

UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA GRADUATE STUDENTS' SOCIETY  
Semi-Annual General Meeting (online via Blackboard)

March 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2021

MEETING MINUTES

**VOTING MEMBERS PRESENT:**

GSS Chair: Drake RUSHFORD  
Director of Finance: Jacob HUNT  
Director of Student Affairs: Antoine ROSE  
Director of Services: Daniel GUDIÑO  
Director of Communication: Nicole KENT  
  
French: Tiffany Kuo (GRC, GSS Electoral Officer)  
Economics: Brooklynn Trimble (GRC)  
Economics: Gerard Mu (GRC)  
Psychology: Thomas Ferguson (GRC)  
History: Michelle Snidal (GRC)  
Nursing: Erin Donald (GRC)  
Curriculum & Instruction: Adair Ng (GRC)  
SEOS: Chrissy Schellenberg (GRC)  
Electrical & Computer Engineering: Alexandros Dimopoulos (GRC)  
English: Elyse Loewen (GRC)  
Chemistry: Gregory Gaube (GRC)  
Law: Adekunle (Kunle) Adewumi (GRC)  
Visual Arts: Liam O'Sullivan (GRC)

Pacific & Asian Studies: Maeve Milligan (GRC)  
Art History & Visual Studies: Mel Granley (GRC)  
Anthropology: Robert Gustas (GRC)  
Biochemistry & Microbiology: Michael Allison (GRC)  
Biology: Nicholas Planidin (GRC, Stipend Review Chair)  
Mathematics & Statistics: Mitch Haslehurst  
Public Administration: David Foster  
SEOS: Haipeng Luo  
Mechanical Engineering: Evan Stefanek  
Anthropology: Hannah Brown  
Public Administration: Trisha Renken-Sebastian  
Biochemistry & Microbiology: Bailey McGuire  
Biochemistry & Microbiology: Ladan Kalani

*Staff, Non-voting attendees:*

Executive Director: Kyla TURNER  
Office Coordinator, Governance: Karen L. Potts (Recorder)

---

CALL TO ORDER AND STANDING ITEMS

The meeting was called to order on the Blackboard Collaborate Videoconferencing platform, at 5:01 pm with RUSHFORD in the Chair.

A. LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

HUNT provided a personal land acknowledgement.

B. AGM ATTENDANCE AND QUORUM REPORT

TURNER reported that there were 28 members in good standing registered as of 5:04 pm, with more members waiting to register. GSS bylaws stipulate a 25 member minimum for a general meeting quorum therefore the meeting was declared quorate.

C. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

*Motion: RESOLVED that the Agenda of the March 23rd, 2021 GSS Semi-Annual General Meeting is approved as presented.*

*M/S ROSE, on behalf of the EXECUTIVE BOARD / KUO*

RUSHFORD presented friendly amendments to the agenda posted 7 days ago, removing draft motions that will be replaced with ballot votes. RUSHFORD noted that the amended draft agenda was posted on the website earlier in the day. There were no objections.

*APPROVED as AMENDED.*

D. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

*Motion: RESOLVED to approve the minutes of the November 24<sup>th</sup>, 2020 Annual General Meeting as presented.*

*M/S EXECUTIVE BOARD / FOSTER*

*APPROVED.*

---

NEW MEETING BUSINESS

---

1. PROPOSED BYLAW AMENDMENT: GRC CO-REPRESENTATIVES

[REF DOC: Proposed Bylaw Amendments, APPENDIX A: BYLAW VI AMENDMENTS, AS APPROVED]

*Motion: WHEREAS co-representation from academic units can foster participation in GRC;  
and*

*WHEREAS co-representation is already common practice for GRC;*

*RESOLVED THAT the proposed changes to Bylaw VI are approved.*

*M/S: Executive Board/TRIMBLE*

RUSHFORD noted a typo in the reference document where 'proxy' should be used instead of 'alternate' in 6.3e. RUSHFORD asked for this correction as a friendly amendment. There were no objections.

*APPROVED as AMENDED.*

2. MOTIONS FOR STIPENDS – NICK PLANIDIN, CHAIR STIPEND REVIEW COMMITTEE

PALADIN explained that the amounts presented were now consistent with the changes approved at the November AGM, linking the stipend rate to the UVic TA rate.

*Motion: RESOLVED THAT the stipends for the GSS Executive Board in 2021-2022 are set to be as follows:*

Chair:	\$ 921.40 /month
Director of Finance:	\$ 921.40 /month
Director of Student Affairs:	\$ 921.40 /month
Director of Communications:	\$ 813.00 /month
Director of Services:	\$ 813.00 /month

*M/S: Nick PLANIDIN, Stipend Review Committee Chair / KUO  
CARRIED.*

ABSTENTION NOTED: FOSTER

3. PROPOSED GSS 2021-22 BUDGET – JACOB HUNT, DIRECTOR OF FINANCE

[REF DOC: Proposed GSS 2021-22 Budget, APPENDIX B: 2021-22 BUDGET, AS APPROVED]

HUNT presented a '3 option budget' for three different scenarios that may be faced by the 2021-22 Executive.

*Motion: RESOLVED THAT the GSS 2021-22 budget is approved as presented.*

*M/S: Jake HUNT on behalf of the Executive Board / RENKEN-SEBASTIAN*

*CARRIED*

4. REPORTS TO THE MEMBERSHIP (SEE APPENDIX C: REPORTS RECEIVED BY THE MEMBERSHIP)

a. MEMBERSHIP AND REPRESENTATION REPORT – KYLA TURNER

[REF DOC: Membership and representation report]

b. REPORT OF THE 2020-21 EXECUTIVE BOARD – DRAKE RUSHFORD

[REF DOC: 2020-21 Executive Board Report]

c. REPORTS OF GRC STANDING COMMITTEES

[REF DOCS: For Committee reports, please click the report title below]

Bylaw and Policy – Drake RUSHFORD, GSS Chair

Communications – Nicole KENT, Director of Communications

Events – Daniel GUDINO, Director of Services

Appeals – Daniel GUDINO, Director of Services

Finance – Jacob HUNT, Director of Finance

Student Affairs – Antoine ROSE, Director of Student Affairs

Stipend Review – Nick PLANIDIN, Chair, Stipend Review Committee

d. SEMI-ANNUAL HEALTH AND DENTAL PLAN UPDATE - KYLA TURNER, GSS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

REF DOC: Health and dental plan update

*Motion: RESOLVED THAT the GSS membership has received the Reports of the 2020-21 Executive Board report, reports from the committees of the society, and the semi-annual extended health and dental insurance plans update.*

*M/S: KUO/ RENKEN-SEBASTIAN*

*CARRIED.*

A question was asked about the status of the GSS work to get Research Assistants status as employees of the university (vs. current status as being employees of the individual grant holders). RUSHFORD explained that following SFU's recognition of RAs as employees, the GSS Executive has drafted a letter to UVic to re-open this discussion. It will be up to the incoming Board whether to proceed.

5. BOARD OF DIRECTORS: RATIFICATION OF ACCLAIMED CANDIDATES – TIFFANY KUO, GSS ELECTORAL OFFICER

RUSHFORD relinquished chair of the meeting to KUO, the GSS Electoral Officer. All meeting attendees, with the exception of KUO and TURNER, had moderator privileges revoked to ensure that all ballots for the GSS Executive Board elections and ratifications would only be submitted by eligible voting members and that members votes would be confidential.

KUO announced that at the end of this year's Executive Board elections, two Directors had been elected, and that there was one candidate for the position of GSS Chair, David FOSTER. As per GSS Bylaws, a ratification vote is required for a sole candidate to be acclaimed.

FOSTER was given one minute to address the members.

A ratification vote by web ballot was held. From the results, KUO declared David FOSTER duly ratified as GSS Chair for 2021-22.

6. BOARD OF DIRECTORS: ELECTIONS FOR DIRECTOR OF SERVICES AND DIRECTOR OF FINANCE – TIFFANY KUO, GSS ELECTORAL OFFICER

As per GSS Bylaws, when no candidates for a Director position were nominated during the election period, an election is to be held at the SAGM. A notice of the vacancy for Director of Services and Director of Finance was sent to all members prior to the meeting.

a. DIRECTOR OF SERVICES

KUO announced that one declaration of candidacy was received prior to tonight's meeting. A second call and third call for nominations was made. Nominations were closed. There were no further nominations from the floor.

Adair NG was confirmed as duly nominated and given 1 minute to address the members.

A ratification vote by web ballot was held.

KUO declared NG as ratified by the members as the 2021-22 Director of Services.

b. DIRECTOR OF FINANCE

KUO reported that no declarations of candidacy were received prior to tonight's meeting. A second call and third call for nominations were made. When nominations were closed, there were no nominations received.

RUSHFORD explained that for the interim, the four incoming Board members will fill the duties of the Director of Finance, and an appointment of a new Director of Finance will be made at the April GRC meeting as per GSS Bylaw 11.2: "Should there be no candidates for either position, a Director will be appointed by the Graduate Representative Council at their April meeting".

7. INTRODUCTION OF THE 2021-22 GSS BOARD OF DIRECTORS

KUO introduced and congratulated the four elected board members for 2021-22:

- Chair: David FOSTER
- Director of Communications: Nicole KENT
- Director of Services: Adair NG

- Director of Student Affairs: Nahid SAFARI
- Director of Finance: to be elected by the GRC in April 2021.

8. OTHER BUSINESS (WITH NOTICE OF MOTION)/ANNOUNCEMENTS

KUO, from her role as a FGS Councillor, raised an issue regarding donor awards not being distributed during the past year. KUO explained that a survey for feedback has been developed.

**TASK: TURNER to circulate the survey.**

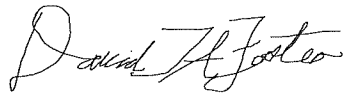
ADJOURNMENT

*Motion: RESOLVED THAT the 2021 GSS SAGM is adjourned.*  
*M/S: Executive Board/KUO*

The meeting was adjourned at 7:10 pm.

klp/

X



David Foster  
GSS Chair 2021-22

X



Kyla Turner  
GSS Executive Director

## APPENDIX A: BYLAW VI AMENDMENTS, AS APPROVED

---

### BYLAW VI - GRADUATE REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL

6.1 Authority:

The Grad Council shall have the authority to establish policies and procedures of the Society, provided that they are in accordance with the constitution and bylaws of the Society.

6.2 Purposes:

- a. Grad Council shall provide a forum for members to discuss issues of relevance to grad students i.e. education, research funding, university policies and procedures, etc.
- b. Grad Council shall provide direction to the Executive Board in the affairs of the Society.

6.3 Membership:

- a. Graduate Council shall consist of:
  - i. The members of the Executive Board;
  - ii. The Grad Rep for each academic unit defined by the University; and
  - iii. A graduate student representative of CUPE 4163.
- b. Each academic unit shall be entitled to elect one (1) Grad Rep or two (2) Co-Reps, from among its graduate students ~~to stand for that academic unit. Unless specified, the term "Grad Rep" in these bylaws includes Co-Reps.~~
- c. Grad 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.
- d. A member of the Executive Board may not serve as a Grad Rep. If a Grad Rep is elected or appointed to the Executive, ~~they~~ he or she shall be deemed to have resigned as a Grad Rep.
- e. ~~Each~~ Grad Reps shall have the power to appoint ~~an alternate~~ a proxy from their academic unit to act in their ~~place and~~ stead at a meeting of Grad Council. The ~~alternate~~ proxy must be a member of the Society, and the ~~alternate~~ proxy shall have full voting privileges for the meeting. The Executive Board may require the ~~alternate~~ proxy to present a written authorization from the Grad Rep for the meeting they attend.
- f. Grad Reps and proxies should be selected and operate in accordance with the Society's Policy and Procedure Manual.
- g. ~~A Grad Rep who does not~~ Where no voting member, whether Grad Rep, Co-Rep or proxy, from an academic unit attends three (3) consecutive meetings of the Grad Council and who does not provide an alternate on such occasions shall, the Grad Rep(s), upon the direction of the Executive Board, cease to be a member(s) of the Grad Council. The Executive Board shall notify the academic unit in question that its place on the Grad Council has become vacant.

6.4 Duties of Grad Reps

~~The graduate representative~~ Grad Reps shall:

- a. Attend the regular Grad Council meetings and general meetings of the Society;
- b. Represent the best interest of fellow grad students at Grad Council;
- c. Report back to respective academic units on discussions and decisions made at Grad Council;
- d. Where possible, sit on one university committee; and
- e. Sit on a committee of the Society as follows:
  - a. Where there is a single Grad Rep, they shall serve on at least one (1) committee
  - b. Where there are two (2) Co-Reps, at least one (1) Co-Rep must serve on a committee. Co-reps may share committee duties at the discretion of Grad Council.

6.5 Procedures of the Grad Council:

- a. Meetings of the Grad Council shall be run according to Robert's Rules of Order.
- b. Meetings shall be chaired by a member of the Executive Board or a meeting chair appointed by the Executive Board.
- c. Meetings shall begin with a meaningful, intentional, and related land acknowledgement
- d. Grad Council shall meet approximately once per month between September and April inclusive and as needed between May and August inclusive.
- e. Each academic unit has one vote at meetings of Grad Council
- f. Notice of a Grad Council meeting shall be given at least seven (7) days prior to the meeting.
- g. Agendas for Grad Council shall be circulated to all members of Grad Council, including Co-Reps.
- h. Quorum for Grad Council meetings shall be at least fifty percent (50%) of Grad Council members, excluding vacancies and regrets. No meeting of Grad Council is quorate with fewer than ten (10) members.
- i. For purposes of quorum at Grad Council, when two Co-Reps from an academic unit are present, they count as one member.
- j. If no quorum is observed, agenda items may be moved to the next meeting.
- k. All members of the Society may attend Grad Council meetings and participate in discussions, although only Grad Council members may vote.

## APPENDIX B: 2021-22 BUDGET, AS APPROVED

## BUDGET OPTIONS:

## 1. IF GSS DOES NOT RE-OPEN A RESTAURANT

University of Victoria Graduate Students' Society  
2021 - 2022 Budget (No Restaurant)

For Approval at March 23, 2021 SAGM

	Operating fund	Food and Beverage Fund	Health and Dental Fund	Capital Fund	Building Fund	Total
<b>REVENUES</b>						
Membership fees	\$392,359			\$80,076		\$472,435
Student advocate fee	\$7,722					\$7,722
Room rentals	\$0					\$0
Handbook revenues	\$300					\$300
Health and dental plan prem	\$0		\$1,674,267			\$1,674,267
Adjustment to next fiscal Yr	\$0		-\$541,036			-\$541,036
Other	\$0					\$0
Interest	\$245					\$245
Revenues	\$400,626	\$0	\$1,133,231	\$80,076	\$0	\$1,613,933
<b>RESTAURANT</b>						
Restaurant revenue		\$0				\$0
Cost of goods sold		\$0				\$0
Gross Profit	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
<b>EXPENSES</b>						
Advertising and membership	\$2,853				\$	2,853
Loan repayment	\$17,143			\$57,918	\$	75,061
Department Grants	\$9,000				\$	9,000
Equipment & software	\$3,182		\$518		\$	3,700
Handbook expenses	\$0				\$	-
Insurance	\$8,600		\$1,500		\$	10,100
Health & dental premiums	\$0		\$1,040,281		\$	1,040,281
Meetings & music	\$4,800				\$	4,800
Office & administration	\$9,233		\$1,503		\$	10,736
Professional fees	\$30,300		\$4,933		\$	35,232
Student Advocate Fund	\$7,722				\$	7,722
Utilities, repairs & maintenance	\$31,996		\$5,953		\$	37,949
Interfund admin adjust YTD					\$	-
Wages & benefits	\$ 239,942		\$42,740		\$	282,682
Interfund wage adjustment YTD			\$0		\$	-
Other expenses					\$	-
Expenses	\$364,771	\$0	\$1,097,427	\$57,918	\$0	\$1,520,116
EXCESS (DEFICIENCY) OF REVENUES OVER EXPEN	\$35,855	\$0	\$35,804	\$22,158	\$0	\$93,817

## Assumptions:

Second Manager hired in January  
 Increase all current unionized office staff hours by 5hrs/wk  
 4 weeks office coverage in September  
 Hire 200 hours of WS for policy/governance/communications/board support  
 Hire 200 hours of WS for student supports within the study space  
 Overlap 4 weeks for new Health and Dental Coordinator  
 Decreased H&D Coordinator wages after new hire arrives  
 Hire Canada Summer Jobs workers for office support over the summer  
 Hire Canada Summer Jobs workers for comms/gov/events/board support over the summer  
 Staff receive 30 hrs of training time  
 Reduce Dept Grants budget to 9000/yr  
 Hire Consultant for payroll only  
 \$1300 budgeted for board and staff training costs

## 2. IF GSS ADOPTS AN ALTERNATE USE FOR THE RESTAURANT SPACE

University of Victoria Graduate Students' Society  
2021 - 2022 Budget (Alternative Use)

For Approval at March 23, 2021 SAGM

	Operating fund	Food and Beverage Fund	Health and Dental Fund	Capital Fund	Building Fund	Total
<b>REVENUES</b>						
Membership fees	\$392,359			\$80,076		\$472,435
Student advocate fee	\$7,722					\$7,722
Room rentals	\$0					\$0
Handbook revenues	\$300					\$300
Health and dental plan prem	\$0		\$1,674,267			\$1,674,267
Adjustment to next fiscal YTD	\$0		-\$541,036			-\$541,036
Other	\$0					\$0
Interest	\$245					\$245
Revenues	\$400,626	\$0	\$1,133,231	\$80,076	\$0	\$1,613,933
<b>RESTAURANT</b>						
Restaurant revenue		\$150,000				\$0
Cost of goods sold		\$100,000				\$0
Gross Profit	\$0	\$50,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$50,000
<b>EXPENSES</b>						
Advertising and membership	\$2,853				\$	2,853
Loan repayment	\$17,143			\$57,918	\$	75,061
Department Grants	\$9,000				\$	9,000
Equipment & software	\$3,182		\$518		\$	3,700
Handbook expenses	\$0				\$	-
Insurance	\$8,600		\$1,500		\$	10,100
Health & dental premiums	\$0		\$1,040,281		\$	1,040,281
Meetings & music	\$4,800	\$15,000			\$	19,800
Office & administration	\$9,233		\$1,503		\$	10,736
Professional fees	\$30,300	\$5,000	\$4,933		\$	40,232
Student Advocate Fund	\$7,722				\$	7,722
Utilities, repairs & maintena	\$31,996		\$5,953		\$	37,949
Interfund admin adjust YTD					\$	-
Wages & benefits	\$ 314,075	\$130,000	\$35,209		\$	479,284
Interfund wage adjustment YTD			\$0		\$	-
Other expenses					\$	-
Expenses	\$438,905	\$150,000	\$1,089,896	\$57,918	\$0	\$1,736,719
EXCESS (DEFICIENCY) OF REVENUES OVER EXPE	-\$38,278	-\$100,000	\$43,335	\$22,158	\$0	-\$72,786

## Assumptions:

Office staff hours and wages stay at CA levels

Hire Second Manager in September, all wages coming from Operating Fund

Hire 45-55 staff hours per day for Sept-March excluding University closures for Food Services Spaces

Allow limited levels of returned food services (just Side Project? Just beer at Grad House? Student run vegan soup kitchen? Student run food bank? Community Centre?)

Consultation and restructuring included in professional fees to reopen with revised services

Hire Canada Summer Jobs workers for office support over the summer

Hire Canada Summer Jobs workers for comms/gov/events/board support over the summer

Staff receive 30 hrs of training time

Reduce Dept Grants budget to 9000/yr

\$1300 budgeted for board and staff training costs

## 3. IF GSS REOPENS A RESTAURANT IN JANUARY, 2022

University of Victoria Graduate Students' Society  
2021 - 2022 Budget (January Restaurant)

For Approval at March 23, 2021 SAGM

	Operating fund	Food and Beverage Fund	Health and Dental Fund	Capital Fund	Building Fund	Total
<b>REVENUES</b>						
Membership fees	\$392,359			\$80,076		\$472,435
Student advocate fee	\$7,722					\$7,722
Room rentals	\$0					\$0
Handbook revenues	\$300					\$300
Health and dental plan prem	\$0		\$1,674,267			\$1,674,267
Adjustment to next fiscal (YT)	\$0		-\$541,036			-\$541,036
Other	\$0					\$0
Interest	\$245					\$245
Revenues	\$400,626	\$0	\$1,133,231	\$80,076	\$0	\$1,613,933
<b>RESTAURANT</b>						
Restaurant revenue		\$76,000				\$0
Cost of goods sold		\$47,333				\$0
Gross Profit	\$0	\$28,667	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$28,667
<b>EXPENSES</b>						
Advertising and membership	\$2,853				\$	2,853
Loan repayment	\$17,143			\$57,918	\$	75,061
Department Grants	\$9,000				\$	9,000
Equipment & software	\$3,182		\$518		\$	3,700
Handbook expenses	\$0				\$	-
Insurance	\$8,600		\$1,500		\$	10,100
Health & dental premiums	\$0		\$1,040,281		\$	1,040,281
Meetings & music	\$4,800	\$10,000			\$	14,800
Office & administration	\$9,233		\$1,503		\$	10,736
Professional fees	\$30,300	\$10,000	\$4,933		\$	45,232
Student Advocate Fund	\$7,722				\$	7,722
Utilities, repairs & maintena	\$31,996	\$500	\$5,953		\$	38,449
Interfund admin adjust YTD					\$	-
Wages & benefits	\$ 283,481	\$110,664	\$35,209		\$	429,354
Interfund wage adjustment YTD			\$0		\$	-
Other expenses		\$2,000			\$	2,000
Expenses	\$408,311	\$133,164	\$1,089,896	\$57,918	\$0	\$1,689,289
EXCESS (DEFICIENCY) OF REVENUES OVER EXPE	-\$7,684	-\$104,497	\$43,335	\$22,158	\$0	-\$46,689

## Assumptions:

Office staff hours and wages stay at CA levels

Hire Second Manager in Nov for restart planning.

Inventory, wages, utilities remain consistent with rates in 2019

Consultation and implementation included in Profession Fees to restart the restaurant

Promotional materials and deals include \$2000 budget

Hire Canada Summer Jobs workers for office support over the summer

Hire Canada Summer Jobs workers for comms/gov/events/board support over the summer

Staff receive 30 hrs of training time

Reduce Dept Grants budget to 9000/yr

\$1300 budgeted for board and staff training costs

---

## APPENDIX C: REPORTS RECEIVED BY THE MEMBERSHIP

---

### *University of Victoria Graduate Students' Society*

## Semi-Annual General Membership Meeting

March 23, 2021

## Reports of the Society Received by the Membership

### 2020/21 Executive Board Annual Report

---

#### MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

---

The GSS Executive Board consists of five elected graduate students and the Executive Director as a non-voting member. The elected members are usually elected and ratified in a Semi-Annual General Meeting in March. For this year, four of the members were acclaimed at the March 2020 SAGM, the remaining position was elected during the March 2020 SAGM.

The Directors:

Chair	<b>Drake Rushford</b>
Director of Communications	<b>Matilde Cervantes Navarrete</b> Matilde was replaced by <b>Nicole Kent</b> in January 2021
Director of Finance	<b>Jacob Hunt</b>
Director of Services	<b>Angélique Rose</b> Angélique was replaced by <b>Daniel Gudino</b> in August 2020
Director of Student Affairs	<b>Antoine Rose</b>

---

#### STRATEGIC GOALS

---

The 2020/21 Executive Board determined their priorities during the summer of 2020. These goals were rooted in the GSS's purposes and reflected the wider context the board found themselves in. Broadly, these priorities can be separated into four themes: Institutional Stability, Member Engagement, Advocacy & Relationship Building, and Equity & Representation. The remainder of this report discusses the actions the Executive took throughout their term as well as opportunities/challenges for the future.

---

#### INSTITUTIONAL STABILITY

---

The 2020/21 Executive Board started their term approximately two weeks after the university began primarily off-campus operations due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Subsequently, the board's early activities were focused on navigating through the financial uncertainty of the organization and the emergency closure of the restaurant brought on by the pandemic. Later in the summer, the GSS's Executive Director of fifteen

years left the organization for other opportunities. As such, the Executive Board worked to ensure a smooth transition to a new Executive Director and to account for the institutional knowledge lost.

**Steps Taken:**

- Struck three working groups to address the various challenges brought on by the pandemic, those working groups were:
  - Members needs and communications,
  - Financial planning, and
  - Operational risk management
- Held a referendum to automatically enroll distance students in the GSS Extended Health & Dental Plan
- Convened a Special General Meeting in June 2020 to seek member permission to
  - apply for a Canada Emergency Business Account (CEBA) (~\$30,000),
  - make use of the building fund (~\$28,000), and
  - approve an emergency budget in response to COVID-19
- Drafted repayment plans for the CEBA and Building Fund loan
- Struck a hiring committee for the Executive Director position and completed the two-month search in October 2020
- Requested staff & board training from the Student Wellness Centre for supporting students dealing with domestic violence
- Approved a Management Hiring Policy to guide future management hiring processes
- Drafted a Remote Work Policy and Procedures document in consultation with the Labour Management Committee
- Formed two working groups focused on planning for the 2021/22 Executive Board training and transition

**Next Steps:**

- **The restaurant space remains closed, the next Executive Board will need to develop a plan for the space once the university resumes in-person activities which accounts for the financial challenges the restaurant faced in recent years**
- **The GSS has a small budget relative to comparable student societies in Canada. We recommend the next board examine the impact of raising the GSS operating fees on the organization and membership**

---

## MEMBER ENGAGEMENT

---

Engaging with the membership proved to be one of the most challenging aspects of the pandemic. The loss of the GSS as a physical space and presence created hurdles in communicating with the membership and resulted in comparably low event participation relative to previous years. That said, the online-only environment forced the Executive Board to get creative and many of the resulting initiatives are worth carrying forward into a post-pandemic environment.

**Steps Taken:**

- Held two townhall events in April 2020 to gather information on how the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent shift to distance-delivery impacted our members
- Improved GSS social media presence
- Produced an E-Handbook instead of a traditional print handbook
- Drafted a GSS Style Guide to standardize GSS communications
- Worked within the Events Committee to utilize online events to sustain membership engagement; this included an events survey, a training series, and a speakers series
- Produced a Welcome to the GSS video to assist with departmental orientations
- Adjusted the requirements for department grants to reflect the online environment and incentivize the formation of Academic Unit Associations
- Created a Defender-Selfie template so that members that defended their thesis could still have their photo taken with the Defender
- Hosted a Graduate Student Townhall with UVic President Kevin Hall to amplify the voices of our membership

**Next Steps:**

- Evaluate methods to boost the GSS bi-weekly bulletin
- Utilize the now prevalent online tools to better engage with distance students post-pandemic

---

## ADVOCACY & RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

---

Although the first half of our term was largely internally focused, we were able to effectively advocate for our membership and foster relationships with outside groups. Most notably being the creation of the Graduate Student Societies of British Columbia (GSSBC) – an informal alliance between the GSS's at UVic, UBC, SFU, and UNBC focused on provincial and federal advocacy. Additionally, we established regular meetings with Student Wellness Centre and the Global Community Advisors with a focus on collaboration.

**Steps Taken:**

- Founded the Graduate Student Societies of British Columbia along side the GSS's at UBC, SFU, and UNBC
  - Approved a Memorandum of Understanding for GSSBC at the February GRC which outlines the scope of the informal alliance
  - Advocated for the extension of the BC Graduate Scholarship, expansion of the eligibility for the BC Access Grant, and for the creation of an Office of Graduate Studies within the BC Ministry of Advanced Education
  - Consulted with the Federal Ministry of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion to highlight how graduate education could be incorporated into the Federal Government's COVID recovery planning
- Advocated for the Saanich Zoning Bylaw No 96078 change to increase the maximum number of unrelated persons in a household to six
- Lobbied for the separation of the ATRS & UPASS opt-in fees for at least the duration of the pandemic and potentially beyond

- Established regular check-in meetings with the Student Wellness Centre (SWC) and the Global Community Advisors
- Advocated for an extension of the rental supplement and eviction ban
- Partnered with the University of Victoria Faculty Association on an All-Candidates Forum during the BC Elections
- Signed onto a welcome letter to President Hall calling on the university to make a Climate Emergency Declaration and divest with the UVSS
- Acted as an official Giving Tuesday Partner
- Partnered with other student societies calling for federal post-secondary work permit accommodations for individual's whose employment prospects were impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic

Next Steps:

- Continue active involvement with GSSBC, SWC, and Global Community Advisors
- Explore methods for establishing externally funded research assistants as employees of the university
- Investigate further ways to reduce housing costs for graduate students – though government policy or the establishment of a housing Co-op
- Continue to push for the permanent separation of the ATRS and UPASS fees for student opt-ins

---

## EQUITY & REPRESENTATION

---

The 2020/21 Executive Board made Equity, Diversity, and Inclusivity a priority during their term. We released two statement's of solidarity and advocated for equitable access to graduate studies. Additionally, we prioritized graduate student representation on UVic committees.

Steps Taken:

- Released a Statement of Solidarity with Black Lives Matter, calling on UVic to eliminate barriers to and within graduate education for BIPOC students
- Facilitated graduate student representation on 48 UVic committees
- Released a Statement of Solidarity with the Mi'Kmaq fishers
- Advocated for equitable access to graduate studies for medically vulnerable students and students living with medically vulnerable family members in the university's reopening plan
- Formed a GRC Ad-Hok Committee tasked with evaluating the scope/composition of faculty and department Equity, Diversity, & Inclusivity Committees at UVic

Next Steps:

- Push UVic to compensate graduate student representatives on time-intensive committees. Specifically, consult with current student reps on the time commitment of their committees and determine which types of committees should be prioritized (hiring committees, etc), consult with Jim Dunsdon, AVP Student Affairs once this list is compiled
- Continue to advocate for equitable access to graduate studies as the university develops its reopening plan
- Partner with the Faculty of Graduate Studies in evaluating ways to eliminate barriers to and within graduate education
- Prioritize the Ad-Hok EDI Committee

## 2020/21 Membership and Representation Report

### 2020/21 MEMBERSHIP OVERVIEW

---

As of March 2, 2020, the GSS had 2999 members.

### REPRESENTATION REPORT

---

The GSS has a mandate to increase graduate student representation on all decision making and advisory bodies around the University Of Victoria. As of March 2, 2020, the GSS has elected representatives to 48 committees around the University Of Victoria. A full list of these committees appears below to document the breadth of committee work conducted by GSS representatives around our University community.

### UVIC COMMITTEES WITH GSS EXECUTIVE BOARD REPRESENTATION

---

UVic Senate Committees:

- Appeals
- Awards
- Learning and Teaching
- Libraries

UVic Hiring or Appointment Review Committees:

- Appointment Committee for the Dean of Graduate Studies
- Appointment Committee for the Associate Dean of Graduate Studies

Other UVic Committees\* with Executive Board Representatives:

- UVic/GSS Operations Committee
- Graduate Executive Committee
- Faculty of Graduate Studies Council
- AVP Student Affairs and GSS Chair
- Bookstore Advisory
- Clubs Council
- Graduate Fee Reduction Appeals
- Graduate Student Recruitment, Retention and Success Implementation Committee (GRR IC)
- Ombudsperson
- Orientation Advisory
- VP Research Advisory
- Student Experience Working Group
- Consultation Committee on 24-hour mental health line
- EQHR Policy Advisory (new committee in 2020-21)
- Wellness Education/Health Promotion (new committee in 2020-21)
- Mandatory Temporary Medical Insurance Opt Out Appeal Committee (new committee in 2020-21)
- Integrated Steering Committee for UVic's Climate Sustainability Action Plan (new committee in 2020-21)

2020-21 saw a 30% increase in the number of UVic standing committees that required participation from an Executive Board member.

## UVIC COMMITTEES WITH NON-EXECUTIVE BOARD REPRESENTATIVES

---

### UVic Senate Committees:

- Academic Planning
- Academic Standards
- Continuing Studies

### UVic Hiring or Review Committees

- Search Committee for Associate Dean Academic, Faculty of Social Sciences
- Search Committee for Associate Deans in the Faculty of Science
- Appointment Committee for the Dean of Humanities
- Vice Provost
- VISPA Director Search
- Centre for Forest Biology Director Search
- Chemistry Chair Appointment Committee
- ARC Director Search Committee, Physics and Astronomy

### Other UVic Committees with Non-Executive Board Representatives:

- Advisory Committee on Academic Accommodation and Access for Student with Disabilities
- Childcare Services Advisory Board
- Convocation Committee
- Make Transit Work Campaign
- Multi Faith Services
- Learning and Teaching with Technology Committee (LTTC)
- Transition to Online
- SupportConnect Advisory Group
- Strategic Research and Creative Works Plan 2021 – 2026 Advisory Group
- Faculty of Science Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion committee
- Faculty of Humanities Council
- Faculty of Social Sciences, Awards and Recognition Committee
- Faculty of Social Sciences, Equity & Diversity Committee 2020-21
- Faculty of Social Sciences, Graduate Curriculum Committee
- Social Sciences Dean's Advisory Forum on Indigenization

## ADDITIONAL GRADUATE STUDENT FEEDBACK PROVIDED TO UVIC

---

We have further provided graduate student feedback on the following issues as per University requests:

- Research Strategy
- COVID-related scheduling, in-person coursework, etc.
- President's Town Halls and Listening Tour

Feedback on these issues was gathered by GRC reps who further consulted with members of their academic unit and provided written responses to the GSS Executive Board to present to the University. We want to thank the members of the Executive Board, the Graduate Representative Council, and all our members for volunteering their time, passion, expertise, and experience to helping us create a more supportive environment for all graduate students at UVic to work and learn.

## 2020/21 Bylaw & Policy Committee Report

### COMMITTEE MEMBERS

---

Chair: Drake Rushford (GSS Chair)

#### April 2020 – August 2020

- William Campbell
- David Foster
- Alison Barnard
- Finn Deschner
- Maan Hani
- Mónica Carbajal Uribe
- Rana Battah
- Rachel Burtman
- Nicholas Bruce

#### September 2020 – March 2021

- Brooklynn Trimble
- Bobby Bickley
- Hannah Reid
- Michelle Snidal
- Tom Ferguson
- Amanda Leclerc
- Luisa Trux
- Hannah Kim

Stacy Chappel, GSS Executive Director during Summer 2020 and Kyla Turner, GSS Executive Director since November 2020 were non-voting members of this committee (during their respective tenures with the GSS). Karen Potts, GSS Governance Coordinator, is the designate staff to support the committee as well.

### 2020/21 COMMITTEE OVERVIEW

---

2020/21 was a quiet year for the GSS Bylaw & Policy Committee, though not necessarily by choice. The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, departure of the previous Executive Director, and the training/onboarding of the new Executive Director made it difficult to prioritize the Bylaw & Policy Committee. Since September, the committee was only able to meet twice, once in October and once in January. As such, this report will catalog the major outstanding initiatives/projects and provide suggestions for the future.

### GOVERNANCE MANUAL REVIEW

---

A comprehensive review of the GSS Policy Manual was initiated by the 2019/20 Bylaw & Policy Committee. The previous committee reorganized the existing policy manual into the GSS Interim-Governance Manual, which was approved at the April 2020 GRC meeting.

#### Steps Taken:

- Compiled a list of motions related to GSS Position Statements
- Drafted Bylaw revisions to allow for online voting
- Gathered feedback from the Executive Board regarding the previously drafted Terms of Reference for the GRC Standing Committees

#### Next Steps:

- **Clarify the process for making future changes to the governance manual by drafting a policy on policies. It is recommended that policies that relate to governance and representation require approval from GRC but that the Executive Board should have authority over operational policies.**

- **Draft guidelines to teach committee members about policy and assist them with updating the governance manual.**
- **Prioritize the completion of the governance manual update.**

---

## GRC ELECTIONS

---

At the May 2020 GRC meeting, the Bylaw & Policy Committee was tasked with reviewing how GRC seats are distributed among the membership. Although not much work was completed on this project, it may still be worth carrying forward into future years.

Next Steps:

- Currently, GRC reps provide a direct link between the GSS and members within an academic unit. Given that grad school can be an incredibly isolating experience and students in different academic units often have very limited contact with one another, the value of grad reps as a link to the membership in a unit cannot be overstated. As such, it is recommended that any change to how GRC seats are distributed continues to **ensure that if an academic unit has a willing representative, then it gets a representative** (regardless of if that rep steps forward in September or April). In short, it is recommended that additional seats are added to the current structure, rather than completely abandoning the current allocation structure.
- Given that all graduate programs are housed within the Faculty of Graduate studies, the logistical hurdle of assigning programs to undergraduate faculties must be accounted for.
- The committee should consult with the GSS staff and Director of Personnel (usually the Director of Finance) and develop an implementation and logistics plan prior to bringing any changes to a General Meeting.

---

## BYLAW AMENDMENTS

---

The bylaws are due for a clean-up. A draft of potential changes has been produced; however, the committee has not had a chance to review it. These changes include allowing for online voting, reviewing the Executive roles, among other recommendations.

Next Steps:

- A comprehensive review of the Executive roles is warranted. The roles currently include out-dated committees and responsibilities. Additionally, greater clarity on the distinction between the Chair and the Director of Student Affairs could help to reduce the Chair's hours which consistently exceed the other directors by... a lot.
- Review the drafted changes that relate to online voting.

## 2020/21 Communication Committee Report

### COMMITTEE MEMBERS

---

Chair: Nicole Kent (GSS Director of Communications January 1, 2021-March 31, 2021)

#### Members April-August 2020

- Talita de Francesco
- Jacob Imbery
- Rivka Landsberg
- Monica Carbajal Uribe
- Hossein Ghanbari
- Alexandros Dimopoulos
- Neil Barney (ex-officio, GSS staff support)

#### Members September 2020-March 2021

- Rachel Schneider
- Maryam Monazami
- Rachel Colquhoun
- Brianna Parent-Long
- Neil Barney (ex-officio, GSS staff support)

### 2020/21 COMMITTEE OVERVIEW

---

Due to a transition in the Executive Board Director of Communications as of December 31, 2020, the Communications Committee was not able to meet from January to March. This highlighted for the Board and Committee the need to improve supports for distance students as the current Director of Communications is outside Canada and this resulted in delays to her onboarding and training. The outgoing Director of Communications has been elected for a second term. Some of the areas for focus includes improving overall communications at the GSS, especially around our social media presence, general communication from the GSS to students so there is ongoing communication to membership, and to implement a multi-communications strategy.

### COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

---

Grad students' voices matter, and the aim of the Communications Strategy is to promote GSS voices, provide a platform for them to be heard, to strengthen our graduate community and ensure engagement. The further aim of this Strategy is to maintain the creative and collaborative work of the grad community to co-create inclusive, rights-based, affective and focused communications strategies as a team. As stated previously, the Communications Committee must be central to the advocacy work of the entire Board of Directors and the GSS. In this way, these efforts will not be siloed. Rather, there will be collaboration. A Communications Committee exists to *communicate the work being done on behalf of students* not to *create* communication items. As such, Matty Cervantes lead the Communications Committee in drafting a new GSS Style Guide to ensure our communications remain consistent across platforms and issues. Nicole is working on the multi-communications strategy to improve communication materials and methods.

#### Steps Taken:

- Continued supporting Orientation material production for incoming graduate students in January 2021
- Posting the election and SAGM notices on the marquee sign outside the Halpern Centre

- Social media strategy aimed at recruiting member participation in GSS and UVic governance and advocacy work
- Drafted new GSS Style Guide

**Next Steps:**

- Focus of brand image and integrity of GSS communications styles and strategies

---

## GRC HANDBOOK

---

As with the 2020-21 Academic Year, it was determined that the 2021-22 GSS handbook will be produced digitally as the decisions around production had to be made by mid-February while no guarantees could be made around a return to on-campus learning for the next year.

**Steps Taken:**

- Revised the 2020-21 GSS e-handbook to prepare for production of the 2021-22 e-handbook

**Next Steps:**

- Will finalize production and distribution of the handbook throughout the summer months

---

## GSS WEBSITE AND BULLETIN

---

Our website and bulletin remain an important way to get GSS messaging out to our membership. This year, we have focused on creating bulletins that advertise the most vital information for graduate students to be aware of regarding their GSS services (e.g. the Extended Health and Dental Plans), committee, volunteer, event and funding opportunities around our University community.

**Steps Taken:**

- Produced biweekly bulletins throughout the 2020-21 Academic Year
- Created space for collaboration with graduate students on topics of their interest such as research recruitment, research results or broader themes of interest

**Next Steps:**

- Update the website structure to allow for greater ease of use for students looking for information tailored to their specific needs (e.g. creating an international students landing page)

## **SAGM 2021 Events Committee Report**

### **Daniel Gudino - GSS Director of Services**

The following report enumerates the activities and responsibilities undertaken by Events Committee from August 2020- March 2021. It is intended to communicate to the membership the opportunities and challenges faced during this period of time, as well as detail the accomplishments and recommendations to move forward with this portfolio.

#### **1. Committee Membership**

- Neil Barney, Staff (Events Coordinator; non-voting member)
- Brianna Brandon, GRC Rep
- Tiess McKenzie, GRC Rep
- Adair NG, GRC Rep

#### **2. Committee Projects**

The projects and responsibilities undertaken by Events Committee responded entirely to the circumstances imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Traditionally, this Committee has benefited from larger participation of GRC members, but as the pandemic hit, events took a secondary role in the fulfilment of this year's Executive Board objectives. The three members of the Committee, with tremendous support from our staff, stepped up to assume higher responsibilities, commitment and supportive roles for the accomplishment of the goals of the Committee. Without the energy, imagination and desire to serve the membership at large from this Committee, the following projects would not have been successful:

##### **2.1. Membership survey**

As the pandemic hit, GSS staff and Executive Board sought to understand operation and acceptance of online events. The hosting of the GSS's traditional Wednesday Coffee in an online format, directed by Neil Barney, was intended as a tool to gauge membership interest in online events and zoom fatigue. Initial low turnout from membership made us rethink the purpose of Wednesday Coffee, as the inability to serve coffee and provide a space for conversation were not met with our first attempts. We decided to host an online morning event with invited guests across campus, so graduate students would learn the offering of services from different institutions at the University. The Student Wellness Centre (SWC); Uvic's Equity and Human Rights office (EQHR); The Anti-violence Project (AVP); The Global Community (GC from International Student Services); the Centre for Accessible Communication (CAC), where all participants and hosted a coffee session with the GSS.

Wednesday Coffee provided with initial clues we had in relation to online events: formats, platform, time, contents. With this basic information, Events Committee proposed a membership survey to ask more specific questions related to online events. Questions were worked within the Committee and the survey was designed by a member of the Committee.

##### **2.1.a. Steps taken:**

- Design, delivery and report of a survey focused on events interest
- Evaluation and interpretation of results
- Answers of the survey allowed us to define three specific programming for membership: 1. Training series; 2. Speaker Series; 3. Social events.
- Support in the creation of a work-study position for a grad student to understand what the GSS can learn from the survey to organize online events, and how the GSS can use surveys in the future to engage with its membership

#### 2.1.b. Current state:

Report from the work-study position will support in decision-making in the design and delivery of online events, and potential post-pandemic in-person events (whenever that is possible). It is really important to understand the needs of our distance students. Because all programming was offered online, we were able to provide access to events who otherwise wouldn't have been possible. In order to serve better to members who are not able to be physically in Victoria, it would be important to consider keeping a few activities for remote access (when possible).

### 2.2. Training Series

These series of events were developed to bring training and skills development opportunities for graduate students.

#### 2.2.a. Steps taken:

Hosted the first training series in collaboration with a community organization from Victoria. Naloxone training with AVI Health and Community Services was hosted on January 2021. This events series instructed students on how to respond to a potential overdose. The training also served as a space to discuss current drug policies and its different impacts across Victoria's diverse populations. This training also showed that alliances -and interest- from the community outside the University exists.

#### 2.2.b. Current state:

There are potential areas to expand with these series. Now that the framework has been developed and tried-out, there is possibilities for further training to be offered. For instance, there is the possibility for graduate training on antiracism skills with EQHR. Survey responses suggested other potential areas of interest for graduate training.

### 2.3. Social Events

This Events Committee, with support from the Director of Services, put particular emphasis on the portfolio expanding to academic and cultural events beyond social.

#### 2.3.a. Steps taken:

We partnered with the Global Community to host a 'speed-friending' social event. In this event, graduate students interacted with other graduate students in different rounds, by responding to a personal question. The idea is to meet new people, have fun, and (socially responsibly) expand your 'bubble'. It was a tremendous success, and the best attended event during this Events Committee period. The social event was hosted on February 2021.

#### 2.3.b. Current state:

There is an initial commitment with the Global Community to host this type of events at least once/twice per semester, as allowed. There were members who are planning to run for GSS Executive Board's next term in the event, and it was great seeing them interact with graduate students. It would be interesting to explore in the future how a social event can support recruitment for potential new board members, or support Executive board members connect with graduate students beyond GRC.

### 2.4. Speaker series

These series of events were developed to offer graduate students a chance to promote their research, expand their networks, and practice their knowledge translation skills. Speaker series focus on the creation of a platform for graduate students to engage in public discussions on their research topic and interests.

#### 2.4.a. Steps taken:

- Events Committee has committed a large amount of committee work in conceptualizing this space.

#### 2.4.b. Current state:

- Ideally, Events Committee will be able to host one Speaker Series event before the end of the term. Members will continue working to see if this is feasible by connecting with students who have shown interest in presenting. There are a few administrative details that the Committee still needs to work out.

## 3. Director of Services

As Director of Services, I would like to offer this report of my duties outside of Committee work, which I believe are in the interest of GRC and the graduate student membership at large.

### 3.1. Orientations

Along with the Director of Communications at the time, Matty Cervantes, we designed an introductory video on behalf of the GSS's Executive Board and the Staff, for Welcome Week on September 2020. This allowed us to participate in more than 20 departmental orientations, and provide information regarding our services.

### 3.2. GSS Academic Unit Grant

Together with the Director of Communications at the time, Matty Cervantes, and GSS staff, we were able to update the GSS Academic Unit Grant, to reflect this period's necessities, but also establishing a good set of priorities to support student association formation in the future. We hope the next Board can take advantage of the work done in this period to expand more graduate student representation throughout campus.

### 3.3. Community relationships

A large amount of time was devoted in the creation and sustaining of community relationships across campus. It is very important for the success of this portfolio to maintain and expand the relationships across campus, and outside of the University as well. Alliances will support in the better delivery of events. It is important to note that the GSS staff hold a healthy and supportive relationship with different stakeholders across campus, and that needs to be supported by the next Executive Board, as well as by GRC. These relationships support the better delivery of our services beyond events.

### 3.4. Hiring Committees

As part of my portfolio, I took the responsibility to represent Graduate Students in hiring committees across campus. This was an intentional action, as the time commitment and level of engagement required to represent in this tasks are tremendous for graduate students, as this activities are not remunerated or compensated. I currently represent graduate students in the committee struck to choose the next Dean of Graduate Studies at UVic. This is an ongoing process so no further information may be shared at this time.

It has been a great honor to serve graduate students in this role, and I'd like to thank the GSS Staff and the Events Committee members for their continuous support towards the fulfilment of this responsibility. It has been a great experience to share this work with my fellow Executive Board members.

*Daniel Gudino*  
*2020-2021 GSS Director of Services*

## **SAGM 2021 Appeals Committee Report**

### **Daniel Gudino - GSS Director of Services**

This report outlines the responsibilities assumed by Appeals Committee from August 2020-March 2021. It also seeks to provide a description in the delivery of the services related to the health and dental extended insurance for graduate students.

#### **1. Committee Membership**

- Mindy Jiang, Staff (Health and Dental Coordinator) non-voting
- Jacob Hunt, Exec
- Erin Donald, GRC Rep
- Mel Granley, GRC Rep
- Tiffany Kuo, GRC Rep
- Maeve Milligan, GRC Rep
- Hannah Reid, GRC Rep

#### **2. Committee Work**

The number of appeals received in this period are unprecedented and signified a tremendous labor for the Committee. So far, this Appeals Committee has reviewed and decided over 30 cases of appeals. It has only been possible to accomplish the mandate of this committee thanks to the support and flexibility of its members, and the active and effective role of the GSS's Health and Dental coordinator.

The Health and Dental Coordinator fulfills a mandate that goes above and beyond their duties. It serves as a mediator point between the insurance company, the University and the recipients of the services (graduate students). As Director of Services, I have witnessed first-hand the amount of dedication and time GSS staff dedicate to provide with the best services to the entire graduate community, and it has been thanks to this dedication that these services remain operational for the benefit of the membership.

The COVID pandemic multiplied and diversified existent problematics in our society, while it revealed other issues that might have been passing under the radar. While the pandemic hit and the University figured out how to adapt to the changes, some of the responsibility to guide and protect graduate students' rights relied disproportionately on the GSS's staff. As Director of Services, I feel it is in my responsibility to report that GSS's staff work and commitment to protect students' rights and benefits are remarkable and should not go unnoticed.

#### **3. Director of Services**

As Director of Services, I would like to offer this report of my duties outside of Committee work, which I believe are in the interest of GRC and the graduate student membership at large.

### 3.1. MTMI

I was assigned by the Executive Board to be the graduate student representative at UVic's Mandatory Temporary Medical Insurance Committee of Appeals. The MTMI is a temporary medical insurance for new international students, while they wait to obtain MSP. I received training and participated in two appeals meetings. This Committee work will be continued by the next Director of Services.

### 3.2. Senate Committee on Appeals

The Senate Committee on Appeals is an impartial final appeal body for students at the University of Victoria. In accordance with the University Act, the Senate has delegated to the Senate Committee on Appeals the authority and responsibility to decide, on behalf of the Senate, all final appeals from students involving the application of academic regulations and requirements. I have received training and will keep participating in this Committee as a graduate student representative, beyond my role as Director of Services.

### 3.3. University relations

As part of my portfolio, I took the responsibility to connect with different institutional bodies across campus, to benefit the delivery of GSS services to graduate students. Beyond monthly operational meetings with the Executive Board and UVic's leadership, we connected with ISS to improve communication to international students and established periodical meetings to identify potential problems that would affect international graduate students in particular. Other operational meetings included conversations with the Athletics and Recreation department regarding Gym fees, as GSS has no responsibility or control over this fee but have been historically confused with the Bus Pass and Health and Dental insurance services. This was an important step taken to alleviate our staff's load of work.

It has been a great honor to serve graduate students in this role, and I'd like to thank the GSS staff and the Appeals Committee members for their continuous support towards the fulfilment of this responsibility. It has been a great experience to share this work with my fellow Executive Board members.

*Daniel Gudino*  
*2020-2021 GSS Director of Services*

## 2020-2021 DIRECTOR OF FINANCE REPORT

---

### Report Sections:

1. Duties of the Director of Finance (DoF)
2. Major Tasks and Projects Completed by Duty and Responsibility
3. Strategic Focus - Financial Stability
4. Report of the Finance Committee
5. Recommendations

### DUTIES OF THE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE (DOF)

---

The DoF is responsible for oversight of financial administration of the GSS together with the Finance Committee and the Executive Director. The specific duties and responsibilities of the DoF as laid out in the GSS's Constitution and Bylaws are as follows:

- a. Present budgets and audited financial statements to General Meetings for ratification by the membership
- b. Report on the status of the extended health and dental plan at General Meetings
- c. Act as chair of the Food and Beverage Advisory Committee\* of the Society;
- d. Be responsible for development and negotiation of staff and external contracts in conjunction with Executive Board;
- e. Act as primary signing authority for the Society;
- f. Normally act as the Personnel Officer for the Society;
- g. Be responsible for other duties as agreed upon and assigned by the Executive Board.

\* Today more often referred to as the Food and Beverage Committee.

The 2020-2021 saw more of an emphasis on work pertaining to Personnel Officer responsibilities that years previous, mostly due to the hiring process of a new ED of the organization.

### MAJOR TASKS AND PROJECTS COMPLETED BY DUTY AND RESPONSIBILITY

---

- a. *Present budgets and audited financial statements to General Meetings for ratification by the membership;*

Circumstances arising this year lead to a delay in the presentation of the Audit to our Membership, but was done at the AGM occurring in November, with a revised budget to account for changes brought about by COVID-19 was presented over the summer at an SAGM in June of 2020.

- b. *Report on the status of the extended health and dental plan at General Meetings;*

Referenda items passed over the summer caused an increase in fees collected from membership, automatically opted students into the health and dental plan, increased

coverage including extended vaccination coverage. Presentation of items pertaining to the Hand and Dental fund were left to the new ED at the AGM in November.

*c. Act as chair of the Food and Beverage Advisory Committee\* of the Society;*

Due to the closure of the restaurant spaces due to COVID and a reduced student presence on campus, the food and beverage committee did not meet this year or play a significant part in planning restaurant business for the upcoming year. Conversations around this topic were largely informal and relegated to mostly board level discussions.

*d. Be responsible for development and negotiation of staff and external contracts in conjunction with Executive Board;*

Services pertaining to the GSS remained largely unchanged aside from reduced traffic in the Halpern Centre and a closure of the restaurant spaces. Major Contract negotiations were minimal, aside from negotiations with restaurant staff around the emergency closure of the Grad House and Side Project Café. Contract negotiations for the new Executive Director was the other major point of negotiations this year.

*e. Act as primary signing authority for the Society;*

During the absence of an Executive Director from the months of July to November, I was also responsible for being the main point of contact with the auditor and bookkeeper. The prolonged absence of an ED caused significant communication issues leading to several backlogs of transactions. This issue was rectified with the hiring of a new ED.

*f. Normally act as the Personnel Officer for the Society*

The big task this year was striking a hiring committee to find a new Executive Director for the GSS. This was a long process but I think we came to the right decision in hiring Ms. Kyla Turner. Other issues involved participation on the Labour Management Committee to address staff concerns around workplace policies and procedures, as well as participating the hiring of temporary office staff and Work/Study positions.

*g. Be responsible for other duties as agreed upon and assigned by the Executive Board.*

Additional items required this year include:

- i. Draft repayment plans for interfund loan from Building Fund Account
- ii. Apply for the Canada Emergency Business Account (CEBA) and draft repayment plan for next Executive Board to implement
- iii. Serve on the Appeals Committee, as well as the Senate Committee on Awards

## STRATEGIC FOCUS - FINANCIAL STABILITY

---

Despite the impacts of COVID-19 on the GSS, the two largest issues that the GSS was facing prior to the Pandemic continue to be an issue; the status of the restaurant spaces, and student enrollment. The latter item saw a small reprieve as enrollment increased slightly, but this should be considered indicative of a larger trend that we can expect to continue. The GSS is in a good position to address both of these concerns post-pandemic but resuming “business as usual” is not a viable strategy.

3 Steps taken to meet these challenges include:

- Maintained Closure of restaurant spaces in response to the COVID-19 situation
- Cut unnecessary spending in revised 2020-2021 budget, made conservative estimates about revenues collected over the year, shifted operations to primarily remote and services primarily offered remotely by minimal essential staff
- Came up with multiple scenario budgets to highlight costs of running restaurant spaces as; an open study spaces, a combined use space with reduced food and beverage services, and resuming regular operations in January of 2022.
- Have begun discussion with professionals on formal consultation of restructuring the space for most effective use
- 2021-2022 Budget was prepared with no expectations on changes in enrollment, leading again to a conservative estimate of revenues collected over the year.
- Apply for the Canada Emergency Business Account (CEBA) and drafted repayment plan for next Executive Board to implement
- Get membership support to move \$28,000 from building fund to Operating Fund to assist with cash flow, draft repayment plan

4 Current state:

- Conservative estimates of revenues collected has led to a slight surplus as of now; the dispersal of these funds has been a topic of conversation in recent Finance Committee Meetings
- The Restaurant space remains closed, with the ultimate decision of what to do with it falling to the next Executive Board
- Decision on restaurant will largely inform the nature of staffing moving forward, more importantly the scope of a second manager, if it is decided to hire one by the new Board
- The structure of the University's response to COVID-19 and the return of students to regular campus activities still remains largely uncertain, so planning around a specified return date or expectation will be difficult to do, and thus, many things are still up in the air.
- GSS is in position to ably pay off both loan amount in a timely manner

## REPORT OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE

---

The duties of the Finance Committee as detailed in its Terms of Reference are to:

- Support and advise on transparency of the financial administration of the GSS;
- Develop an annual budget for all GSS operations;
- Oversee the maintenance of the GSS capital budget, and to make recommendations to the Executive on capital expenditures;
- Make recommendations to the Executive Board on all significant matters of financial administration and policy; and
- Carry out all other duties as directed by the GRC.

The organization of the finance committee was all new members with little experience in finance this year, and remote meetings did not appear to make attendance from members an issue. With the closure of the restaurant and reduced services offered by the GSS this year, the proposed duties of the Finance Committee did not veer far from those outlined in the Terms of

Reference. The additional item that was proposed that we explore is a more visually appealing and digestible format of the societies funds and accounts. Little progress was made on this item, due to a lack of meetings in both December and January. The timeliness of statements available from the bookkeeper made reviewing the finances of the society somewhat difficult to do in a reasonable time frame, which has been flagged as an area of concern for the next board and new ED.

The duties of the Finance committee was primarily to go over the larger membership presentations that were being prepared by myself, the rest of the Board, and the ED to come up with likely questions and areas of concern that might be flagged or brought up by our membership. As of this writing we have not had our last committee meeting, but our plan is to go over the proposed 2021-2022 budget and alternative scenarios to do the same thing; come up with questions and areas of concern that may be raised by our membership at the AGM later this month.

As far a budget prep, this was left primarily to myself and ED, which provided another opportunity to develop resources to accurately model various scenarios and budgets for the GSS's future, especially given the uncertain nature of COVID-19 and the Universities response. Assumptions made were:

- B.C. Price index of 2.1%
- Stable enrollment through 2021-2022 fiscal year with a transition of student from distance enrollment to regular (on-campus) enrollment.
- Scenarios of continued restaurant closure, but using the space purely as a place for students to gather; an alternative use of the space (purposefully left vague for the next boards discretion); fully resuming old operations of the Grad House and Side Project Café in January of 2022.
- Multiple staffing situations congruent with the restaurant space scenarios

---

## RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE DOF AND 2021-22 FINANCE COMMITTEE

COVID-19 has shown that GSS has the capability of operating even under extreme circumstances, and that should be applauded. One of the unfortunate side effects of also being graduate students while serving on the board is the multitude of responsibilities that we may be saddled with at any given time. Due to the hiring process of the new ED, a large chunk of time that could've been spent planning for the Finance Committee over the Summer was spent on the hiring committee and Personnel Officer responsibilities. I hope that the next DoF does not have a similar situation on their hands, and in the event that they don't, a few pointers on things to focus on if you're struggling to come up with things to do:

- Spend some time reading over the ToR for the Finance Committee, and come up with suggestions of what to focus on during the year early. Obviously it is a democratic process, but if the sitting members don't have much finance experience or committee experience in general, a few suggestions to just them an idea of what COULD be worked on would be helpful.
- Collect sources of Data that will influence the budget early as well. There are some established channels of reliable data but more is always better.

- Possibly continue the committee item of developing visual representations of GSS funds and finances, particularly monthly statements.
- Continue to monitor the viability of running the restaurant spaces and the amount of risk that is associated with each explored option. It is never meant to be a profit seeking venture, but should be thought of as a service to our membership, whichever form that space takes.
- Staff have opinions on how money is spent and on the proposed budgets and financial decisions. While some things must certainly be kept purely at the board and executive level, finding a way to effectively incorporate staff feedback and suggestions with the ED would be a good thing to focus on moving forward.

## SAGM 2021 Report

# Student Affairs Committee

Chair: Antoine Rose, Director of Student Affairs (2020-2021)

### Introduction:

As one of the most important aspects of the Graduate Student Society, the Student Affairs Committee extends this fundamental aspect for vital advocacy for the graduate students. Our research and analysis within the committee has led to our ability to advocate for graduate students, with decisions taken at our committee and our subcommittee on RA Legal Status – one of our biggest achievements. As a chair of the Student Affairs Committee I have engaged with the Ombudsperson and the Executive Board, in order to advocate for the graduate students which required our help.

### Committee Membership:

Student Affairs	GRC Rep	Gregory Gaube Archita Adluri
Student Affairs	GRC Rep	Aryia Eini
Student Affairs	GRC Rep	Lauren Petersen Meng Qi (Annie) Wu
Student Affairs	GRC Rep	Erin Donald
Student Affairs	GRC Rep	Chrissy Schellenberg Rebecca Morris
Student Affairs	GRC Rep	Talya Jespersen
Student Affairs	GRC Rep	Michael Allison
Student Affairs	GSS Chair	Drake Rushford
Student Affairs	GSS ED	Kyla Turner
Student Affairs	GRC Rep	Christine Todd

### Committee Activity Report

As a committee we have been heavily involved with finding out the ultimate way to advocate for the student whose award has been halved due to the pandemic and it did not seem like the cause could be upheld officially by the board because the crisis circumstances navigated the halved funds to the larger scope of students, saving a lot of students from really negative circumstances.

Student Affairs Committee has been highly involved in defending the student rights of a PhD student whose supervisor's conduct led the student into a situation where his studies have been jeopardized according to the clear chronological report by the student. I have brought this student's concern to the Executive Board and the Student Affairs Committee. Strict dependency upon your supervisor has been an on-going issue at Grad School, and by bring this situation through various student affairs channels, which is of course the office of the Ombudsperson, this situation can serve as a case-scenario that leads to expand students' control of their own studies. Although members identified this situation as an individual student centered situation, I proposed the involvement of the ombudsperson and that action has been ratified by members, hence we continued thereof and the student received the right advocacy form the Ombudsperson which has helped the student immensely.

In our advocacy for the student who needed my help to resolve a dead-line dissertation issue, which required me to contact the Ombudsperson after I was able to bring the case toward that decision ratified by the Student Affairs Committee and then the Executive Board. The Ombudsperson has an immense conflict resolution expertise, and this situation has been de-escalated and ultimately resolved, as a result of Ombudsperson's actions which were brought to attention by the Student Affairs Committee.

As a Director of Student Affairs I have received multiple concerns from UVIC international students who have been dealing with an unprecedented number of problems as a result of covid-19 pandemic. Reflecting upon this concern, I have participated in a meeting with representative from different Canadian universities to discuss the issue of the immense problems the international students, and as a result I brought by the proposition made by Rahil Adeli, SFU's Director of Academic Relations to discuss the potential of creating a BC Advocacy Office for International Students in liaison with SFU and other Canadian universities. The Student Affairs committee has discussed whether a creation of such a body would be vital for UVIC; nonetheless we have concluded that such a creation would be unnecessary as our research provided evidence that the ISS Office of UVic provides these services. My further Communication with Tricia Best, Director of the ISS Office I have discussed our Student Affairs Committee research in terms of a BC Office for International Students, and it was a positive discussion where Tricia was able to communicate her ideas and how GSS can be helpful in the future to the ISS Office, she also pointed out the ICA – Intercultural Association in Victoria, which can be mentioned to international students for supplementary support.

In the Student Affairs Committee we have been highly involved in the process of advocating for Research Assistants at the University of Victoria, by researching and analyzing all of the documents and the lawyer's legal advice on changing the RA Legal Status to be university employees. Considering the amount of policy review, HR review, and legal review required, as part of the Student Affairs Committee - I created an RA Legal Status Subcommittee. Our subcommittee has been intensely researching how to make sure to write a strong proposal letter to the university president Dr. Hall - so that the RA legal status can be changed so that RAs become university employees. As a result of our research and analysis, we reviewed various nuances that are important for this proposal. In the lawyer's legal advice all the back in 2013, there was a clear instruction that if we cannot achieve as GSS to change the RA legal status, we have to contact the local union. As a result of the previously rejected proposals: and legal documents, research and action taken in the last 8 years, we contacted SFU whose success with RA legal status change to university employees has been very helpful, and we organized RA Legal Status Subcommittee meeting with a UVIC CUPE 4163 union president Greg Melnechuk and we have learned an immense amount of knowledge with him, as he carefully observed how the RA Legal Status at SFU has been shifting to become university employees – and SFU GSS was able to spearhead that project by gathering all RAs and unionizing them, then presenting the union of RAs to SFU, who in return began changing their legal status to university employees. After the intense Subcommittee meetings and the Student Affairs regular meetings, as a chair of the committee I have drafted a Proposal to the University President to change the RA legal status, and it has been ratified by the Student Affairs Committee to go to the Executive Board, to be determined by the board if this letter will be sent to the university president.

**Stipend Review Committee term report**

**Nicholas Planidin, Chair**

As usual the, stipend review committee (SRC) has read, discussed and recommended the approval of the monthly executive board reports. Last year we updated the report template, streamlining this process a bit and (hopefully) making it easier for the exec as well. So far, the template has been working well, although a review and tweaking may be warranted in the near future. Most months four of the five executive reports would be received, however the person whose report was missing was inconsistent. We have tried moving back the SRC meeting to accommodate getting all the exec reports in prior and discussed whether this is an issue, however no direct action has been taken yet.

The SRC has drafted and eventually passed motions for the allotment of up to \$2,000 for the training of the incoming executive board and allocated \$750 to top up the current executive stipends for exception work that was done this year.

A review on the duties of the exec as outlined in the bylaws has been initiated and we are currently awaiting feedback from this year's exec on how they felt their duties matched their day-to-day actions. This will eventually culminate in drafting a motion to update the exec duties bylaws and creating a job description document for each position; however, this will have to continue into the summer.

The SRC has reviewed its terms of service and updated the draft provided by the 2019-2020 Chair which was also updated by the 2020-2021 chair.

The SRC has begun planning on how to get feedback from the 2021 exec training, which will be the second time this program will be ran. This will be a brief report of the exec's thoughts on the training in August and another report on how well the training prepared the exec for the term in December. This feedback and other documents will then be archived, and the training protocol can be updated. The SRC Chair will also be participating in training the incoming exec on the stipend review process.

## Annual Update to the Membership on the Extended Health & Dental Insurance Plans

From: Kyla Turner, Executive Director

### Plan Basics

The GSS provides graduate students with access to an extended health and a dental insurance plans through Pacific Blue Cross. The plan includes benefits for prescription drugs, ambulance services, paramedical services, basic dental care, and travel insurance benefits.

All full time graduate students with at least 3.0 units or more are assessed plan fees automatically with their tuition once per academic year. Graduate students assessed with the fees with tuition had the option to opt-in their dependents at additional cost during the opt-in period. Effective September 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020, part-time graduate students had the option to opt-in themselves and their dependents during the opt-in enrollment period with separate processes and payment through the GSS.

Members' health and dental plan fees cover the premiums paid to the insurer as well as the cost for the GSS to administer the plan.

### Plan Administration

#### Enrolment

As of March 11, 2021, there were 1815 students enrolled on the plan. 122 family units have opted in to the GSS Extended Health and Dental Plans.

#### Member Support

Staff work directly with our membership to answer questions about our plans and to resolve any problems they counter. Dominant issues in the past 4 months were:

#### COVID-19

COVID-19 continues to impact our Health and Dental plans administration, particularly by restricting travel for international students unable to come to Canada. As multiple vaccines have been approved in Canada and the BC government has released these without charge to BC residents, requests for information on the vaccines have slowed down.

Our Coordinator continues to work with UVic to ensure students receive up to date information regarding vaccinations and travel (including the need to self-isolate upon arrival in Canada).

#### Access to Service Providers and Benefits

The pandemic has decreased many students' access to in-person healthcare services. Our Health and Dental Coordinator has gone above and beyond the scope of her position to draft resource lists for students for e-health services, including online counselling.

As many students are living outside BC this year, our Health and Dental Coordinator has had to coordinate care and access for students across all jurisdictions around Canada. This has meant significantly expanding our network of contacts to include most provincial and territorial basic insurance providers, (such as BC MSP, Ontario's OHIP, Quebec's RAMQ) to coordinate services between basic and extended health and dental insurance plans.

## International Students and Students Studying Outside Canada

International students continue to be impacted by travel restrictions: increased testing and documentation requirements, and the need self isolation. The GSS continues to work with ISS to provide students with the information they need to travel to Canada or travel outside Canada for the students studying abroad.

For international students, eligibility for BC MSP is dependent on a valid student permit. Changes to the processing times for study permits meant it became a more frequent issue for international students to lose their MSP eligibility while waiting for their study permit to be renewed. The GSS was able to work with International Student Services (ISS) to ensure these students were aware they were eligible for temporary coverage through Guard.me until their study permit renewal was completed.

## Appeals

Graduate students can appeal decision about their eligibility for opt ins and opt outs of the plan. Appeals are heard by graduate student volunteers who serve on the Appeals Committee. The Committee includes members from the GSS Executive Board and Grad Council, supported by the Health & Dental Coordinator. They meet monthly, receive training on the appeal process and insurance rules twice annually. Once decision are determined, the committee chair (Director of Services), works with the Health and Dental Coordinator to notify the appellants and implement the decisions.

The Appeal Committee heard 31 cases from September 2020 to March 2021. This is an increase from 18 cases last academic year.

## Financial Outlook for the Plan

### Retention Accounting

The GSS Extended Health and Dental Plans use retention accounting. A model of insurance contract that allows the GSS to share plan profits with the insurer without the risk of fully funding our own plan costs. The retention accounting contract requires us to maintain a Claims Fluctuation Reserve (CFR), calculated at 15% of total paid claims. Any profits above the reserve are available to the GSS to use in maintaining the plan. Since the shift to retention accounting, the GSS has been slowly building the CFR, and at August 31, 2019 the required CFR was achieved for both the Extended Health and Dental Plan for the first time.

### Contract Renewal

The GSS renews the Extended Health and Dental Plan contract with the insurer (Pacific Blue Cross) annually. The broker, AON, negotiates the renewal and advises the Executive Board throughout the process. Negotiations are currently underway, and the broker has provided the GSS with an initial renewal notice that they are negotiating down on our behalf. As with most insurance negotiations with the GSS this academic year, there have been slightly delayed compared to last year. We will keep the membership informed throughout the negotiation process regarding potential costs of the Health and Dental Insurance plans for the next academic year.

## Conclusion

The GSS Extended Health and Dental Insurance Plans remain a popular service for our members. The Health and Dental Coordinator continue to be busy throughout the year supporting students with questions about the plan and administering the opt in/opt out process. As of March 23, 2021, the plans

are financial stable, but the GSS remains mindful that enrolment changes and increasing costs of healthcare are a risk area for the plans moving forward.