

# 2024-25 Advocacy & Campaigns Committee Semi-Annual Report

March 25, 2025 SAGM

## Membership

Co-chairs: Jitendra Palaparty, Rosemary Webb

2024-25 members:

- Victor Marrugat Arnal
- Yasmeen Barakat
- Bryce Bartsch
- Jesse Delmage
- Semyon Drozdetskii
- Neve Sugars-Keen
- Mahmoud Chick Zaouali
- Kyla Turner, ex-officio, non-voting

The 2024-25 Advocacy & Campaigns committee members have been a delight to work with over the past months! Thank you to Semyon and Neve for your contributions over the fall semester, and to the remainder of the members as we continue into the spring semester. Thank you especially to Victor for your involvement in many different committee projects!

## Duties of the Committee

The Advocacy & Campaigns committee proposes, plans, and organizes advocacy work on graduate student issues. This includes identifying and researching issues that affect graduate students, developing and implementing campaigns and actions that align with the GSS' Annual Plan, and suggesting areas of advocacy for future Annual Plans.

## Overview of Work Completed

Overall, the advocacy and campaigns committee has worked on several key issues that concern graduate students at UVic, these are some of our achievements since the last reporting term:

- Project workflow resource
- Welcome letter to Minister Kang (PSFS)

One project started by the 2024 Committee is finally coming to fruition – we had called for a renaming of the ATRS (Athletics and Recreation) fee to reflect that students are not paying for access to recreation, but rather for UVic to support Athletics operations costs. We have been told that the fee will be renamed effective September 2025.

The GSS has gained representative seats on two additional campus committees in the past few months: the Residence Dining Advisory Committee and the Advocacy for Inclusive Recreation (AIR) Committee. A&C has really strengthened our relationship with AIR this year, and the Society for Students with a Disability, with the aim of providing grad students with opportunities for recreation since UVic continues to remove access to free programming.

In October, the GSS Executive Board met with UVic Executives, where we proposed changes to better support international as a result of our work from the Advocacy and Campaigns Committee. One of these changes is to make study permit information letters issued by UVic to better reflect students enrolled in master's programs that are less than 16 months in length but could be extended to 16 or more months. This is to better support international students to apply for a Spousal Open Work Permit (SOWP). This issue has now been resolved.

In November, the GSS endorsed a letter written by Divest UVic which called for UVic to sign the United Nations Global Compact Policy platform as a part of UVic's Responsible Investment Policy review, in response to UVic Foundations's investments that are in direct violation of human rights. The platform calls for organizations to align their operations with 10 principles of human rights, labour, environment, and anti-corruption. Divest UVic wrote to us with the update that UVic committed to incorporating the principles of the Global Compact into their execution of the Responsible Investment Policy!

UVic currently has an open bid to the Province for funding to build a new dorm, and the GSS as a whole has been making as much noise as possible around the need for dedicated graduate student studio suites. We have also emphasized that the new dorm design should include lockable workspaces as many graduate students do not have access to offices, or graduate student-exclusive work and study space. Should the UVic bid get accepted, we will continue firmly emphasizing our needs.

Finally, in February the GSS hosted our first ever Queer BIPOC social in collaboration with the Events Committee, after hearing from our members that there has been a lack of Queer BIPOC space and events at the GSS. Thank you Yasmeen for planning the social!

## Overview of Incomplete and Outstanding Work

In the face of changes to accessible athletics and recreation available at UVic, the GSS and A&C have been advocating for student needs, with varied degrees of success. Although we won't see renovation of McKinnon Pool, nor construction of a new pool, we have been brainstorming where to go with advocacy projects. One potential future direction is proposing partnerships with regional community centres, particularly with the recent referendum regarding Crystal Pool. Bryce created a report with details of community centre programming, facilities, fees, and access information which the Committee may utilize in upcoming advocacy work.

Members have expressed dissatisfaction with the revised Student Accommodation Policy as implemented in September 2024 (AC1205), and A&C is involved in ongoing advocacy around the Policy and supporting graduate student needs. There has been a recent increase in requests for Teaching Assistant supports, which is a potential project for A&C to look into, particularly in collaboration with our campus partners.

The Lactation Friendly Campus project, initiated by the 2023-24 Student Affairs Committee unfortunately fell to the wayside for the current committee, but could be picked up again by the incoming Board members and/or the 2025-26 A&C Committee depending on their Annual Plan.

Another change proposed to UVic in October 2024 for better international student support in the face of rapid IRCC changes is implementing a system to automatically display full-time status on the verification of enrollment (VOE) letters for international graduate students with disabilities registered with Centre of Accessible Learning (CAL). This is still a work in progress with meetings ongoing with the Registrar's Office and the International Centre for Students (ICS).