Bylaw and Policy Committee Annual Report, October 2021

Membership

Chair: David Foster, GSS Chair

Ex-officio, non-voting members: Kyla Turner, Executive Director; Karen Potts, Governance Coordinator; Tiffany Kuo, Electoral Officer (July 20 to August 31, 2021)

2020-21 members:
- Bobby Bickley
- Tom Ferguson
- Hanna Kim, Amanda Leclerc, Luisa Trux (co-reps)
- Michelle Snidal
- Brooklyn Trimble (resigned April 30, 2021)
- Hannah Reid (resigned June 8, 2021)

2021-22 members:
- Moronke Harris
- Matheson Gillis
- Bruna Barusco
- Dee Wong
- Tom Ferguson
- Tyler Branston
- Stefanie Dorosz
- Bobby Bickley
- Christopher Jones (also Electoral Officer)
- Arash Isapour
- Paige Thombs

Overview of Work Completed

When I took office as GSS Chair in April 2021, the Bylaw and Policy Committee had only met twice since October. While the BPC did not have a formal workplan, a few priorities had been identified with ongoing work on GSS bylaw amendments to permit online voting and remove outdated references to physical space and advertising to reflect the new virtual context, as well as collection of GSS position statements for inclusion in the Governance Manual.

My term began with holding a training session for BPC members that covered general public policy development as well as policy in the GSS context. Creation of a Policy on Policies and Procedures was prioritized in order to introduce a systematic approach to development, approval and implementation of GSS policies. Under the Policy on Policies and Procedures, each policy will have an appropriate development body assigned to it, rather than the BPC serving as the default development body. Policies will be separated from enabling procedures and will be divided into a Governance Manual and an
Operations Manual to reflect which policies relate to the Executive Board/GRC and governance issues, and which relate to staff and operational issues. The Policy on Policies and Procedures was approved by GRC on June 8, 2021, setting the stage for implementation of the new policy governance framework.

The BPC subsequently decided through consultation that the BPC was the appropriate body to collect recommendations for proposed new policies, decide whether the proposed policy fits in the Governance or Operations Manual and choose an appropriate development body. In addition, the BPC will continue to serve as the development body for governance policies. Revisions to the BPC’s membership and terms of reference to reflect its new duties were approved by GRC on July 20, 2021, along with a revision to the Finance Committee’s terms of reference to reflect its role as the development authority for financial policies and restricted fund terms of reference.

On the bylaw front, the BPC was active in developing amendments to include online voting and remove references to physical space and advertising, thanks to the work of our dedicated committee members. The Electoral Officer also put significant time and effort into reviewing the online voting amendments and participating in revisions to the Electoral Officer bylaw. I drafted a number of housekeeping bylaw amendments as well. All of these proposed bylaw changes were passed by the BPC for recommendation to the Annual General Meeting in October.

I am pleased to report that the BPC completed the following work in 2020-21:

- Policy on Policy and Procedures – APPROVED by GRC June 8, 2021
- Physical Space Bylaw Amendments – RECOMMENDED to AGM June 18, 2021
- Online Voting Bylaw Amendments – RECOMMENDED to AGM July 6, 2021
- BPC, Finance Committee and SRC TOR Revisions – APPROVED by GRC July 20, 2021
- Electoral Officer, Society Membership, Policy Creation, GRC Attendance, Non-Partisanship and Housekeeping Bylaw Amendments – RECOMMENDED to AGM August 13, 2021

Overview of Incomplete and Outstanding Work

Due to feasibility, time constraints and decisions of the BPC, several items are ongoing, incomplete or did not move forward. A proposed GRC election policy that would have given the Electoral Officer limited oversight of GRC elections did not pass because the BPC identified that bylaw changes would need to be made first (which were subsequently drafted and recommended to the AGM).

I proposed a University Representation Committee to provide a forum for the GSS and graduate student representatives on UVic governance bodies to collaborate, but this was shelved pending further consultation as BPC members felt it could create too many additional meetings for GSS reps.

A committee member drafted an amendment to Bylaw 10 that would provide clarity regarding the ability of the Stipend Review Committee to disallow an Executive Board member’s stipend. This was not recommended to the 2021 AGM as the 2020-21 BC’s term ended before it could receive feedback on the proposed wording from the Stipend Review Committee.

A BPC member undertook significant work on reformatting position statements for inclusion in the Governance Manual, and this project was left ongoing.
The issue of GSS membership for students on leave was referred to the BPC, and a committee member conducted some initial research, but the issue was left to be taken up by the current year committee.

Implementation of the Policy on Policies and Procedures is a significant ongoing project that is part of the larger work of revising all the GSS’ current policies.

The Executive Board passed a motion to develop a conduct policy for Board and GRC members, which will be one of the BPC’s next projects. Another project for the 2021-22 committee will be potential restructuring of GRC to increase membership and address disparities in faculty and department size.

**Priorities for 2021-22**

On November 3, 2021, the BPC approved its 2021-22 Committee Workplan. The main projects included in this workplan are creation of a Board and GRC conduct policy, development of a proposal to restructure GRC and change how GRC elections are conducted, and continued implementation of the new policy governance framework. New electoral policy and a policy on in-camera Board meetings are also slated for development. Finally, the committee is moving forward with creation of a bylaw amendment that would allow students on leave to opt into full voting membership in the GSS.