

University of Victoria Graduate Students' Society
Graduate Representative Council
([ONLINE VIA ZOOM](#)) MEETING MINUTES

JULY 20, 2021, 5-7 PM

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

Anthropology: Robert Gustas

Earth & Ocean Sciences: Chrissy Schellenberg,

French: Tiffany Kuo (Electoral Officer)

Law: Adekunle (Kunle) Adewumi

Mechanical Engineering: Gerard

Avellaneda Domeme

Nursing: Erin Donald

Pacific & Asian Studies: Maeve Milligan

Physics & Astronomy: Bobby Bickley

Psychology: Thomas Ferguson

Other Reps Invited:

CUPE 4163: Christine Todd (partial)

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

Chair: David FOSTER

Director of Communications: Nicole KENT

Director of Finance: Ryan KHAN (partial)

Director of Services: Adair NG

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

Regrets Received:

Art History & Visual Studies: Mel Granley

Biochemistry & Microbiology: Michael Allison

English: Elyse Loewen

Director of Student Affairs: Nahid SAFARI

Absent Without Notice or an Alternate:

Chemistry: Gregory Gaube, Archita Adluri

Civil Engineering: Aryia Eini, Maryam Monazami

Economics: Gerard Mu

Educational Psychology & Leadership: Lauren Petersen

Electrical & Computer Engineering: Alexandros Dimopoulos

Geography: Brianna Brandon, Sejal Pramlall

History: Michelle Snidal

Medical Sciences (Neuroscience): Hannah Reid

Music: Tiess McKenzie

Political Science: Brianna Parent-Long

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 5:05 pm with FOSTER in the chair when called to order.

KENT offered a personal land acknowledgement.

STANDING ITEMS

A. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

*MOTION: RESOLVED that the agenda is approved as presented.
M/S FOSTER/MILLIGAN
APPROVED by Consent.*

B. TIMEKEEPER VOLUNTEER (NON-EXECUTIVE MEMBER)

GUSTAS volunteered as timekeeper.

C. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

*MOTION: RESOLVED the Minutes of the April 20, 2021 and June 8, 2021 Grad Council meeting are approved with corrections to Gerard MU's last name and minor grammatical errors.
M/S: FOSTER/KUO
APPROVED by Consent.*

D. BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES/PAST MEETINGS

None.

E. REPORTS

F. MEMBERSHIP REPORT

GSS Membership: As of July 13, 2021 there are 2591 GSS Members.

GRC Membership: Since the June 8, 2021 GRC meeting, there have been 2 co-rep resignations and 1 new elected Coucilor. Welcome Gerard Avellaneda Domeme from Mechanical Engineering!

GRC now consists of 32 voting members: 28 academic units (out of 47 academic units eligible), 1 additional academic unit, CUPE, and 5 Executive Board representatives.

Meeting Quorum: With 8 regrets received, quorum for tonight's meeting is 12.

G. CHAIR'S REMARKS

See Appendix A for the full text of the Chair's remarks.

Discussion:

DONALD requested further clarification on UVic's COVID-19 Safety Plan. FOSTER stated that we will keep GRC informed of any new information as it becomes available.

H. EXECUTIVE BOARD REPORTS – MOTION TO ACCEPT

*MOTION: RESOLVED the Executive Board Reports for April, May and June 2021 are accepted, as recommended by the Stipend Review Committee
M/S: GUSTAS/DOME ME
APPROVED by Consent.*

I. RESIGNATIONS

MOTION: RESOLVED the following resignations are accepted effective immediately:

Luisa Trux from Bylaw and Policy Committee
Meng Qi (Annie) Wu from Student Affairs Committee
Liam O'Sullivan from Finance Committee
M/S: FOSTER/SHELLENBERG
APPROVED by Consent.

J. GRC STANDING COMMITTEES – APPOINTMENTS AND REPORTS

COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS:

None.

STANDING COMMITTEE REPORTS:

- Appeals – NG reported that the Appeals Committee has no reports.
- Bylaw & Policy – FOSTER reported that BPC has approved a series of bylaw changes related to physical space and advertisements to allow for better online engagements and voting. FOSTER acknowledged KUO for her work on the voting related bylaw changes in her role as the Electoral Officer.

[TODD dropped call at 5:29. Meeting lost quorum.]

- Communications – KENT gave no report
- Events – NG reported on Speed Friending with Global Community with good turn out. Planning for orientation events is coming along well.
- Finance – KHAN not present.
- Student Affairs – SAFARI not present.
- Stipend Review – GUSTAS reported that the SRC is updating their terms of reference and setting executive top up motions.
- Ad Hoc Committees – no reports.
- Electoral Officer – no reports.

K. GRADUATE REPRESENTATION ON UVIC COMMITTEES

REPORTS FROM GRAD REPS ON UVIC COMMITTEES:

Board of Governors: FOSTER reported that the BOG has not met in their new term yet.

Senate: See Appendix B for Joseph Martin's April Senate report received July 20, 2021.

Make Transit Work Coalition: FOSTER reported that he is working to ensure that there is a GSS representative on the forthcoming Student Advisory group for BC Transit.

L. DEPARTMENT REPORTS:

GUSTAS reported high rates of anxiety around returning to campus in the Fall. Also questions about whether or not Grad House will reopen in future. Newly arriving international students are having difficulty securing housing.

DONALD reported Nursing remains disconnected as a professional program. Eliciting service involvement at UVic is a challenge for mid-career students. One of the things that facilitated engagement from Nursing in 2020-21 was distanced/online meetings. DONALD requested hybrid meetings to increase accessibility.

[KHAN arrived at 5:43. Meeting made quorate again. MILLIGAN's call dropped 5:46-5:48.]

KUO reported that there are questions about Grad House and concerns around campus return. SCHELLENBERG reported anxieties around return to campus plans and the possibility of online courses again.

DOMEME reported interest in the lab safety procedures regarding COVID-19.

BICKLEY reported that students are looking forward to the beginning of the semester.

ADEWUMI reported dissatisfaction with the level of support incoming international students are receiving from UVic during COVID.

FERGUSON reported that Psychology surveyed grad students regarding TA work in the Fall and advocating to their department for TA needs. Incoming students have also been matched with a grad student mentor.

M. DEPARTMENT REPORTS: GRC REP EXIT INTERVIEWS

FOSTER asked GRC reps to report any highlights, lowlights, and recruitment tips for GRC.

BICKLEY felt the overall experience was positive and enjoyed the opportunity to advocate for students.

GUSTAS reported that he didn't know how much GRC and GSS did until he got involved and felt it was integral to grad studies at UVic. We should show more members what we are doing and increase communications.

DONALD stated it was nice to see the non-university side of grad school and how graduate students advocate for change. Her experience on UVic committees was especially meaningful and the best part of her term on GRC.

DOMEME's department had been attempting to recruit for a long time. He advised GRC to be clearer in explaining the role of GRC reps, focus on CV building elements for leadership skills and public speaking.

FERGUSON noted the first part of the pandemic was a challenge to GRC, but that was a common experience across the board for September 2020. The increased work outcomes from Bylaw and Policy were encouraging and kept members engaged.

TURNER recapped that better hybrid meeting structures, getting out on campus to recruit, and bringing back food to in-person meetings would facilitate GRC recruitment.

BREAK FOR 5 MINUTES

MEETING NEW BUSINESS

1. GRC COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE REVISIONS

Leads: David FOSTER and Robert GUSTAS

REF DOCS: [Committee TOR Revisions Approved by BPC](#)

MOTION: RESOLVED the revisions to the Bylaw and Policy Committee Terms of Reference are adopted as presented, as recommended by the Bylaw and Policy Committee.

FURTHER RESOLVED the revisions to the Finance Committee Terms of Reference are adopted as presented, as recommended by the Bylaw and Policy Committee.

FURTHER RESOLVED the revisions to the Stipend Review Committee Terms of Reference are adopted as presented, as recommended by the Stipend Review Committee and the Bylaw and Policy Committee.

M/S: FOSTER/BICKLEY

APPROVED by Consent.

2. 2021 EXECUTIVE BOARD TRAINING COMPENSATION

Lead: Robert GUSTAS

MOTION: RESOLVED the following motion passed by Grad Council on February 23, 2021 is rescinded, as recommended by the Stipend Review Committee:

“RESOLVED that Grad Council approves the expenditure of up to \$2000 from the Operating Fund for a collection of training sessions for non-returning, incoming Executive Board members to take place during the week after the SAGM, with a stipend for those members to be per hour of training attended at a rate of \$27.10. FURTHER RESOLVED that the outgoing Exec shall be paid per hour of training attended outside their term at a rate of \$27.10.”

FURTHER RESOLVED Grad Council approves the payment of \$200 to each member of the current Executive Board (David FOSTER, Nahid SAFARI, Nicole KENT, Adair NG, and Ryan KHAN) in recognition of time spent training for their positions in March, April, May, and June of 2021, as recommended by the Stipend Review Committee.

M/S: GUSTAS/KUO

CARRIED. Executive Board members all abstained from this motion.

3. IN-PERSON EVENTS AND MEETINGS

Leads: David FOSTER and Kyla TURNER

MOTION: RESOLVED the following motion passed by the Executive Board on April 7, 2021 is rescinded:

“RESOLVED ‘in-person event’ is defined as an event that involves participants interacting in the same physical space and is not necessary for the continued functioning of the Society.

“FURTHER RESOLVED the Executive Board reaffirms that the Society will not hold or sponsor in-person events until the Executive Board or Grad Council decides otherwise.

“FURTHER RESOLVED the Society recognizes that its jurisdiction is limited to the Province of B.C., however, Executive Board Members, Grad Council members and

volunteers located outside the Province of B.C. are expected to adhere to the legislation and public health orders of the jurisdiction in which they are located."

FURTHER RESOLVED "in-person event" is defined as an organized event that involves Society members interacting in the same physical space and is not necessary for the continued functioning of the Society.

FURTHER RESOLVED "in-person event" does not include in-person services offered to Society members on an individual basis.

FURTHER RESOLVED "outdoor event" is defined as an in-person event that takes place in an open space without vertical walls or partitions and which may include an awning or canopy.

FURTHER RESOLVED "indoor event" is defined as an in-person event that takes place in a space with one or more vertical walls or partitions.

FURTHER RESOLVED all persons entering the Halpern Centre shall be required to wear non-medical face coverings

FURTHER RESOLVED the Society may hold or sponsor outdoor events provided that social distancing is maintained outside of each participant's chosen personal contacts.

FURTHER RESOLVED the Society may hold or sponsor in-person indoor events provided that the requirements for indoor events specified by the BC Provincial Health Officer's order regarding gatherings and events dated July 7, 2021, until such time as this motion is revoked, and that all participants are required to wear non-medical face coverings

FURTHER RESOLVED no meetings of Society members (including Executive Board meetings, GRC meetings, general meetings, committees and working groups) shall be held in-person.

FURTHER RESOLVED Society Board members or volunteers may choose to attend and represent the Society at in-person events and meetings held by the University, however the Society does not endorse such events and meetings and will not accept liability for any damages caused by holding such events and meetings.

FURTHER RESOLVED the Society recognizes that its jurisdiction is limited to the Province of B.C., however, Executive Board Members, Grad Council members and volunteers located outside the Province of B.C. are expected to adhere to the legislation and public health orders of the jurisdiction in which they are located.

M/S: KUO/BICKLEY

Friendly Amendments to allow for restricted indoor events and to include a mask mandate for Halpern Centre.

Discussion:

FOSTER provided history for the previous GRC motion that needs to be rescinded in order to allow in-person events. FOSTER presented a rationale for not allowing indoor, in-person events until further notice. He noted that the Delta variant of COVID-19 is more transmissible and efficacy rates of a single dose of vaccine against Delta are lower than two doses. The UK, which has a similar vaccination rate to Canada, is in the midst of a new wave of COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations, and deaths. Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) notes that outdoor events are significantly safer than indoor events. The vaccination rates among UVic students is not fully known and international students do not have equal access to vaccinations compared to domestic students getting vaccinated in Canada. If unvaccinated people (including newly arriving international students) may be present, PHAC recommends maintaining masking and distancing requirements. From the GSS perspective, we

do not have capacity to restrict events to vaccinated people and traditionally GSS events include food and drink and therefore masking could become difficult.

TURNER presented a rationale for allowing indoor, in-person events, noting that BC's vaccination rates are very high and Island Health's case counts are low. The BC Restart Plan includes reasonable measures reflecting the vaccination and case count rates. In following the BC Restart Plan, we can increase member engagement at the start of the year when we reach the highest percentage of students. We can present an option for students who feel comfortable gathering indoors, while not requiring indoor participation of any member, volunteer, or staff.

DONALD asked for clarification on the definition of which events would be affected by this motion. TURNER clarified that it would be for events in Halpern Centre and around campus if occurring indoors. DONALD asked if these were the same spaces the GSS has advocated for ventilation upgrades. TURNER stated that those buildings on campus that could receive a ventilation upgrade had. Halpern Centre is NOT received a ventilation upgrade, but we have the capacity to increase ventilation by opening windows.

FOSTER clarified that the motion allows for orientation events hosted by the University but does not allow those events to be endorsed.

TURNER solicited GRC reps to provide examples of the kinds of safety measures would be appropriate at this time.

DONALD argued for ventilation being the most important safety measure. We've asked UVic to take more precautions and should take all precautions now. GUSTAS and KUO agreed that the GSS should walk our talk after repeat requests to the University for more safety measures.

KUO and TURNER requested a friendly amendment to mandate masks in Halpern Centre.

FOSTER requested a friendly amendment to include the July 7, 2021 public health requirements.

Regardless of changes to the PHO orders, we can commit to these requirements to decrease capacity.

CARRIED.

Erin DONALD abstained from the friendly amendment allowing for restricted indoor, in-person events following the July 7, 2021 PHO guidelines.

MOTION: RESOLVED to extend the meeting by ten minutes.

M/S: FOSTER/DONALD

APPROVED by Consent

4. STUDENT ADVOCATE FUND

Lead: David FOSTER

REF DOCS: [Student Advocate Fund Report to GRC](#)

MOTION: RESOLVED the Student Advocate Fund Report for 2019-2021 is received as information and its recommendations are referred to the Executive Board.

M/S: KHAN/KUO

Discussion:

FOSTER provided the background on how the Student Advocate Fund came into being in a 2019 referenda posed by both GSS and UVSS to create a fund to hire a full time student advocate. The GSS referendum passed, but the UVSS referendum failed. Therefore, sufficient funding for hiring an advocate was not secured. Since then, no individual cases have been approved for funding and the funds were not appropriately separated out into a restricted fund in GSS accounting. FOSTER

recommends the following resolution to the accounting concerns:

1. The Executive Director confirm with the bookkeeper the amount of money that should be in the Student Advocate Fund based on fee remittances from September 2019 to April 2021.
 2. The Executive Director work with the bookkeeper, auditors and the GSS' financial institution to establish the Student Advocate Fund as a restricted fund in GSS budgets, audits, financial statements and bank accounts.
 3. The Finance Committee revise the Terms of Reference of the Student Advocate Fund to allow the Fund to be used for broader purposes than currently permitted. It is recommended that the purposes be expanded to include systemic advocacy to improve University policies and procedures and the delivery of information, referrals and education to graduate students on University policies and procedures and student rights. The revised Terms of Reference would be submitted to the Semi-Annual General Meeting in March 2022 for approval.
- KHAN noted that we will need to resolve bookkeeping concerns before any funds are moved within GSS accounts.

APPROVED by Consent

CLOSING ITEMS

IMPORTANT DATE REMINDERS:

Next GRC meeting: September 28, 2020

REQUESTS FOR SUPPORT/ADVOCACY/PARTICIPATION

None.

NOTICES OF MOTION FOR NEXT MEETING

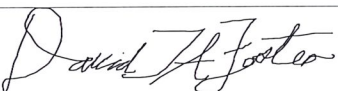
None.

ADJOURNMENT


MOTION: RESOLVED that the meeting is adjourned.
M/S GUSTAS/KENT
APPROVED by Consent.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:17pm.

KT/klp

X 

David Foster
GSS Chair 2021-22

X 

Kyla Turner
GSS Executive Director

APPENDIX A: CHAIR'S REMARKS

Chair's Remarks July 20, 2021

- The GSS held a referendum on the Extended Health and Dental Plan on June 9, 10 and 11 via Web-vote. There was a 9% turnout (impressive for a summer referendum) and the majority voted to increase the fee and maintain their current coverage. I'd like to express appreciation to all GSS Board and staff members and the Electoral Officer for their excellent work.
- The GSS has continued to raise concerns regarding ventilation in classrooms, accommodation for medically vulnerable students, and international students unable to arrive in Canada.
- UVic has stated that 95% of buildings with mechanical ventilation systems should have MERV 13 filters installed (the industry standard for reducing COVID transmission). Ventilation will be run an hour before occupancy and at a higher rate than normal. However, it is not yet clear what will be done in buildings without mechanical ventilation.
- The Centre for Accessible Learning will have increased staff and resources to address requests for medical accommodation. Each request will be handled on an individual basis and there is no overall policy regarding remote attendance for those with medical conditions.
- A large number of international students were identified in graduate courses and some courses were moved to online as a result.
- The GSS co-signed a letter to the UVic administration with the UVic Faculty Association and staff unions asking for accommodations for medically vulnerable and international students, and the ability for instructors to mandate masks in classes.
- The University responded that they will not allow mask mandates in classes. An additional \$885,000 will be provided for learning and teaching technology support staff which may assist in accommodations of people needing to join classes remotely (e.g., sick or self-isolating).
- According to International Student Services, 69 graduate students are not planning to attend UVic in person this fall. The University is working to accommodate them on a case-by-case basis.
- The GSS endorsed a letter written by the UVSS and Camosun College Students' Society asking BC Transit to continue mandatory masks on buses. BC Transit responded that they will not do this, but they will continue other measures such as enhanced cleaning of buses, partitions between drivers and asking passengers to stay home if they have symptoms.
- The GSS is participating in the Access4All Campaign which is led by the UVic Society for Students with Disabilities and focused on ensuring adequate academic accommodations for medically vulnerable students. Anyone interested in this campaign is encouraged to contact the UVic SSD.
- The GSS has responded to the tragic discovery of thousands of graves on the sites of residential schools across Canada by sharing resources and opportunities to offer support to Indigenous communities with our membership and via social media. The GSS will be hosting Indigenous Cultural Acumen Training in the Fall and Spring semesters for all interested graduate students.
- The GSS has not been able to produce monthly financial statements since March due to issues with an external contractor. I am working with the Executive Director and the Director of Finance to resolve this situation. It is not ideal for the Board as we should have access to financial statements to enable us to perform financial oversight of the Society.
- The GSS Board has decided to begin the process of hiring a second manager, a position that has been vacant since the Grad House Restaurant closed due to COVID-19. Currently the GSS has only one full-time staff person and three part-time staff. The need for a second full-time staff person has been identified regardless of whether the restaurant reopens.

APPENDIX B: SENATE REPORT

From: Joseph Martin <joeymartin888@gmail.com>
Sent: July 20, 2021 4:00 PM
To: GSS Governance <gssgov@uvic.ca>
Cc: David Foster - GSS Chair <gsschair@uvic.ca>; Kyla Turner - Executive Director, Graduate Students' Society <gssmgr@uvic.ca>
Subject: Re: April Senate report

My apologies for this abysmally late reply. It's been a busy summer getting my thesis across the finish line and starting a new job.

I would say that the erosion of faculty participation in governance is not as profound in Canada (at least at UVic) as compared to in the US. In fact, from my experience on the Senate, it appears that the faculty is far and away the stakeholder which receives the most deference. The clearest example of this was with regards to the Senate's review of Course Experience Surveys where the many legitimate concerns of faculty members were covered in depth without a single mention of how the CES is important for students or their education. The labour rights perspective roundly trumped any discussion of educational quality.

I think that in the current context there hasn't been any large negative effects of the faculty's disproportionate share of power in academic governance because we by-and-large have fantastic faculty who truly care about UVic students and the institution. That being said, the current structure of the Senate is such that the faculty have an almost assured majority by themselves (excluding administrators and staff) and thus the presence of students appears relegated almost to an "observer" status in comparison.

Unfortunately, being a master's student, there is virtually no way for me to serve past my one term on the Senate short of failing my defence, but my replacement on the SCAG committee is a law student who seems keen and able to continue pushing for more effective student representation in the Senate.

Best of luck with the new academic year and thank you for all you do for the GSS.

Joey

Joseph Martin
MSc Student
School of Earth and Ocean Sciences
University of Victoria