

UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA GRADUATE STUDENTS' SOCIETY  
Annual General Meeting

MEETING MINUTES

October 24, 2017

Human and Social Development Building – A240  
University of Victoria

**PRESENT:**

Chair: Susan Kim

Director of Communications: Danny Martin

Director of Finance: Olga Gould

Director of Student Affairs: Gillian Dornan

Director of Services: Jessica Wyatt

Stephen Luehr, Exercise Science, Physical Health  
and Education

Carla Osborne, History

David Eso, English

Teesha Luehr, Biochemistry and Microbiology

Joseph Horan, Mathematics and Statistics

Luke Kernan, Anthropology

Maya Cowan, Anthropology

Adar Anisma, Linguistics

Carla Osborne, History

Lucianne Marshall, Biology

Ryan Broe, Political Science

Stephanie Gruhlke, Political Science

Lindsay Shaw, Social Determinants of Health

Marina DiMaio, Visual Arts

Janet Munsil, Writing

Maan Hani, Physics and Astronomy

Tanya Tran, Environmental Studies

Neda Savic, Biochemistry & Microbiology

Seth Greylyn, Computer Science

Christiaan Laureijs, SEOS

Li Qin Tan, Psychology

Peter Sugrue, Psychology

Dempsey Wilford, Political Science

Agam Chandra, Political Science

Julia Horne, SEOS

Stephanie Bethune, CSPT

Matthew Miller, SEOS

Katrina Flanders, History

Myles Maillet, Psychology

Pejman Azarsa, Civil Engineering

Renay Maurice, Sociology

Leila Bautista, Public Administration

Aazim Lakhani, Computer Science

David Gorham, Public Administration

Pei-Ling Wang, Geography

Joëlle Alice Michaud-Ouellet, Political Science

(also GSS Health and Dental Coordinator)

*Non-voting attendees:*

Executive Director: Stacy Chappel

Operations and Services Manager: Brandy Sistili

Office Coordinator, Governance and Recorder:

Karen Potts

41 Voting members were in attendance. Quorum of 25 voting members was met.

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CALL TO ORDER and LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The meeting was called to order at 5:02 pm with KIM in the Chair, making the acknowledgement that the University of Victoria Graduate Students' Society exists upon land that belongs to the Songhees, Esquimalt and WSÁNEĆ peoples whose relationships with the land continue to this day.

## MEETING BUSINESS

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### APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

*Motion: RESOLVED that the October 24, 2017 Annual General Meeting agenda be approved as presented.*

*M/S GRUHLKE/LUEHR*

*CARRIED*

### APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

*Motion: RESOLVED that the minutes from the March 28, 2017 Semi-Annual General Meeting be approved as presented.*

*M/S TRAN/ESO*

*CARRIED*

### REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

***KIM presented the report from the Executive Board.*** Highlights included:

- **International student tuition** – March Board of Governors approved a large tuition increase on international students. The GSS supported the creation of the Tuition Working Group to strategize around the issue.
- **Mental health:** Was a major component of last year's strategic plan and continues. UVic now has a dedicated work page on mental health resources, thanks to support from GSS.
- **Ongoing progress:** continuing to complete the work of the previous Executive including campaigns, communications strategies, representing student interests on various committees, and the Grad House renovation.
- **Moving forward:** looking to strengthen the GSS organization, including a long term strategic plan.

### REPORTS OF THE COMMITTEES OF THE SOCIETY

***WYATT reported on the Events Committee.*** Highlights included:

- **2<sup>nd</sup> annual Welcome Weekend:** was well received and attended by new graduate students. The success of this event was only possible with the dedication of student volunteers.
- **Summer and fall event** highlights included a Caesar Crawl, Bocce and Ice Cream in the Quad was held twice, Cider and Distillery Tour, and Escape Room.
- **Planning** for events required some creativity with the restaurant closure.

WYATT also reported that the Appeals Committee completed its training and has already reviewed one appeal.

***GOULD reported on the Finance Committee.*** Highlights included:

- **Review** of decision-making tools, contracts, terms of reference and agreements between GSS and UVic Student Affairs, Vancity, insurers, contractors, auditors, brokers and Pacific Blue Cross, other providers etc. Contracts are as follows:
  - Restaurant financing: Vancity
  - Restaurant contractor: Kingsview

- Restaurant project manager: UVic Facilities
- Health and Dental plan: Pacific Blue Cross
- **Moving forward:**
  - There is a plan to create a Functions Manual and process maps to standardize processes within the GSS and ease year to year transitions.
  - Working on long-term financial planning and budgeting guidelines for the next 5 years.

**DORNAN reported on the Student Affairs Committee.** Highlights included:

- **Graduate Student Advocacy Program** – Working on a proposal to develop a position within the GSS, in cooperation with Uvic student Affairs and other internal/external stakeholders.
- **Graduate Student Scholarship** – Attended MLA candidates’ events to make graduate student priorities known in the May 2017 provincial election. News is that the new BC government will include this in their upcoming mandate. Will continue to reach out to government officials involved in the establishment of the NDP graduate student scholarship, in collaboration with SFU GSS to ensure graduate student input influences the program design.
- **Mental health and wellbeing** – GSS continues to participate on the UVic Student Mental Health Steering Committee to increase graduate student resources on campus, and, increase graduate student mental health awareness.
- **Research Assistants Legal Status** – GSS continuing to push policy change for students with research assistantships to have the protection of UVic as the employer (vs. thesis supervisor as grant holder, etc.)
- **Part time thesis students** - GSS continues to push for changes to fix discrepancies experienced by part time students.

**MARTIN reported on the work of the Communications Committee.** Highlights included:

- **Development of a social media strategy** to fit with the long term strategic plan, including mapping out the social media processes follows.
- **New banners and marketing materials** have been designed and new banners and marketing materials have been printed. The new brand is beginning to be rolled out.
- **Promotion** of the Events Committee events.
- **New website development:** Completed the tender process for the website, appointed a developer, and are working with developer and GSS staff on website. Are at the point of copy edits, fine tweaking plug-ins for online forms. Hope to launch the new website with the new restaurant opening in January.
- **ATRS (athletics and recreation services) fee informational video** - Worked with CARSA to create a video showcasing which athletics and recreations services are included in the GSS student fee. It was developed to counter the perception that there is little available for the fee GSS members pay. *A Day in the Life of the Rec Fee*, starring GSS’ own Julie and Pedro was played. This is available on the GSS Facebook page.
- **Moving forward:** There will be enhancements to the e-bulletin, the Committee will be working with GSS operations staff to market the new restaurant/coffee bar, and will work on the campus visibility of GSS.

**KIM reported on the Bylaw and Policy Committee’s work.** Highlights included:

- **Health and dental plan process** – as a result of the referendum, the Committee is researching how to resolve tension between the timeline when information received from Pacific Blue Cross, and the referendum notice requirements. CHAPPEL presented in detail later in AGM.

- **Moving forward** – the Committee is doing some long-term planning looking at bylaw and policy revisions for the future to solidify and support the GSS as it grows. One initiative is work on a code of Conduct for the GSS and participants to outline our values regarding how the GSS conducts its business.

## PRESENTATION OF THE AUDITED STATEMENTS

**GOULD presented the audit for 2016-17. The audit was completed by Obara & Co., CPA.** Highlights included:

- A presentation on the Statement of Financial Position, and the Statement in Change of Net Assets.
- A report on the Grad House revenue and expenses, as well as the Operating Fund details.
- The current balance of the health and dental fund surplus is \$14, 116.

GOULD explained that the audit statements do not include the Grad House Renovation, which occurs in the 2017-18 fiscal year. She noted the project is on target to complete within budget. After consultation with the lender about interest rates, the GSS borrowed 100,000 less than originally planned, and invested more from the Capital and Building Funds.

MAURICE asked the question regarding a plan if something goes awry with the last phase of construction. CHAPPEL responded that all the high risk phases of construction that could have revealed large unexpected costs have been completed. Anything unexpected at this point would be covered by an insurance claim.

GOULD summarized by saying:

- Overall the auditors found the GSS to be in good financial health.
- The risk areas remain the food and beverage service, the potential for enrolment to decrease and the potential for increasing costs of the health and dental insurance plan.

*Motion: RESOLVED to accept the 2017 audited statements as presented.*

*M/S OSBORNE/BETHUNE*

*CARRIED*

*Motion: RESOLVED to reappoint Obara & Company as the Society's auditors.*

*M/S HORAN/COWAN*

*CARRIED*

## PRESENTATION ON THE GSS EXTENDED HEALTH AND DENTAL PLAN

CHAPPEL presented an update on the current state of the GSS Extended Health and Dental Plan.

For many years during 2009-15, the plan was in 'stabilization', where the fees and costs were able to be equalized through a stabilization fund. In 2016 the GSS plan hit the point where costs were not going to be met with reserves from the fund, so either services/benefits were going to have to decrease or the fee to members had to increase.

CHAPPEL presented information on the factors that contribute to increased plan costs, including:

- The GSS has a high plan usage with people taking care of their health by using preventive services,
- There are general trends of increasing health insurance costs
- There is an actuarial assessment of risk
- There are projected increases for administrative costs

CHAPPEL also presented strategies the GSS uses to contain costs, including:

- Using retention accounting,
- Insuring against catastrophic claims,
- Using the BC Pharmacare drug formulary, with exceptions able to be authorized
- Individual claims are capped with annual limits,
- Bids are sought from competing insurance companies every 3 years,
- Planning to generate surpluses for a stabilization fund so that fees do not change every year, even though what GSS pays every year changes.

Moving forward, CHAPPEL explained that with costs expected to continue increasing and the depletion of our previous stabilization fund, she anticipates the GSS may have to hold another referendum in 2018 for a further fee increase.

CHAPPEL explained that while a summer referendum is not desirable, it is better for the GSS to negotiate plan rates with insurers later in the spring as the GSS status is more favourable later in the academic year (there is a flurry of plan use/costs when members first sign on in September). However later negotiation means the information for a referendum decision is not available until late spring/summer.

GSS members raised several important questions for discussion. These included:

MAURICE expressed a concern regarding the university using the existence of student private plans as rationale to limit funding to the UVic health and counselling services.

DORNAN responded about the advocacy work being done by GSS with UVic and welcomed more GSS members' input. CHAPPEL explained the catch-22 that confounds an easy solution, e.g. waiving requiring a doctor prescription for massage decreases the demand on physician time but a non-prescription benefit is a higher fee from insurers. However there are some efforts that have been effective e.g. allowing clinical counselors to be insured and not only psychiatrists' increased access as well as decreased costs.

TRAN asked about how members will stay informed about these upcoming changes, which are stressful to members. CHAPPEL responded that all updates will be taken to Grad Council, which are open meetings. However CHAPPEL encouraged members not to work with actual dollar figures that may be subject to change, but to stay informed about the trends, plan use throughout the year, and being involved with discussions and decisions around a set of principles to guide decisions e.g. it was decided not to cut one service which fully impacts one set of students, but to spread the costs and benefits to all members. CHAPPEL expressed hope that the principle of insurance where all members pool together to help everyone most effectively will prevail.

HORAN expressed support for CHAPPEL's direction to develop principles in consultation with as many students as possible.

COWAN expressed concern that trying to continually engage students over the duration without concrete information may not be the most helpful.

BAKER-LUEHR asked if small regular updates on the discussions, trends could be possible to helpful to diminish surprise.

MICHAUD-OUELLET, as the Health and Dental Coordinator, explained that during negotiations it is difficult and perhaps not beneficial to the GSS position to reveal negotiations prior to be finalized. CHAPPEL added that the costs presented by the insurers at the start of the negotiation process can be quite shocking and could be very panicking for members. However, CHAPPEL supported process updates that do not involve dollar values.

MAURICE responded that providing members with more of the analytics might be helpful to decreasing costs e.g. encouraging our members to registering with Fair Pharmacare. CHAPPEL supported this idea.

GREYLYN asked about the reset date for benefits. CHAPPEL explained that the reset date is January 1<sup>st</sup>.

## RENOVATION UPDATE

SISTILLI provided an update on the Grad House Renovation complete with photos of the demolition and current behind-the-scenes work in progress.

SISTILLI reaffirmed the information provided earlier by KIM and GOULD. \$821,000 remains the total budget.

SISTILLI expressed great appreciation for Gord Shirley, the construction manager for his work and advice, including his advice to increase the contingency fund.

SISTILLI provided details on some of the major unexpected costs that were covered by the contingency fund including a major rotten beam, the need to move all the electrical wiring, and the costs of moving the fireplace. There have been costs that were not the responsibility of GSS including the construction accident setting off the fire suppression equipment. At the same time there have been unexpected costs savings of the university donating a lot of AV equipment. Overall there is room in the contingency fund to finish the AV installations and painting and other work to meet health and safety inspections. There will not be new furniture.

SISTILLI also reported on the construction schedule. Construction was 1 month late in starting due to delays in securing the loan. At this point, the project manager estimates that construction will be 98% finished by the end of November. December will have access to the space, resolve any deficiencies such as light fittings. Anticipate full finish December 24<sup>th</sup>. Hiring, training will occur early January. Anticipate opening January 15<sup>th</sup>. There will be a 'soft opening' with familiar folks invited in to test the new products. There will be a launch party.

SISTILLI announced that there will be a new café: Side Project Coffee. In response to questions, Sistilli reported that Canterbury will supply and service coffee equipment and the coffee shop will serve a specialty line of fair trade coffee not currently offered on campus, Sacred Acres. Tea is also undergoing review. A major influencing factor is the amount of support that Canterbury is willing to provide in the contract. She also explained that there will be a space to honour all the Defenders of past and future.

SISTILLI announced that she will be leaving the GSS for a new position but is pleased to have seen the renovation through and feels it's in a very good place.

CONSIDERATION OF MOTIONS RECEIVED WITH NOTICE

None.

OTHER BUSINESS

WYATT hosted the door prize draws.


ADJOURNMENT

*Motion: RESOLVED to adjourn the meeting.*

*M/S Broe/Maya Cowan*

*CARRIED*

The meeting was adjourned at 6:49 pm with 35 members in attendance at adjournment.

  
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Approved, Chair  
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Approved, Executive Director

KLP/SC/klp