

University of Victoria Graduate Students' Society

# Graduate Representative Council

(ONLINE VIA BLACKBOARD) MEETING MINUTES

OCTOBER 27<sup>TH</sup>, 2020, 5-7 PM

## Elected Academic Unit Reps (1 vote per academic unit) Present:

<b>Anthropology:</b> Robert Gustas	<b>Electrical &amp; Computer Engineering:</b>	<b>Music:</b> Tiess McKenzie
<b>Art History &amp; Visual Studies:</b> Mel Granley	Alexandros Dimopoulos	<b>Nursing:</b> Erin Donald
<b>Biochemistry &amp; Microbiology:</b> Michael Allison	<b>English:</b> Elyse Loewen	<b>Pacific &amp; Asian Studies:</b> Maeve Milligan
<b>Chemistry:</b> Gregory Gaube, Archita Adluri	<b>French:</b> Tiffany Kuo	<b>Physics &amp; Astronomy:</b> Bobby Bickley
<b>Curriculum &amp; Instruction:</b> Adair Ng	<b>Geography:</b> Brianna Brandon	<b>Political Science:</b> Brianna Parent-Long
<b>Earth &amp; Ocean Sciences:</b> Chrissy Schellenberg	<b>Germanic &amp; Slavic Studies:</b> Rachel Colquhoun	<b>Psychology:</b> Thomas Ferguson
<b>Economics:</b> Brooklynn Trimble, Gerard Wu	<b>History:</b> Michelle Snidal	<b>Public Administration:</b> Amanda Leclerc
	<b>Medical Sciences (Neuroscience):</b> Hannah Reid	<b>Social Dimensions of Health:</b> Courtney Majewski (part)
		<b>Sociology:</b> Talya Jespersen

## GSS Executive Board (1 vote per elected board member) Present:

<b>Chair:</b> Drake RUSHFORD	<b>Director of Services:</b> Daniel GUDIÑO
<b>Director of Communications:</b> Matty CERVANTES	<b>Director of Student Affairs:</b> Antoine ROSE
<b>Director of Finance:</b> Jacob HUNT	<b>Executive Director:</b> vacant (non-voting)

**Recorder: Office Coordinator, Governance:** Karen L. Potts

**Regrets:** none submitted.

### Absent:

**Biology:** Nicholas Planidin  
**Civil Engineering:** Aryia Eini, Maryam Monazami  
**Computer Science:** Masoud Mokhtari  
**Educational Psychology & Leadership:** Lauren Petersen, Meng Qi (Annie) Wu  
**Law:** Adekunle (Kunle) Adewumi  
**Theatre:** Devon Goldie  
**Visual Arts:** Liam O'Sullivan

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## CALL TO ORDER AND LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

RUSHFORD called the meeting to order at 5:01 pm.

ROSE provided a personal statement of land acknowledgement, in French.

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## STANDING ITEMS

### 1. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

*MOTION: RESOLVED that the agenda is approved as presented.  
M/S ROSE/CERVANTES  
Approved by CONSENT.*

2. TIMEKEEPER VOLUNTEER

BRANDON volunteered.

3. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

*MOTION: RESOLVED that the Minutes from the September 29, 2020 Grad Council meeting are approved as presented.*

*M/S LONG/ROSE*

*Approved by CONSENT.*

4. BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES/PAST MEETINGS

RUSHFORD reported that CUPE will elect a GRC rep at their upcoming AGM.

5. REPORTS

A. MEMBERSHIP REPORT

**GSS Membership:** As of October 27, 2020 there are 2909 GSS Members.

**GRC Membership:** Since the September 29 GRC meeting, there has been 1 resignation, LJ Wallace (Theatre) and 3 new elected Councillors: Elyse Loewen (English), Courtney Majewski (Social Dimensions of Health), and Devon Goldie (Theatre).

Therefore, GRC now has 30 academic units represented (out of 47 academic units eligible).

**Meeting Quorum:** With no regrets received, quorum for tonight's meeting was 18. The meeting was quorate.

**Discussion:** TRIMBLE asked about comparing to numbers pre- COVID. Information was not available.

B. CHAIR'S REMARKS

Full Remarks are attached as Appendix A.

C. EXECUTIVE BOARD REPORTS – QUESTIONS ARISING AND MOTION TO APPROVE

*MOTION: RESOLVED that Grad Council approves the Executive Board Reports received for the month of July, August, and September.*

*M/S GUSTAS/KUO*

*CARRIED*

D. GRC STANDING COMMITTEES – APPOINTMENTS AND REPORTS

**COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS:**

*MOTION: RESOLVED that GRC members are appointed to the 2020-21 GRC Committees as follows:*

*Events: Devon Goldie*

*Finance: Courtney Majewski*

*Student Affairs: Elyse Loewen*

*M/S TRIMBLE/ROSE*

*CARRIED*

**STANDING COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

- Appeals – GUDIÑO expressed appreciation for members who volunteered for this committee whose heaviest work occurs right now at the beginning of the year.
- Bylaw & Policy – RUSHFORD had no report.
- Communications – CERVANTES reported that the first meeting was held and priorities were set for the year, emphasizing strategies to connect with more GSS members. CERVANTES shared links to the new LinkedIn and YouTube channels for GSS.
- Events – GUDIÑO reported that Events is working on online events and alternatives.
- Finance – HUNT reported that the first meeting was held and focus will be on making documentation more readable.
- Student Affairs – ROSE reported that work has continued with UVic regarding the process when scholarship criteria changes.

## E. GRADUATE REPRESENTATION ON UVIC COMMITTEES – VACANCIES

### COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS:

*Motion: RESOLVED that to elect Caleb Miller as the graduate student representative to the VISPA Director Search Committee.*

*M/S BICKLEY/ROSE  
CARRIED*

*Motion: RESOLVED that to elect Adair Ng as the graduate student representative, and Brooklyn Trimble as the alternate, to the Vice Provost Hiring Committee.*

*M/S ROSE/SHELLENBERG  
CARRIED*

### REPORTS FROM GRAD REPS ON UVIC COMMITTEES:

No reports.

## F. DEPARTMENT REPORTS

Members who would like their update recorded in the official minutes were requested to email their reports to [gssgov@uvic.ca](mailto:gssgov@uvic.ca) for inclusion. See Appendix B.

General concerns raised during the reports included:

- grad students are finding motivation very difficult
- problem with UVic limiting opening study spaces opening to Monday – Friday
- the lack of parking passes is making it difficult for grad students to get to UVic who do not feel safe using transit
- grad students residing in countries with different timezones have made the required course discussion etc. very difficult e.g. for a member in South Africa, all online course discussions are between 1 am – 3 am
- report that when courses have more than 50% international students, some faculty have suspended any live presentation of material and discussion; arguing that the reduction in quality is at least equitable.

- grad students who specifically chose a program stream with an in-person components are frustrated that this format has been changed for next summer, with no consultation
- international students are struggling trying to get visas
- asynchronous discussion forums require a much higher time and work load
- multiple difficulties were reported in trying to receive payment for TA work. Some members still waiting to receive any payment or full payment 8 weeks into the semester.

It was asked how departments were addressing the isolation, mental health concerns. One rep shared that their department has implemented a buddy system, pairing 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> year grad students to meet over Zoom or in person, and using the online forum 'Strata' to hold socially distance outdoor activities e.g. hike.

HUNT reported that the GSS Executive will raise these concerns during its regular meeting with UVic administration.

BREAK

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## MEETING NEW BUSINESS

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### 1. GSS WEBSITE AND CONNECT DOCUMENTATION

Lead: Drake RUSHFORD

REF DOCS: [RUSHFORD - GSS Website and Connect Documentation](#)

*Motion: RESOLVED that the following motion passed at the July 2020 GRC meeting is rescinded:*

*RESOLVED that Executive Members and committee chairs shall post all non-confidential items relating to GSS operations under their responsibility on the website and to begin the process of posting non-confidential information currently on Connect onto the website.*

*M/S RUSHFORD/BRANDON*

RUSHFORD explained that this item was added at the beginning of the July 2020 GRC meeting with no notice given, no time to consult with staff, and no time to think through the implications.

RUSHFORD explained that the majority of the materials on the Connect site are working documents which would be out of context on the public website. RUSHFORD felt the motion's intent was to make the work of the Executive and GRC more available and transparent but the specifics of the motion missed the mark.

*CARRIED*

*Motion: RESOLVED that all regular agendas and minutes, from 2020-21 onward, for the GSS Executive Board, Graduate Representative Council, and General Meetings are posted on the GSS website.*

*FURTHER RESOLVED that from 2020-21 onward, Executive and GRC Committee general membership meeting reports will also be posted on the GSS website.*

M/S RUSHFORD/BRANDON  
CARRIED

## 2. STUDENT DATA SECURITY AND VPN USE

Lead: Brooklynn TRIMBLE

REF DOCS: [TRIMBLE - Student Data Security and VPN Use](#)

*Motion: RESOLVED that the GSS formally protest this lack of response in terms of student data security with a letter, written by the GSS Chair, to President Hall noting a motion passed at the Graduate Representative Council.*

M/S TRIMBLE/ALLISON  
CARRIED

Discussion:

TRIMBLE stated that what was needed was for UVic to provide acceptable a secure VPN for all TAs, and if not, then there should be disclosure to the class if the TA is outside Canada and if there are potential data security issues.

BRANDON express concern that this issue may result in discriminatory hiring practices for TAs. TRIMBLE stated that she has discussed this with her department and cited several different options that universities in other countries are using.

DIMOPOULOS expressed concern that the Help Desk is not the best target, and suggested that the UVic Office responsible for FIPPA adherence be the focus. TRIMBLE reported that she has been brushed off by UVic's Privacy Officer. DIMOPOULOS suggested that it is now time to raise the issue with the BC Privacy Commissioner. DIMOPOULOS questioned whether a grad student currently in China, would be eligible to be a TA and still keep UVic's obligations for FIPPA compliance.

Lead: Maeve MILLIGAN

Purpose: for decision

REF DOCS: [MILLIGAN - Is it ethical to require students to use a VPN](#)

*Motion: RESOLVED that if a task force is formed to address the VPN issue, the potential risk of requiring students in China to use VPNs be seriously investigated.*

M/S MILLIGAN/TRIMBLE

Discussion:

TRIMBLE commented that students who are not working for UVic as TA are not required to use a VPN. For grad students who are TAs, the issue is not requiring VPN use, but how to access data securely.

DIMOPOULOS expressed concern for any motion that would subvert Canadian privacy laws to laws from a foreign country.

MILLIGAN restated that their department was concerned that UVic might require students to do something that is breaking the law of the country that they are in. MILLIGAN explained that their motion was to ensure a robust discussion that includes the ethics of what is asked of UVic students and TAs.

Given the passing of the previous motion and that the GSS is proceeding with a letter and not a task force, and the direction of the current discussion, MILLIGAN withdrew the motion.

### 3. COLONIAL VIOLENCE AGAINST MI'KMAQ FISHERS EXERCISING THEIR RIGHT TO FISH ON THEIR LANDS IN MI'KMA'KI

Lead: Rachel COLQUHOUN

REF DOCS: [COLQUHOUN - Mi'kmaq right to fish](#)

*Motion: RESOLVED that that the GSS put forward a statement of solidarity with the Mi'kmaq people and their inherent rights to this land and the use of its resources.*

*FURTHER RESOLVED that this statement of solidarity be created through a communitarian structure, within the framework of anti-racism, as to ensure that we center the voices of Indigenous Peoples, and not further perpetrate colonial violence through our language or our methodology.*

*M/S COLQUHOUN/GRANLEY*

*CARRIED*

Discussion:

COLQUHOUN provided an overview of the historical context behind the current conflict and expressed concern for the lack of state and police intervention to support the Mi'kmaq's rights.

Members expressed support for the motion.

RUSHFORD stated that the Executive Board will look at drafting a statement of solidarity.

### 4. EXECUTIVE STIPEND

Lead: Nicholas PLANIDIN (absent)

REF DOCS: [PLANIDIN - Exec Stipend](#)

*Motion: RESOLVED that Grad Council recommends changing the hourly rate of the executive board stipend from \$23.27/hr to match the current rate of TA wages, currently \$27.10/hr.*

*FURTHER RESOLVED a motion to change the hourly rate of the executive board stipend as described in the preceding clause be included on the November 24<sup>th</sup> AGM agenda.*

*M/S GUSTAS/SHELLENBERG*

*CARRIED*

Discussion:

GUSTAS, on behalf of the Stipend Review Committee, spoke to the motion.

RUSHFORD clarified that this is a motion to recommend to the general membership, so if the motion passes the proposal will come up discussion and decision at the AGM. RUSHFORD also clarified that a positive decision would not affect the current Executive, and would come into effect in April 2021.

### 5. STIPEND REVIEW COMMITTEE SIZE

Lead: Nicholas PLANIDIN (absent)

Purpose: for discussion

REF DOCS: [PLANIDIN - SRC Membership Size](#)

*Motion: RESOLVED to table this motion until the next GRC meeting.  
M/S RUSHFORD/LONG  
CARRIED.*

## CLOSING ITEMS

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### IMPORTANT DATE REMINDERS

#### Committee Meetings:

- See the GRC Calendar on Connect site.

#### GSS AGM:

- Please have any potential agenda items, with supporting materials, to the Executive Board for consideration, in advance of October 30th, 2020.
- Agenda, Notice of Motions will be posted: November 10th, 2020.

Next GRC meeting: December 15th, 2020.

- Please have any potential agenda items, with supporting materials, to the Executive Board for consideration, in advance of December 7th, 2020.
- Agenda, Notice of Motions to be posted: December 8th, 2020.

### REQUESTS FOR SUPPORT/ADVOCACY/PARTICIPATION

TRIMBLE provided a follow up on payments to TAs in sanctioned countries. There has been progress made with UVic making arrangements to hold funds for when these students arrive next semester, however issues remain for students who are graduating this semester, as well as the problem of the sanctioned countries currency being depreciated.

### NOTICES OF MOTION FOR NEXT MEETING

TRIMBLE asked that a recap of actions completed on the VPN be provided at the next GRC meeting.

### ADJOURNMENT

*MOTION: RESOLVED to adjourn the meeting.  
M/S COLQ/CERVANTES  
CARRIED*

The meeting adjourned at 6:55 PM.

klp/

X 

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Drake Rushford  
GSS Chair 2020-21

X *matilde cervantes*

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Matilde Cervantes  
GSS Director of Communications and Vice-Chair



## APPENDIX A: CHAIRS REMARKS

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Welcome everyone to the second Grad Council of the year! We have a pretty packed agenda this evening, so I'll try to keep my remarks brief. There are really just two updates from the executive board, the first is the postponing of our Annual General Meeting to the end of November. I mentioned this in my email to all of you last week, but our annual audit got a late start this year and we subsequently had to postpone the AGM as a result. This is a rather frustrating situation, but we on the board are trying to be as transparent as possible about it and so if any of you have any questions please feel free to reach out to me.

The second item I would like to provide an update on is our search for a new Executive Director. For those of you that have been around the GSS for a few years, you'll know how important our previous ED, Stacy, was to the organization. It has definitely been a little odd without her around, but after a three-month search and two months without an ED, the GSS Executive Board is excited to announce that the search has concluded! Our new Executive Director will be starting in the next few weeks, and I everyone from the board to the staff are really looking forward to welcoming Kyla Turner to the organization.

Cheers,

Drake Rushford

2020-21 GSS Chair.

## APPENDIX B: DEPARTMENT REPORTS SUBMITTED

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### **SCHOOL OF MUSIC – Tiess McKenzie**

The School of Music does not offer an online degree in any form, and so is working toward having all grad students present in Victoria. Many students are struggling with Visa applications and as of yet, haven't made it to Canada, despite having letters from the University that they are required to be in Victoria for the program. There is some struggles with remote classes: in terms of using Zoom for music specific purposes, it is not an ideal program (there is no perfect software available), and we are still learning the best way to use Zoom to have consistently good audio which is vital for our work. There is also the struggle for students who are not yet in Canada of dealing with time zones and attending seminars late at night for many folks.

We also had an issue with having TAs paid on time, as of today, October 27th, no School of Music TAs have been paid to my knowledge, but we have received assurance that we will be paid on October 30th. This seems to have been an error of paperwork being lost in the shuffle with various people working from home this fall.

Otherwise the attitudes around the School are mostly optimistic - there has never been an ideal world for learning and making music, and so in some ways we are used to dealing with challenging circumstances. The strict protocols for the use of the building in the MacLaurin B Wing have so far worked fairly well to keep everyone safe while also providing at least some space for practice, research, and learning. We are feeling quite isolated from each other compared to typical years when we would've had many recitals and ensemble performances by now, and so I am hoping that we will be able to increase social engagement, both virtually and in person as the term progresses.

### **DEPARTMENT OF CHEMISTRY – Greg Gaube and Archita Adluri**

We would like to voice that many students in chemistry are suffering because of the covid-19 rules that have been put into place. Although necessary, we want to acknowledge that the mental health of many students has deteriorated. Rotating work schedules have been extremely tough, office capacity has been severely reduced or removed altogether, and consequently any social aspect to student's days has been significantly reduced or eliminated altogether if their work does not require lab usage.