

*University of Victoria Graduate Students' Society*

## Graduate Representative Council

MEETING MINUTES (ONLINE VIA ZOOM)

JANUARY 25, 2022, 5-7 PM

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

**Anthropology:** Rae Dias

**Art History & Visual Studies:** Shruti Parthasarathy

**Biochemistry & Microbiology:** Michael Allison

**Chemistry:** Greg Gaube

**Earth & Ocean Sciences:** Chrissy Schellenberg

**English:** Julie Funk

**Exercise Science, Physical & Health**

**Education:** Emily Magel

**French:** Alphonse Bode Abiodun

**Geography:** Wyatt Maddox

**Greek & Roman Studies:** Alix Galumbeck

**Health Information Science:** Dee Wong

**History:** Dax Tate

**Law:** Carol Marinho-Ribeiro

**Linguistics:** Mona Sawan

**Music:** Kayleigh Francis (part)

**Pacific & Asian Studies:** Maeve Milligan

**Physics & Astronomy:** Bobby Bickley

**Public Health and Social Policy:** Zachary Derrick

**Sociology:** Tyler Branston

**Visual Arts:** Colton Hash

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

**Chair:** David FOSTER

**Director of Communications:** Nicole KENT

**Director of Finance:** Ryan KHAN

**Director of Services:** Adair NG

**Director of Student Affairs:** Nahid SAFARI

**Executive Director:** Kyla TURNER (non-voting)

**Recorder:** GSS Governance Coordinator: Karen L. Potts

### **Regrets:**

**Biology:** Sarah Lane

**Curriculum & Instruction:** Sara Fallahi, Tahmineh Farnoud

**Psychology:** Tom Ferguson

### **Absent without notice or proxy:**

**Civil Engineering:** Ariya Eini, David Serrano

**Computer Science:** João Batista Rocha Bezerra Junior

**Economics:** Matheson Gillis

**Educational Psychology & Leadership Studies:** Rohit Jain, Echo Huang

**Electrical & Computer Engineering:** Amir Sepahi, Anushka Halder

**Neuroscience:** Hannah Reid

**Mechanical Engineering:** Gerard Avellaneda Domeme

**Political Science:** Lingyu Jing

**Public Administration:** Christopher Jones

**Social Dimensions of Health:** Eli Verdugo

**Theatre:** Vjosa Mala, Arash Isapour

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## CALL TO ORDER AND LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

FOSTER called the meeting to order at 5:04 pm.

DIAS offered a land acknowledgement.

## STANDING ITEMS

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### 1. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

*MOTION: RESOLVED that the agenda is approved as presented.*

*M/S MADDOX/DERRICK*

*Approved by CONSENT.*

### 2. TIMEKEEPER VOLUNTEER (NON-EXECUTIVE MEMBER)

MADDOX volunteered.

### 3. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

*MOTION: RESOLVED that the Minutes of the December 14, 2021 GRC meeting are approved as presented.*

*M/S DIAS/ALLISON*

*Approved by CONSENT.*

### 4. BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES/PAST MEETINGS

None.

### 5. REPORTS

#### A. MEMBERSHIP REPORT

**GSS Membership:** As of January 18, 2022 there are 3117 GSS Members.

**GRC Membership:** GRC now consists of 51 voting members: 34 academic units (out of 46 academic units eligible), and 5 Executive Board members.

**Meeting Quorum:** With 3 regrets received, quorum for tonight's meeting is 18.

#### B. CHAIR'S REMARKS

See [Appendix A](#) for the full text of FOSTER's remarks.

#### C. EXECUTIVE BOARD REPORTS

REF DOCS: [Executive Board Reports September to December, 2021](#)

December Executive Board reports were available. There were no questions or comments.

#### D. ACADEMIC UNIT & COUNCILLOR REPORTS – ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION

FOSTER provided some guiding questions for this month's reports, specifically regarding GRC members' perspectives on the University's return to in-person classes in the Spring 2022 semester.

- How has the University's decision to begin classes online and then transition to in-person affected students in your unit?
- Should the University prioritize providing the greatest possible amount of in-person instruction, even if this means frequent disruptions as classes move from online to in-person and back, or a consistent mode of course delivery throughout the semester, even if this means forgoing in-person instruction?

GRC reps reported the following concerns:

Members who have teaching responsibilities reported that there was an increase in workload associated with pivoting between online and in-person teaching. Members had differing comfort levels with in-person teaching and different preferences regarding providing in-person versus online instruction. However, across all members, there was a sense that the adaptation to remote learning had been under-supported and the workload of graduate student TAs and instructors had increased significantly due to the move to remote learning for three weeks, followed by a return to campus. GRC reps would like to see UVic increase their supports to teaching staff for adapting their teaching models to hybrid/remote/in-person formats as public health orders require. GSS staff present advised GRC reps of the resources available through the Learning and Teaching Support and Innovation centre and asked them to circulate that information to their members.

Members who study on campus reported concerns around lack of available space in which to eat or drink due to masking requirements, limited open study spaces (especially for members trying to log into remote classes from campus), and a profound dearth of graduate student work space on campus. Some members reported that the University's removal of public seating had left their department with no viable place to work, eat, or drink.

All members expressed concerns around safety, overwork, and disruptions caused by the pandemic. There was a desire for increased transparency and communication from UVic leadership regarding the decision making process and safety assessment process. There continue to be equity concerns for those more significantly impacted by the pandemic (immunocompromised, those whose programs must be completed in-person, etc.) in terms of access to University supports. Re-entry anxiety was felt strongly by many members, and UVic's messaging has not adequately addressed those concerns to date.

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

BREAK

Meeting was called back to order at 6:02 pm.

#### E. GRC STANDING COMMITTEES – APPOINTMENTS AND REPORTS

##### **STANDING COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

- Appeals – NG reported still receiving about 3 appeals per month.
- Bylaw & Policy – FOSTER reported that three policies have been finalized and are coming to GRC for approval tonight. It is expected that more will be ready for the February GRC. Also looking at a bylaw change to allow for membership of grad students on leave.
- Communications – KENT reported the committee has been working on improving social media presence with targets to meet, and promoting the bi-weekly eBulletin.
- Events – NG reported on the upcoming movie night, language learning series and a knit and chat session.
- Finance – KHAN reported that Finance Committee needs its members to attend to do work on the Student Advocate Fund Terms of Reference and input to the proposed budget for 2022-23.
- Stipend Review – GALUMBECK reported that the Committee has not met for a while since the Executive reports were not available for review.

- Student Affairs – the committee has not met for some time, but UVic did respond to their letter regarding the need for hot food options on campus in the evening.

#### COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS:

*MOTION: RESOLVED that Arash ISAPOUR is deemed to have resigned from the Bylaw and Policy Committee effective January 12, 2022, and FURTHER RESOLVED that João Batista Rocha BEZERRA Jr, Anushka HALDER and Vjosa MALA are deemed to have resigned from the Communications Committee effective immediately, and FURTHER RESOLVED that Rohit JAIN, Anushka HALDER, Oluwatosin ADEYEMI and Kirsten LOCHER are deemed to have resigned from the Events Committee effective immediately.*  
 M/S DERRICK/ALLISON  
 Approved by CONSENT.

The people who have been removed from their GRC committees for non-attendance are expected to join a committee that they will be able to attend. As all people who have been removed from a GRC Committee were not in attendance, no motion for re-appointment was made.

#### F. GRADUATE REPRESENTATION ON UVIC COMMITTEES - REPORTS

##### REPORTS FROM GRAD REPS ON UVIC COMMITTEES:

- Board of Governors: See [Appendix B](#) for the full text of FOSTER's report.
- Senate: See [Appendix B](#) for the full text of FOSTER's report.
- HSD Council: DERRICK reported that have been elected to HSD Council and had concern that curriculum changes were voted on in the Council meeting without the specific curriculum changes being available in the meeting. FOSTER noted that the new HSD Council bylaws had many issues of concern regarding role of student representatives.
- Faculty of Humanities Council: PARTHASARATHY reported on work for a new Humanities Commons, new fellowships, and an upcoming Humanities Week.

Note: Reps are encouraged to submit short written reports to [gssgov@uvic.ca](mailto:gssgov@uvic.ca) for inclusion in the minutes.

#### COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS:

*MOTION: RESOLVED that graduate student representatives are elected to the following UVic committees:*

- 2021-22 Faculty of Social Sciences Awards and Recognition Committee – 1 member in Social Sciences. Nominations: No nominations.
- 2021-22 Faculty of Social Sciences Dean's Advisory Forum on Indigenization – 1 member in Social Sciences. Nominations: No nominations.
- 2022-23 Appointment Committee for Reappointment of the University Librarian – 1 member. Nominations: Kayleigh FRANCIS Member elected: Kayleigh FRANCIS

M/S BICKLEY/ALLISON  
 Approved by CONSENT.

## MEETING NEW BUSINESS

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### 1. ENGAGED HR FUNDING ALLOCATION

Lead: David FOSTER

*MOTION: WHEREAS the Board of Directors approved the allocation of \$2000 to a limited scope contract with Engaged HR, a human resource consulting firm, on November 8, 2021, in order to provide professional advice to assist the Board in discharging its personnel management responsibilities, and, WHEREAS the current cost of services from Engaged HR to date is \$2,115.75, and, WHEREAS the Board still requires additional work from Engaged HR to complete the Executive Director's performance review and performance feedback, and, WHEREAS the Board of Directors has identified the need for incoming Board members to receive human resources training in order to perform their duties effectively and reduce risk to the Society,*

***RESOLVED that Grad Council approves the allocation of an additional \$2500 to Engaged HR, which includes \$795 to amend the scope of the contract to include human resources training for incoming Board members.***

M/S SCHELLENBERG/BICKLEY  
CARRIED.

### 2. GRC ELECTION POLICY

REF DOCS: GRC Election Policy REVISED; Interim Governance Manual, Policy 3 – Graduate Representative Council Appointment Policy (page 5)

Lead: David FOSTER

*MOTION: WHEREAS Bylaw 4.1(d) was amended at the November 23, 2021 Annual General Meeting to add ensuring the integrity of GRC elections to the duties of the Electoral Officer, and WHEREAS Bylaw 4.13 was amended at the November 23, 2021 Annual General Meeting to provide for remuneration of the Electoral Officer for work conducted to ensure the integrity of GRC elections,*

*RESOLVED that the revised GRC Election Policy is adopted, as recommended by the Bylaw and Policy Committee, and*

*FURTHER RESOLVED that Policy 3 – Graduate Representative Council Appointment Policy is rescinded, as recommended by the Bylaw and Policy Committee.*

M/S BICKLEY/TATE  
Approved by CONSENT.

### 3. EXECUTIVE BOARD VACANCIES POLICY

REF DOCS: Executive Board Vacancies Policy REVISED; Interim Governance Manual, Policy 4 – Appointments to Executive Board Vacancies (page 6)

Lead: David FOSTER

*MOTION: RESOLVED that the revised Executive Board Vacancies Policy is approved, as recommended by the Bylaw and Policy Committee, and*

*FURTHER RESOLVED that Policy 4 – Appointments to Executive Board Vacancies is rescinded, as recommended by the Bylaw and Policy Committee.*

M/S FRANCIS/HASH  
Approved by CONSENT.

4. CONFLICT OF INTEREST POLICY

REF DOCS: Conflict of Interest Policy REVISED; Interim Governance Manual, Policy 7 – Appointments to Executive Board Vacancies (page 6)

Lead: David FOSTER

Purpose: for decision

*MOTION: RESOLVED that the revised Conflict of Interest Policy is approved, as recommended by the Bylaw and Policy Committee, and FURTHER RESOLVED that Policy 7 –Conflict of Interest and Resource Use Policy is rescinded, as recommended by the Bylaw and Policy Committee.*

M/S BICKLEY/DIAS  
Approved by CONSENT.

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CLOSING ITEMS

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IMPORTANT DATE REMINDERS: CHECK YOUR GRC CONNECT HOMEPAGE CALENDAR!

Next GRC meeting: **February 22, 2022, 5-7pm via Zoom**

GRC training sessions: **Indigenous Cultural Acumen Training – TBD**

REQUESTS FOR SUPPORT/ADVOCACY/PARTICIPATION

FRANCIS encouraged members to come out for live in person music events by the music grads:  
<https://finearts.uvic.ca/music/calendar/events/>

NOTICES OF MOTION FOR NEXT MEETING

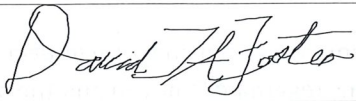
None.


ADJOURNMENT

*MOTION: RESOLVED that the meeting is adjourned.*  
M/S FRANCIS/ALLISON  
Approved by CONSENT.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:47 pm.

klp/KT

X   
David Foster  
GSS Chair 2021-22

X   
Kyla Turner  
GSS Executive Director

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## APPENDIX A: CHAIR'S REMARKS – DAVID FOSTER

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- Since we last met, the Omicron variant of COVID-19 has had immense global and local impact
- The Halpern Centre remains closed to the public due to concerns regarding Omicron and the status of several GSS staff members as either high-risk, or with high-risk family members
- UVic has gone ahead with returning to in-person classes, and has contingency plans in place for when instructors or students are required to be absent due to illness or quarantine, such as availability of recorded lectures or temporary online teaching
- With the advent of the Omicron wave, UVic experienced a sudden demand for COVID testing from vaccinated, symptomatic students at the on-campus rapid testing centre
- As the testing centre was designed to screen the very small number of unvaccinated students, faculty and staff, it did not have the capacity to meet the new demand, and was shut down
- Rapid tests for vaccinated individuals will be arriving at BC universities in the coming weeks, however we can expect them to be rationed and not available to everyone on demand
- UVic is confident that transmission will remain low with the existing layers of protection on campus (a highly vaccinated population; expansion of mandatory mask-wearing; enhanced ventilation in university buildings)
- The course drop date and the deadline for graduate students to register for personal leave was extended to January 30 due to the changes in course delivery
- In other COVID news, the GSS Board has signed onto the Alliance of BC Students' letter to the BC government requesting that provincial return-to-campus guidelines are revised to include greater flexibility for online and hybrid course attendance, particularly for immune-compromised and vulnerable students
- In non-COVID news, the GSS Board has also endorsed the Alliance of BC Students' submission on the 2022 BC Budget, which calls for increased investment in post-secondary student mental health, sexualized violence prevention and Indigenous student support
- The GSS has begun our consultations regarding the Grad House Restaurant space with an online survey and a series of Town Hall meetings
  - While the first Town Hall had no attendance, the second had a small but engaged turnout
  - If you'd like to make your voice heard, please consider attending one of the remaining Town Hall meetings on January 27 at 5pm or February 2 at 10am, via Zoom
  - The survey on the restaurant space has had a large number of responses
- The University is consulting students on its policy for access and accommodation for students with disabilities (please see the email sent out regarding a meeting on January 27 at 10am and get involved if you are interested!)
- The GSS' campaign for compensation to students on the most time intensive UVic committees (e.g., hiring committees) is moving forward, as I've introduced a motion to the February Senate meeting to develop a policy on this
- The GSS has also had issues with attendance at some GRC committees, particularly Finance, which needs to approve the Society budget and revisions to the Student Advocate Fund terms of reference in the next three weeks
  - We will support committee members as best we can, but you need to communicate with your committee chair and let them know what your barriers to attendance are



## APPENDIX B: EXTERNAL REPRESENTATION REPORTS

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### BOARD OF GOVERNORS REPORT – DAVID FOSTER

- The Board of Governors met on January 24 and 25, 2022
- UVic has just met its fundraising goal of \$25 million for 2021-22 (\$21.18 million was raised in 2020-21)
- The Student Housing and Dining Facility construction is going ahead, however the proposed National Centre for Indigenous Laws (an extension to the existing Fraser law building) is expected to be \$5-7 million over budget and to open in 2024, a year later than first planned
- I have drafted changes to the Board of Governors' Procedures and Statement of Responsibilities regarding the representative role of elected members, since this was totally absent from the current documents, and will be working with other Board members to bring these forward

### SENATE REPORT – DAVID FOSTER

- Senate met on January 7, 2022
- The main issue discussed was the change to course drop dates due to the University's decision to start classes online in January and then transition to in-person delivery
- Ultimately, a motion passed to change the drop date for 100% tuition refund to January 30, but amendments by student senators to also change the 50% refund date and the final date to drop courses without academic penalty were defeated
- I tabled my own motion to increase student representation on the Senate Committee on Agenda and Governance because the motion had been referred to that committee, which then recommended against it without consulting the UVSS, GSS or most of the student senators
- It is concerning that a UVic committee with only one student on it would come out against a proposal to increase student representation, without any significant consultation with students
- Senate is meeting on February 4, when I will be introducing a motion to strike a working group to develop a policy on compensation for student representatives the most time-intensive University committees
- There are also two motions from another student on the agenda, including one to allow students to drop courses without academic penalty if the University moves from in-person to online course delivery again
- New rules on changing modes of course delivery in September 2022 and beyond are also expected to be on the agenda

