UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA GRADUATE STUDENTS' SOCIETY

Annual General Meeting
October 23rd, 2018
Halpern Centre for Graduate Students
University of Victoria

MEETING MINUTES

PRESENT:

Chair: Arash Isapour
Director of Communications: Kelly Clark
Director of Finance: Carla Osborne
Director of Student Affairs: Esmail Rahimi
Director of Services: Mahsa Mahtab

Joseph Horan, Mathematics and Statistics
Anahita Ranjbar, Art History and Visual Studies
Anabelle Bernard Fournier, Public Health & Social Policy
Janice Niemann, English
Lauren Thompson, Germanic and Slavic Studies
Meaghan Storey, Curriculum & Instruction
Theresa Wanning, EPLS
Rachel Corwin, French
Sydney Fuhrman, History
Chad Williams, Neuroscience
Charlie White, Public Admin
Grace Montemurro, Publ/c Admin
Thomas Ferguson, Psychology
Jae Hyun Kim, Germanic and Slavic Studies
Mitchell Haslehurst, Math/Stats
Maya Cowan, Anthropology
Charlotte Lafleur, Mechanical Engineering
Rad Maghi, Mechanical Engineering
Christiaan Laureijis, SEOS

Kamran Tayyebi, Civil Engineering
Matty Cevantes, SDH
Ryley Erickson, Economics
Tanya Tran, Environmental Studies
Luke Kernan, Anthropology
Cortney Baldwin, EPLS (Education)
Danny Martin, English
Gill Dornan, Biochemistry and Microbiology
Susan Kim, Political Science
Brydon Kramer, Political Science
Phil Henderson, Political Science
Daniel Gudino, SDH
Jerold Flexer, PAAS
William Majani, EPLS
Patrick Makororo, EDCI
Manoj Raithnasuary, Biochemistry and Microbiology
Olivie Li, SDH
Maheyen Shogy, Physics
Seyed Saeed Rezvani, Civil Engineering
Tim Cunningham, History/CSPT

Non-voting attendees:
Executive Director: Stacy Chappel
Operations and Services Manager: Mike Ronning
Office Coordinator, Governance, and Recorder:
Karen L. Potts

44 GSS Voting Members were in attendance. Quorum of 25 members was met.
CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 5:07 pm with ISAPOUR in the Chair, making the acknowledgement that the GSS convenes on the traditional Coast Salish territories of the Lekwungen speaking peoples.

Point of Order: HORAN asked that the motion from the last SAGM to make the land acknowledgement meaningful be respected.

BALDWIN offered her perspective on why territorial acknowledgements are important, and made a personal acknowledgement.

MEETING BUSINESS

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Motion: RESOLVED to approve the agenda.

M/S EXECUTIVE BOARD/GAVIN
CARRIED

APPROVAL OF THE M NUTES

Motion: RESOLVED to approve the minutes of the March 27th 2017, SAGM as presented.

M/S EXECUTIVE BOARD/HORAN
CARRIED

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

CLARK presented the highlights of the Executive Board work to date, including:

- BC Graduate Scholarship announced after 15 years of lobbying.
- GSS Staff 1 year Collective Agreement settled with a fair and just process.
- Renovation of Crad House completed and new Side Project opened.
- Orientations provided in person by Executive to 40 different departments.
- Approved GVAT membership. (Members encouraged to talk to Courtney BALDWIN if they have questions.)
- Participated in the hiring of a new Ombudsperson hired for UVic.

Currently the Executive Board is continuing work on:

- The graduate student survey.
- Review of election policy for GRC.
- Organizing around International Student Tuition Fee increases.
- Advocating for Research Assistant employment rights.
- Work on a Student Advocate position in collaboration with UVSS.
REPORT OF COMMITTEES OF THE SOCIETY

Events – Mahsa Mahtab, Director of Services

MAHTAB reviewed some of the events of the past year including providing space to view World Cup games, participation in UVic orientation activities, hosting our own GSS Welcome Weekend, ice cream and bocce/colouring and cocoa, trivia and board game nights. MAHTAB encouraged all members to join in on upcoming events.

Student Affairs – Esmaeil Rahimi, Director of Student Affairs

RAHIMI shared the work on the UVic graduate student survey that was carried out in Spring 2018, and thanked everyone involved in the project. There were approximately 600 responses from 43 different departments, including students from 29 different countries. RAHIMI highlighted the results showing average graduate student workload, what graduate students identified as the main obstacles to academic progress, the financial situation of graduate students, insights into student/supervisor relationships, and student experiences of UVic as a safe/unsafe, inclusive/disrespectful climate. Meetings have begun with the UVic President and senior administration to discuss the results and needed changes.

Follow through on the survey results is ongoing and RAHIMI encouraged anyone with ideas and interest in moving the results forward for action to join.

HENDERSON asked about the number of ‘excluded’ responses that were referenced. RAHIMI explained that these were responses where a person started the survey and did not complete, or where responses were not pertinent to the question being asked.

Communications – Kelly Clark, Director of Communications

CLARK reported on the work done to date, including the new Handbook design, and social media work. Upcoming will be promotions for the Grad House including special theme nights in Side Project in the evenings, a podcast (Grad as Hell), and renovation of the biweekly email newsletter. CLARK asked for any grad student interested in talking about their work to come forward to be interviewed.

Concern was expressed that the podcast might be duplicating effort done by CFUV in Beyond the Jargon. There was some uncertainty as to whether this program was continuing. CLARK will investigate and if it is continuing will look into the potential for collaboration.

Will be doing a small ‘Welcome to the GSS, Grad House’ video to promote our location and businesses.

Bylaw and Policy – Arash Isapur, GSS Chair

ISAPOUR announced that the first meeting of this committee will be next month, and will include a review of the work by last year’s committee on the Code of Conduct.
OSBORNE reported that the main work of the Finance Committee to prepare next year’s budget will occur in the coming months.

PRESENTATION OF THE AUDITED STATEMENTS

REF DOCS: March 31, 2018 Audited Statements

OSBORNE presented the audited financial statements. OSBORNE took the time to provide some basic definitions of terms used in the statements. OSBORNE emphasised the principles at work for a non-profit society, including a conservative approach to asset management. This past year was an exception as the renovation required a bank loan (which was unusual), and the Grad House was closed for a significant number of months, but staff were still employed in getting the new operations up and running. The Grad House is run as a member service first, not as a for-profit business. Fortunately less of a bank loan was required than expected, and despite all the unexpected events encountered in renovation, the project was completed on time and within budget.

Also unique this past year was the decline in UVic graduate student enrollment which meant lower operational revenue from student fees.

Baldwin asked if projections have been made regarding revenue for 2019. OSBORNE replied that there is still work to be done in promoting the Grad House and Side Project, and consolidating the menu.

Horan asked about how staffing issues are impacting the Grad House. OSBORNE reported that the menus have been re-worked to accommodate the staffing shortages and other efforts are being made to stabilize staffing and operating hours.

Chappel spoke to the finances of the Health and Dental Plan which although with a decline in general member enrollment, there has been an increase in the number of people opting in to the plans, so only a small deficit occurred in the 2017-18 plan year.

OSBORNE also reviewed the upcoming and ongoing risk areas for the GSS including:

- Food and beverage revenue/expenses remain the highest risk area,
- Balancing capital purchases with repaying renovation loan,
- Concern over graduate enrollment at UVic potentially continuing decreasing.

Horan asked for clarification regarding the line item for stipends for graduate students. It was explained that this line item includes stipends and honoraria for other members, not solely for the Executive stipend.

Motion: RESOLVED to accept the 2018 audited statements as presented.

M/S EXECUTIVE BOARD/FERGUSON

CARRIED
Motion: RESOLVED to reappoint Obara & Company as the Society’s auditors.
M/S EXECUTIVE BOARD/COWAN

PATRICK asked if the audited statements could have been provided prior to the meeting.

CHAPPEL explained that as per GSS Bylaws the AGM Agenda and Financial Statements are provided on the GSS website two weeks in advance.

BALDWIN asked if the audit is something that GSS is required to do.

CHAPPEL reported that the audit is required under the BC Universities Act and UVic cannot withhold the GSS fees if the audit is completed and presented to the membership.

CARRIED

HEALTH AND DENTAL INSURANCE PLAN – SEMI-ANNUAL UPDATE

CHAPPEL presented the semi-annual update of the GSS Pacific Blue Cross Health and Dental Insurance Plan. CHAPPEL reviewed the eligibility for mandatory inclusion, and optional inclusion or exclusion.

CHAPPEL reported that the referenda to increase the premiums of the plan failed as it did not reach quorum. Therefore, changes were made to the 2018-19 benefits and annual deductible to account for increased costs.

CHAPPEL reviewed the status of Health Plan stabilization fund.

Going into affecting the cost of our plan:

- Usage – GSS has a high usage rate. 60% of our members will make a claim on our plan;
- Member age – we are an older population (compared to e.g. UVSS); and,
- Increasing cost of services and benefits.

GSS tries to keep costs down by:

- Retention accounting,
- Using Fair Pharmcare formulary for drugs, emphasising generic drug use,
- Catastrophic claim insurance, and,
- Keeping eligible claim amounts stable.

The results of the graduate student survey show the balancing act that the GSS Executive considers between what benefits to offer, and what premiums members are willing or able to pay.

Upcoming will be a re-tendering for our broker.

There may be another referenda which will hopefully be quorate to help make a decision about either premiums increasing or keeping the higher deductible.

Dental plan is currently meeting the goal in the retention accounting system, but the health plan is not. Together they balance each other, but officially these are two are separate programs.
Question was asked about the referenda quorum. CHAPPEL stated referenda require 5% participation of membership. The referenda was held in April 2018 as it was felt it was unfair to hold a referenda in summer as there is lower enrollment.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion: RESOLVED to adjourn the meeting.
M/S TRAN/KERNAN
CARRIED

The meeting was adjourned at 6:22 pm.

Approved, Chair

Approved, Executive Director

klp/JH