buddy? In department?</td>
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<td>- Promote guaranteed housing for international grad students</td>
<td>Health and Dental</td>
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<td>- Establish a buddy system to connect international students</td>
<td>- More language options</td>
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<td>- Handbook for international graduate students</td>
<td>- Explanation of coverage</td>
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<td>- Link students with a senior member of same country</td>
<td>Promotion of events</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Social media – officer maintains</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- More events</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Mixing of international and Canadian students</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Coordinating information in a handbook</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Schools</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Doctors/pediatricians</td>
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<tr>
<td>Best case</td>
<td>Problem:</td>
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<td>- Executive officer for international grad issues &amp; support</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Some international office policies aren’t so hot. Resistance to health and dental language options</td>
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GSS Graduate Representative Council minutes

January 21, 2013
- We don’t know who is an international student. Graduate secretaries will know

Moving forward
- Gather department info: what they do to assist students (academic, non-academic)
- No way to know if a student is an international student? Is this good? Does the department know?
- Work with IESS to get more graduate-specific advice
- Pool information in one format/place
- Officer at the GSS to work on international student issues
- More events for international students/promotion through social media

General Discussion on International Student support at the GSS

Unofficial buddy system exists in some departments... supervisor will ask established students to buddy incoming international students in Geography, for example.

International Commons – in the library – some peer group support
- Mostly undergraduates
- Looking to be hands on

Some of the events from IESS are geared toward outgoing exchange students, or have an Undergraduate focus.

A contact list would be helpful

IESS does have an email list of international graduate students, the GSS uses it sometimes.

Graduate Council in particular could be aware of the number of international students in their departments.

In Physics and other sciences there is a team focus to the work – you have lab mates you work closely with. Isolation can be more intense in fields where you work in isolation, especially at the PhD level.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Multi-Year Funding</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>GROUP 1</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>AIS -- ?? – no predictability: arbitrary. Solutions??</td>
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<tr>
<td>MA “one” year programs.funding (often becomes TWO year program) Solutions?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Travel Grants - one size fits all? ($600) regardless of distance. Solutions?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Specify: What is “maintaining high academic</td>
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TAships

Ensuring Minimal Funding – rather than piling on rewards to students who earn external funding.

Sources are dispersed through hthe department... it can be a problem when every department is different.

Solutions: strike a balance

Ensuring minimum funding is ideal

Timely information if funding will change—allow students to prepare.

Since the new dean of FGS is amenable we should ask that he fix the sense that the funding is arbitrary... it needs predictability

standards” BE CLEAR No vague language

No emails... or email followed by hard copy

Travel Grants: First Come First served

AIS - when? Department dependent. Did you know? Need transparency on how it works.

Effects on teaching positions – e.g. more TAships inadvertently reducing or at least delaying sessionals instruction opportunities for PhD.

Funding should accord to the realistic length of programs. E.g. if most students are unable to finish MAs in 12 months due to systematic barriers, then funding should be guaranteed for longer than 12 months.

We can handle reality! Just tell us the truth!

General discussion on multi-year funding

In GSS meetings with the FGS dean it is clear he is also looking for transparency. Right now they are trying to map out the sources and distribution of funding

Clarity on relationships between types of funding is also important—for example, when you get a SSHRC your UVIC fellowship is gone, but the Centre for Studies in Religion and Society scholarship is not.

Travel Grant is very appreciated. But hotel and plane booking in advance and then waiting for reimbursement is costly.

There is prepaid travel funding through UVIC, a form you submit to book these items.

GROUP 1

Major discussion included:
- What is the role of the grad rep?
- Role not clear, not every department has real elections
- Online election would be easiest to reach many members
- Provide an outline of tasks for grad reps
- Department administrative year is not always the same as the Grad Rep year for election purposes... some reps elected after the first meeting.
- The experience is different for larger and smaller departments... could there be

GROUP 2

Big issues identified by the group were communication and bridging isolation.

Concrete suggestions included
- Start awareness on campaigns so people know what we’re working on.
- Bigger events

Email colour? Look nicer
Radio Show? Idea spread. GRC. Website ok. Print. Email. Not Ok, duplicate

Events - campaigns

GSS Structure

GSS Graduate Representative Council minutes January 21, 2013
proportional systems?

Having an introduction meeting for grad reps at the start of their term.

Online Grad Rep elections

Contact list

Separate committees

Would it be possible to group smaller departments with one rep (for example, language programs, French, Spanish, German could have one rep)

Ideal: Every student happy and engaged

No activities between departments

Communication bubble: Engaged? Representative.

Business over social

Lack of rep feeling. Show meaningful work. Lack of knowledge

Possible solutions: Face to face visibility. Free stuff. GSS website: more info.

General discussion on GSS Structure

Could the room change, to allow expansion?

Shankman noted that the UBC group has representation weighted by population ... for important discussions and decisions

Concern with election by email, or by default when no one else responds to email, a concern...

Sometimes having a rep is very dependent on determined department secretary!

SESSION EVALUATION

Head (thoughts); Heart (feelings); Feet (Actions)

Head

• Group discussion and reporting back was the best and most productive part – more time for this next time.
  Continued discussion at restaurant after? Informal, lets us get to know each other too.
• Not sure how we take solutions/ideas and make them part of the executive agenda? FGS agenda?
• Effective for brainstorming concrete concerns to bring to the FGS dean.
• Very informative info sharing
• This methodology was a total success
• Meeting was much more productive
• This new format was interesting to discuss some of the main issues
• This is a much more productive way to bring up new issues from all departments
• Time management was crunching—can executive reports be shorter
• I think this format allows for greater input from II GRC members
• Touching on the right topics
• It was a nice way to facilitate discussion but there wasn’t really enough time left in the meeting to really discuss issues
• We may need to troubleshoot the timing; make sure that we stay in our allotted time
• Took too long in post-discussion
• Brought up interesting issues
• A good talking session, but discussion was more suited to committees than a council. What are the actionables? Are there committees in charge of these topic areas that can further study them?
• All of the paper handed out is wasteful. It should be emailed in advance (esp minutes so we don’t allow people time to read it during meetings).

Heart
• Loved the discussion, Sometimes felt a bit stressed and rushed, More time! Supportive atmosphere! Yay!
• Sense of community and empathy
• Thanks for a great first meeting and being able to share my voice
• Felt more lively and personably
• Felt motivated, actually helpful and really advocating for other grads
• I felt more engaged and better about discussion
• I think you should still do department reports. It’s nice to know what’s going on elsewhere
• I enjoyed the process and would be happy to continue with it
• Really enjoyed this focus group discussion, hope to have more coming
• First timer—great to meet other grads
• Great set up! I felt very engaged. More please.
• Always use more time
• I like the small group set up it allows for more opportunity to speak our minds
• Great working as small groups as opposed to large groups

Feet
• I’d like to continue with this format
• Can’t plan too far ahead because leaving soon, but I will try to search for the next rep
• I’m leaving hopefully, so not much I can do. Maybe having checklists or FAQ on common issues *like the travel grant* on the website.
• This will push me to engage/attempt to engage with members in my department
• Can “suggested questions for consideration” be sent (emailed) ahead of time?
• I would love to do more of this in the future
• Spend time narrowing ideas to next steps
• Focus groups were excellent - do it again!
• Good stuff! Would definitely like to do this again!
• Continue with this format for next meeting

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 7:15 pm

Approved, Chair

Approved, Executive Director