

University of Victoria Graduate Students' Society
Graduate Representative Council
(ONLINE VIA BLACKBOARD) MEETING MINUTES
JANUARY 26TH, 2021, 5-7 PM

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

Anthropology: Robert Gustas	Lauren Petersen	Nursing: Erin Donald
Art History & Visual Studies: Mel Granley	Electrical & Computer Engineering:	Pacific & Asian Studies: Maeve Milligan
Biochemistry & Microbiology: Michael Allison	Alexandros Dimopoulos	Physics & Astronomy: Bobby Bickley
	English: Elyse Loewen	Political Science: Brianna Parent-Long
Biology: Nicholas Planidin	French: Tiffany Kuo (Electoral Officer)	Psychology: Thomas Ferguson
Chemistry: Gregory Gaube	Geography: Brianna Brandon	Public Administration: Amanda Leclerc
Curriculum & Instruction: Adair Ng	Germanic & Slavic Studies: Rachel Colquhoun	Social Dimensions of Health:
Earth & Ocean Sciences: Chrissy Schellenberg	History: Michelle Snidal	Courtney Majewski
Economics: Brooklynn Trimble, Gerard Wu	Medical Sciences (Neuroscience):	Sociology: Talya Jespersen
	Hannah Reid	CUPE 4163: Christine Todd
Educational Psychology & Leadership:	Music: Tiess McKenzie	

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

Chair: Drake RUSHFORD	Director of Services: Daniel GUDIÑO
Director of Communications: Nicole KENT	Director of Student Affairs: Antoine ROSE
Director of Finance: Jacob HUNT	Executive Director: Kyla TURNER (non-voting)

Guests Attending: CSPT: Rachel Schneider

Recorder: GSS Governance Coordinator: Karen L. Potts

Absent:

Civil Engineering: Aryia Eini, Maryam Monazami
Law: Adekunle (Kunle) Adewumi
Theatre: Devon Goldie
Visual Arts: Liam O'Sullivan

CALL TO ORDER AND LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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

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

STANDING ITEMS

A. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

MOTION: RESOLVED that the agenda is approved as presented.

M/S SCHELLENBERG/PARENT-LONG

Approved by CONSENT.

B. TIMEKEEPER VOLUNTEER (NON-EXECUTIVE MEMBER)

SCHELLENBERG volunteered.

C. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

OMNIBUS MOTION:

RESOLVED that the Minutes from the October 27th, 2020 Grad Council meeting are approved as presented].

RESOLVED that the Minutes from the December 15, 2020 Grad Council meeting are approved as presented.

M/S KUO/SCHELLENBERG

CARRIED

D. BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES/PAST MEETINGS

OMNIBUS MOTION:

RESOLVED that the Dec. 15 motion to award a \$100 stipend to the Incumbent Director of Communications be rescinded.

RESOLVED that Nicole Kent, incoming Director of Communications, will receive a \$100 stipend in recognition of GSS work undertaken prior to the January 1st start of her term of office.

M/S HUNT/ALISON

CARRIED

E. REPORTS

1. MEMBERSHIP REPORT

GSS Membership: As of November 24, 2020 there were 2913 GSS Members.

GRC Membership: Since the December 15th GRC meeting, there has been 1 new elected Councillor: Christine Todd, representing CUPE 4163. Welcome Christine! And, as per Bylaw 6.3 g, 1 member is deemed to have resigned, Masoud Mokhtari from Computer Science.

Therefore, GRC now has 29 of 47 academic units represented.

Meeting Quorum: With no regrets received, quorum for tonight's meeting is 17. Quorum is met.

2. CHAIR'S REMARKS

RUSHFORD reported that his emphasis was turning to preparation for the next Board transition. The Executive has struck two subcommittees related to improving the orientation, training and Board transition.

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

MOTION: *RESOLVED that Grad Council approves the Executive Board Reports received for the month of December 2020.*

M/S KUO/ALISON

CARRIED

4. GRC STANDING COMMITTEES – APPOINTMENTS AND REPORTS

STANDING COMMITTEE REPORTS:

- Appeals – GUDIÑO reported that there have been no appeals yet for this term, as the extended deadline is Feb. 11 for health and dental insurance opt in/opt out.
- Bylaw & Policy – RUSHFORD reported that Committee members will be hearing from him with help for them to complete their assigned tasks in the next days.
- Communications – no report.
- Events –GUDIÑO reported that a NONOXON training event was held cooperatively with AVI. There will be further sessions, along with a social and speaker series beginning in February. Watch for details in the eBulletin.
- Finance – HUNT reported that the Committee has not met since they have not yet received any financial statements to review. Next major task is preparing next year's budget.
- Student Affairs – no report.
- Stipend Review – PLANIDIN reported that the Committee plans on reviewing Executive Board duties and asked for feedback.
- Electoral Officer – KUO provided the dates for this years Board of Directors elections.
 - Friday, February 5 – Nomination Period Begins
 - Tuesday, February 23 – Nomination Period Closes
 - Wednesday, February 24 – Campaign period begins
 - Monday-Wednesday, March 3-5 – Voting period (UVic webvote)
 - Preliminary results posted within two days of polls closing
 - March 15 – Appeals Close

COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS:

MOTION: RESOLVED that Christine Todd has been elected to the 2020-21 Student Affairs GRC Standing Committee.
M/S REID/ALISON
CARRIED

5. GRADUATE REPRESENTATION ON UVIC COMMITTEES

COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS:

MOTION: RESOLVED that Talya JESPERSON has been elected as the graduate student representative to the 2021 Search Committee for Associate Dean Academic, Faculty of Social Sciences.
M/S PETERSON/KUO
CARRIED

REPORTS FROM GRAD REPS ON UVIC COMMITTEES:

Senate Committee on Academic Standards: DONALD reported that a subcommittee has formed to look into academic standing and is requesting feedback. Please send feedback to: donalde@uvic.ca

Vice Provost Hiring Committee: TRIMBLE is now the primary representative.

Humanities Council: SNIDAL reported that the Faculty of Humanities was developing a student distress protocol pamphlet for faculty and TAs to support students. New President will be at Faculty Council meeting in February. Humanities grad students should contact SNIDAL with questions or concerns: msnidal@uvic.ca.

6. ACADEMIC UNIT REPORTS (APPENDIX A)

Note: Reps were asked to submit short written reports for inclusion in the minutes. SEE APPENDIX A.

Arising from the information sharing session:

- Significant issues trying to access help and support from International Student Services. Response times have been over a month. It was noted that the office was undergoing a re-organization in December, and early January.
- Reports of apparent discrimination against women and women with children graduate students being refused travel visas. It was suggested that the UVic EQHR may have suggestions for sources for advice. ROSE noted that GSS's from all BC universities were looking at ways to collaborate on international student advocacy.
- Concerns for graduate students who are medically vulnerable being left behind by efforts to re-open campus before there is full herd immunity. Concern that a focus and emphasis on a 'return to normal' enforces able-ism. Concern that medically vulnerable grad students are not being accommodated in their TA work requirements. Concern that the Centre for Accessible Learning does not have a broad enough mandate to address this.
- Interest was expressed in graduate students across departments collaborating and sharing information on incorporating anti-racist strategies.

TASK: RUSHFORD to look at how GSS can be responsible/accountable to graduate students who are medically compromised and at greater risk or disadvantage from any campus re-opening plan that does not include equal off campus options. (Specifically to review GSS bylaws for potential amendments at March SAGM.)

HUNT read the GSS position statement adopted by the Executive Board on January 6, 2021 regarding any move to campus re-opening. This statement was largely based on conversations and feedback received when UVic was contemplating the later start date to the January semester.

Executive Board Motion, January 6th, 2021: RESOLVED that the GSS does currently not support more in-person courses during the Summer term of 2021 until there are clear plans from the University regarding safety of in-person courses.

BREAK

MEETING NEW BUSINESS

1. CSPT SEAT CREATION

Lead: Rachel Schneider

Purpose: for decision

REF: Bylaw 6.3 c Council may create Grad Rep positions for any group by a majority resolution. This Grad Rep position will be temporary, ending with the term of the current Graduate Representative Council, on August 31.

Motion: RESOLVED that the CSPT program will have a seat on the Graduate Representative Council for the remainder of the 2020-21 GRC year.

M/S DONALD/ROSE

CARRIED

Motion: RESOLVED that that Rachel Schneider has been elected to the 2020-21 Communications GRC Standing Committee, pending confirmation as the official CSPT rep.

M/S KUO/SHELLENBERG

CARRIED

2. RECRUITMENT COMMITTEE

Lead: TURNER

Purpose: for decision

TURNER explained that the Executive proposed creating a new committee to encourage member participation in getting nominees and in voting for next year's Board of Directors. TURNER explained that these tasks were especially important this year with so many members being disconnected from on-campus. The proposed committee would work on strategies to better communicate about the upcoming election, and encourage voting participation. The Committee would not be endorsing any specific candidates. The Committee will start meeting as soon as possible and wrap up shortly after the election.

RUSHFORD asked for feedback on the proposed Committee, specifically on whether the Committee should focus on reaching out broadly to as many grad students as possible vs. encouraging reps to focus on their own academic units.

DONALD expressed support for work currently being done by the Communications Committee and suggested building on this. RUSHFORD explained that our current communication tools (Bulletin, social media) are very limited as they require members to have opted in. Our mass emails reach everyone but they lack the potential for any graphics or two way exchange as personal encouragement/relationship to getting people to run.

SNIDAL while supportive of the idea of the Recruitment Committee noted that she did not feel confident that she could explain the duties of Executive Board.

RUSHFORD summarized the discussion as general support for the Committee to work on materials and then asking GRC reps to circulate and promote the materials.

RUSHFORD proposed that KENT chair the as a sub-committee of the Communications Committee. Staff and current Board can provide content re: Board duties. SCHNEIDER and BICKLEY volunteered. TURNER and/or BARNEY will provide staff support.

Motion: RESOLVED that the GRC will strike a Recruitment Committee to engage with graduate students and encourage participate in the Executive Board and GRC elections.

FURTHER RESOLVED that the Recruitment Committee will be comprised of Nicole KENT, Rachel SCHNEIDER, and Bobby BICKLEY.

M/S ROSE/KUO

CARRIED

3. PRIORITY SETTING FOR ACADEMIC YEAR 2021-22

Lead: Drake Rushford

Purpose: for discussion

RUSHFORD explained that the previous Board had to be very internally focused due to issues with the restaurant etc. Similarly, this past year, the Board was also internally focused due to COVID and the Executive Director transition. RUSHFORD stated that the current and past Board regretted not being able to do more advocacy work. He explained his priority in ending his term is setting up the next Board for success. RUSHFORD presented a series of guiding discussion questions and invited comment.

Discussion Questions:

- As the university begins to shift away from a primarily online environment, what challenges to you foresee in that transition?

Discussion points included:

HUNT – for students coming in, focus should be just on explaining where services now are and how to access them – what can you access on campus once restrictions are lifted

KUO – concern if there is going to be an obligation for students to return to campus and concern about putting household at risk

SNIDAL - special concern for students with families, children if university moves faster than other society institutions e.g. public schools, day care

REID – Neuroscience is lab based and has to be on campus, in-person. Experiences of new incoming first year Neuroscience – concern that procedures were being followed excessively for new arriving students for the protection of students already here.

DONALD – Now is the time not to go back to normal, which was never equitable. No on campus course should be offered without an online option until EVERYONE is safe to come back; unless UVic is ready to invest in universal design campus that is accessible to all students with disabilities, with families.

GUDIÑO spoke to the disconnect of the individual allowances from supervisors, small classes and the lack of accommodation by the larger university structures e.g. timelines for completing comprehensive exams, and the length of visas to compete work.

LOEWEN – thinking about the things that incoming students have missed – orientation, making early social contacts – how to do these things differently, how to catch these students up when things do re-open?

- What do you feel are some of the lasting impacts of the pandemic as it relates to your studies and academic success?

Discussion points included:

RUSHFORD – UVSS is lobbying for a designation about the COVID interruption being on all transcriptions for all terms in 2020-21. Currently only noted on summer 2020 transcripts.

SCELLENBERG – related that experiments started in USA had to be abandoned as had to leave to USA. Was fortunate to have to have funding for an extra year, but it will take an extra year of life, lost connections, motivation, had to repeat work, lost connection to being a grad student.

KUO – pandemic cut access to resources – print materials were not being shared, libraries were closed, publisher closed down, research stopped, and now need more funding for more time. Also thinking about other students in other provinces who might be affected differently.

- What do you view as the most pressing issues impacting graduate students at UVic?

Discussion points included:

RUSHFORD – systemic racism, climate change, housing

TRIMBLE – mental health and appropriate supports

KUO – remembering effects of the pandemic will be felt long after official crisis is over, housing

TRIMBLE – there will have to be transition, adjustment support in the expectation to suddenly be 'normal' again

GUSTAS – housing biggest issue in Anthropology

TODD – issue of inclusion/exclusion of students, by race, ability but also a lot of other factors

- Do you have any ideas on actions the GSS can take in 2021/22 to address these issues?

Discussion points included:

REID – departments should be starting to bring in speakers and develop a library on systemic racism.

Expressed support for the academic unit grant funding available through GSS

TRIMBLE – advocating for blended, mixed learning programs allow people to live in more affordable communities

KUO – GSS should provide list of rentals of people willing to house university students, connect with other rental resources

DIMOPOULOS – social activities to help people connect in the mix of online, off campus. Support for GSS Wednesday coffee, suggested online movie clubs, outdoor activities

TODD – actively recruit for homestay places for grad students

4. ACADEMIC UNIT ASSOCIATION CHECK-IN

Lead: Kyla Turner

Purpose: for discussion

Trying to move work forward on the project to develop and standardize academic unit associations for all graduate students, TURNER explained that the GSS needs to compile a full list of academic unit associations that already exist.

TASK: ALL GRC reps to email TURNER gssmgr@uvic.ca, as to whether academic unit has an association or not, formal or informal, active, inactive, and any contact information. TURNER will send out a more formal request on the GRC listserve.

CLOSING ITEMS

IMPORTANT DATE REMINDERS

GSS Board of Directors Election Dates:

Friday, February 5 – Nomination Period Begins

Tuesday, February 23 – Nomination Period Closes

Wednesday, February 24 – Campaign period begins

Monday-Wednesday, March 3-5 – Voting period (webvote)

Office, Staff Scheduling Notes: GSS Office Closed Feb 15-19, 2021 during Reading Break.

GSS SAGM:

- Please have any potential agenda items, with supporting materials, to the Executive Board for consideration, in advance of March 2, 2021.
- Agenda, Notice of Motions to be posted: March 16, 2021

Next GRC meeting: February 23, 2020.

- Please have any potential agenda items, with supporting materials, to the Executive Board for consideration, in advance of February 15, 2021
- Agenda, Notice of Motions to be posted: February 16, 2021.

REQUESTS FOR SUPPORT/ADVOCACY/PARTICIPATION

None.

NOTICES OF MOTION FOR NEXT MEETING

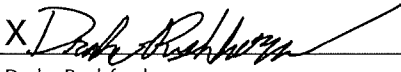
None.

ADJOURNMENT

*MOTION: RESOLVED to adjourn the meeting.
M/S ROSE/JESPERSON
CARRIED*

The meeting adjourned at 7:02 PM.

klp/

X 
Drake Rushford
GSS Chair 2020-21

X 
Kyla Turner
GSS Executive Director

APPENDIX A: DEPARTMENT REPORTS

Chemistry – Archita ADLURI and Greg GAUBE

The Department of Chemistry had a successful Winter break and was very happy with the university's decision to extend the winter break by one week. This was appreciated by the grad students. Archita and Greg helped with the Chemistry department's Christmas party which was held over Zoom this year. We also hosted our monthly #Chem600 zoom social, it was great to be introduced to some of the new faces in the department.

We would like to point out that some students were not allowed to enter lab spaces because of quarantine rules implemented by some PIs. These quarantine periods were not mandated by the government as the travel was within Canada or within the province. We would like the university to give clear guidelines about this as quarantine policies should be the same across campus.

Educational Psychology and Leadership – Lauren PETERSON

PETERSON inquired as to whether there were GSS supports available for International Students who were being denied visa due to their gender/family circumstance, as this has been happening to students who are mothers in our cohorts. This is having a negative impact on our cohorts, as we have a strong appreciation for equity, social justice and fairness. ROSE explained that typically GSS suggests reaching out to the ISS, but could expect delays. ROSE also mentioned the formation of a provincial committee that will advocate for international students in circumstances like this. ROSE was asked to report on this committee in more detail at the next meeting. POTTS suggested reaching out to EQHR Office if there is a question of human rights discrimination. PETERSON will bring this back to her faculty.

