Student Affairs Committee Annual Report, October 2021

Membership
Chair: Nahid Pourdolat Safari, GSS Director of Student Affairs
Ex-officio, non-voting members: Kyla Turner, Executive Director

2020-21 members:
• Talya Jespersom
• Michael Alliso
• Elyse Lowen
• Archita Adluri
• Lauren Peterson
• Aria Eini
• Gregory Gaube

2021-22 members:
• Rae Dias
• Ariya Eini
• Tahmineh Farnoud
• Dee Wong
• Wyatt Maddox
• Moronke Harris
• Maeve Milligan
• Zonke Guddah
• Echo Huang
• Michael Allison
• Gregory Gaube
• Chrissy Schellenberg
• David Serrano

Overview of Work Completed

My term started considering that the previous student affairs committee has formed in Covid time and everything had shifted to online format which was completely new to the committee members. They have met regularly since October, there were some incomplete items from that committee that we have started to work on them and complete them.

The first concern came to student affairs committee around the tuition increase decision by the Board of Governors, as the international students’ increased 3.75 percent in 2021-2022 school year, we have asked university to consider the negative results of these decisions on students’ life and on their academic achievement.

In June, with discovery of unmarked graves at the sites of residential schools, student affairs committee devoted the monthly meeting to advocate who have been affected by this difficult situation and prepare a list of available options for students and their families both inside and outside of the university. This
draft has been shared through GSS with students. The committee provided a list including mental health support systems, donation options and volunteer opportunities.

In 2019, the BC government announced that Medical Services Plan (MSP) premiums would be eliminated by January 2020. However, while nearly all BC residents no longer pay MSP, the premiums were retained for international post-secondary students, who actually saw an increase in cost from $37.50 to $75 per month. The GSS wrote a letter to the Ministry of Health in fall 2019 opposing the continuation of MSP premiums for international students, but so far the fee has not been changed. MSP premium costs was the most complained problem and student affairs committee has worked on a petition. In August, we developed a petition to the BC Legislative Assembly calling for the elimination of international student MSP premiums to circulate among members of the GSS, UVSS, GSSBC and other student societies. Besides, we have worked with GSSBC to coordinate advocacy for abolition of international student MSP premiums with other student societies. This item is nearly finished and it is not officially included in the list for 2021-2022 committee work.

Overview of Incomplete and Outstanding

A working group had worked on RA legal status subject last year and they have a made a draft ready to be delivered to the new president of university, President Kevin Hall. The draft was well written and could be effective, however with some changes through RA situations through CUPE4163, the draft was not fit the current situation and the whole process should be start over again. So due to lengthy process, in 2021 we postponed writing the letter to the president of the university and instead asked for the consultation with a lawyer before writing any letter. We are going to consult with past and present GFRAs to identify the current scope of the problem and the most appropriate and supported option to move forward.

Priorities for 2021-2022

Student Affairs Committee has several ongoing and incomplete items that should move forward with new committee members. We are going to work in four working group on items including RA legal status, Housing crisis, UVic Committee Stipend, and Office Space problem.

Based on the decision of the board, UVic committee stipend advocacy will be done through Student Affairs Committee. Student representation on University committees is essential indecision making. Serving in some of the committees such as search and hiring committees, awards adjudication and appeal committees can be highly time-consuming. Therefore, the GSS supports a University policy that would provide stipends to student representatives on the most time-intensive committees to recognize their work. Housing crisis and office space have been included later in our list and hopefully will move forward in this educational year.