

*University of Victoria Graduate Students' Society*  
**Graduate Representative Council**

MINUTES

DECEMBER 16, 2025, 5-7 PM

**Executive Board Invited (1 vote per member):**

**Chair:** Rosemary Webb

**Director of Internal/University Relations:** Sarah Roberts

**Director of Finance:** Maggie Lawton

**Director of Student Life:** Asma Noureen

**Director of External Relations:** Jitendra Palaparty

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

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

Anthropology: <b>Semyon Drozdetskii, Zenus Francis</b>	Electrical & Computer Engineering: <b>Victor Marrugat Arnald, Latifa Yusuf</b>	Interdisciplinary Studies:	Public Health & Social Policy:
Art History and Visual Studies: <b>Melody Ray</b>	English: <b>Becca Andelyn</b>	Law: <b>Chidimma Ike</b>	Social Dimensions of Health: <b>Marcela Zamudio, Maren Akyurek</b>
Biochemistry & Microbiology: <b>Liam Mihalynuk, Sophie Culos</b>	Environmental Studies:	Mathematics and Statistics:	Social Work:
Biology: <b>Sydney Houston, Manuel Centeno Duque</b>	Exercise Science, Phys. & Health Ed:	Mechanical Engineering: <b>Bernardo Leite, Ama Ouchen</b>	Sociology:
Business: <b>Ross Harthy</b>	French and Francophone Studies:	Medical Sciences/Neuroscience: <b>Frances Armas</b>	Theatre:
Chemistry: <b>Amelie Cazelaïs</b>	Geography: <b>Wyatt Maddox</b>	Music: <b>Josie Hill</b>	Visual Arts: <b>Kylie Fineday</b>
Child & Youth Care:	Germanic & Slavic Studies:	Nursing:	Writing:
Civil Engineering:	Greek and Roman Studies: <b>Grace Niehaus</b>	Pacific and Asian Studies: <b>Curran Chapman, Ruyan Wang</b>	CUPE:
Computer Science: <b>Chloë Farr</b>	Health Information Science: <b>Astrid Han</b>	Philosophy:	Other Programs:
Curriculum & Instruction: <b>Shina Khan</b>	Hispanic & Italian Studies:	Physics and Astronomy: <b>Maggie Berube &amp; Laura Dufort-Gagnon</b>	Social Work: <b>Clara Troje</b>
Earth & Ocean Science: <b>Nadiya Shore, Lekima Yakuden</b>	History:	Political Science: <b>Max Backhaus</b>	Sociology: <b>Jasmine Padam</b>
Economics:	Indigenous Education:	Psychology: <b>Jessica Li</b>	Theatre:
Educational Psychology & Leadership Studies: <b>Annie Wu,</b>	Indigenous Governance:	Public Administration: <b>Andrea Sadowski</b>	Visual Arts:

**Recorder:** Maggie Lawton

**Invited Guests:** Anna-Elaine Rempel

**Regrets Received:** Irfan Tanveer, Governance Coordinator, Kyla Turner

**Absent without regrets:**

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## LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND OPENING ITEMS

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CALL TO ORDER 5:00 PM

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT 5:01 PM

Councillors are asked to provide a personal, meaningful statement of land acknowledgement.

Today's personal land acknowledgement will be provided by WEBB. They described doing a walking tour in Seattle and learning about the history of the Duwamish people.

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA 5:05

*MOTION: to approve the agenda as presented.*

*M/S: Executive Board/BACKHAUS*

*CARRIED*

TIMEKEEPER VOLUNTEER 5:10

Today's timekeeper was: REMPEL.

MEMBERSHIP REPORT, MEETING QUORUM AND ATTENDANCE 5:12

**GSS Membership:** As of September 23, 2025, the GSS has 3025 members.

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

**Welcome to new GRC reps:** Everyone!

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## REPORTS AND OPEN DIALOGUE

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CHAIR'S REMARKS 5:15

WEBB updated GRC on the goings on of the Executive Board. The board has been consulting with FGS on the supervision policy review. They also helped review the FGS Dean position criteria for the appointment/reappointment committee. They solidified and finalized election and referendum planning. They also researched and planned a response to the recently announced provincial review of the financial sustainability of post-secondary institutions.

GRC COMMITTEE, ELECTORAL OFFICER REPORTS, UPCOMING MEETINGS AND EVENTS 5:20

- Advocacy and Campaigns: PALAPARTY
  - Report by ROBERTS A&C did some training on developing work plans. They also reviewed their campaign strategies for verification of enrollment letters, and briefly discussed the provincial review of post-secondary institutions.
- Appeals: LAWTON.
  - Appeals committee had 0 appeals to review
- Bylaw & Policy: WEBB
  - B&P is still planning the constitutional review. They discussed how best to engage with a membership that is not intimately familiar with our constitution and policy documentation.

DROZDECKII had several students reach out about longstanding concerns with a specific professor in Anthropology that makes inappropriate comments and discussions in lecture. E.g. on 4 occasions the professor pushed white nationalism over indigenous histories. They also caused significant student distress during class. The situation is uncomfortable especially as the professor acts as Graduate Advisor, and despite contacting the Department Chair no feedback was received. DROZDECKII asked for advice on next steps and how to best handle it. LAWTON recommended reaching out to the Faculty Dean and Dean of FGS. WEBB offered that, if anonymity is desired, the GSS can do that communication, although it can hinder follow-up. CULOS noted it would be very useful if the course lectures are recorded.

LEITE reported on two feedback sessions with the Mech Eng feedback students. In one, they asked the professors to leave mid-seminar to allow for more open discussion. They also attended the faculty retreat to further discuss things. Lastly, they just received privacy allowances for a future wellness survey.

CULOS noted that they're working on a project with A&C on how the building becomes too hot for proper lab safety. They have received responses that the policy protects instrumentation first over human use. They hope to reach out directly to Facilities and the University to resolve this issue. They're looking to collaborate with other groups and people in other buildings to collect data on how significant the issue is. LAWTON noted that the executive board discussed this issue with Facilities at Operational Relations, and how they expressed their understanding of the issue but also the limitations of the old buildings (e.g. Petch) without pre-existing AC. REMPEL inquired if a claim has been made with Work Safe BC, and suggested looking into Work With Solidarity's "Too hot to work" campaign. CULOS noted that it has been considered, and the constant comment brought up is 'can you bear it?' e.g. it's starting to approach, but has not yet hit, the 'danger zone' of temperatures. They noted that they looked into the heat exhaustion policy set by Work Safe BC – it's not quite at the limit, but is close (approximately 2°C off). More records would be useful for making a case. ARNALD noted that often the high temperatures are very space-specific (e.g. in glove boxes), and it can be very difficult to keep laboratories at reasonable temperatures. They recommend that for summertime, we should advocate to professors for reduced working hours during peak temperatures. FARR noted similar issues in Clearihue basements.

BREAK – 5 MINUTES – 5:55 PM

## MEETING NEW BUSINESS

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### 1. ELECTION EARLY NOTICE 6:00

Lead: WEBB/DROZDECKII

Reference:

For: Discussion

Elections are right around the corner! WEBB and DROZDECKII to give a heads-up of important dates and information to expect when preparing to run for/vote for Executive Board positions.

- Nominations Open: Mon Feb 9th – Mon Feb 23rd
- Campaign Period: Tues Feb 24th – Tues Mar 3rd
- Voting: Wed Mar 4th – Fri Mar 6th
- Meet the Board: Wed Feb 4th, 9-10:30am
- Meet the Candidates: Wed Feb 25th, 9-10:30am

- Events: NOUREEN
  - Report by DROZDECKII. They reviewed their calendar and did sign ups for January events (see January Events agenda item for list). They also planned events including Chinese New Year celebrations, Powerpoke Karaoke, House Plant Swaps, etc. for February and March.
- Finance: LAWTON
  - Finance committee approved the final referendum questions and background to send to the board for ratification. This included discussion of last-minute financial information received from WUSC, which ultimately resulted in no change to the proposed referendum questions. The Committee also reviewed the draft budget and scheduled consultations with Finance Committee, Board, and Staff.
- Stipend Review: LEITE
  - Discussion was long, and they created a plan to develop a guide document for creation of better board reports.
- Electoral Officer: DROZDECKII
  - Upcoming election and referendum. DROZDECKII met with WEBB and TANVEER to finalize election and referendum dates. They also developed a work plan to finalize a nomination package that allows for interested university groups to engage and campaign for the referendum. DROZDECKII also gave an overview of election dates as seen in Election Announcement agenda item.

#### GRC STANDING COMMITTEES – APPOINTMENTS 5:30

If anyone wishes to change committees, please raise your hand.

*MOTION: to appoint 2025-26 GRC reps to the GRC Standing Committees as follows:  
Advocacy and Campaign: Becca Andelyn*

*Bylaw and Policy:*

*Events:*

*Checks and Balances (Appeals, Finance, Stipend Review):*

*M/S: BACKHAUS/ARNALD  
CARRIED*

#### OPEN DIALOGUE AND REPORTS 5:35

LEAD: WEBB

## 2. JANUARY EVENTS 6:05

Lead: NOUREEN

For: Discussion

The GSS will be welcoming everyone back in January with some fresh and fun events! NOUREEN to provide an overview of those events and call for volunteers.

- Wed Jan 14 – Pancake Breakfast
- Fri Jan 16 – Pub Crawl
- Tue Jan 20 – Ice Skating @ Oak Bay Rec Centre
- Fri Jan 23 – Trivia with Fierce Brosnan
  - o Themes: Twilight & Dr. Who
- Wed Jan 28 – DIY Vision Board
- Also Naloxone Training!

## 3. GSAW REFLECTIONS 6:10

Lead: ROBERTS/NOUREEN

For: Discussion

Please consider the below questions and come ready to provide feedback to ROBERTS and NOUREEN!

These were the events from GSAW this year:

- Taco Breakfast
- De-stress fest with the UVic Libraries
- Beyond Academic Careers with the Career Educator
- EGRS (and post-EGRS social)
- Successful Supervisory relationships panel and workshop with FGS, OVPRI and the Ombudsperson
- Board Games and Brownies with the UVic Innovation Centre

1) Did you attend the Excellence in Graduate Research Symposium this year as a presenter/as an attendee? How did the experience go for you? What parts felt successful, and what aspects could be improved for next time?

- Bryn participated as a presenter and had a great time. They felt all the communication was clear and helpful
- RAY Had a poster and found that those presenting in the afternoon didn't know about awards or judging – this information could be better communicated! BACKHAUS asked if judging instructions were provided verbally as well as in written form, and WEBB suggested that more information be provided at the orientation table day-of.

- LAWTON noted that while chairing the online session, there were far more attendees and engagement than in previous years. This was likely because there were more and shorter talks scheduled for this session, meaning more people had to attend.
- 2) Did you volunteer at GSAW events (including EGRS)? What went well? What could be improved for future volunteers?
  - 3) Did you see/hear about EGRS/GSAW events around campus (e.g. from department emails, posters, newsletters, or IG)? How did you share information with other students in your unit?
  - 4) If you did not attend, were there any factors or barriers that prevented your participation?
  - 5) Thinking about the whole week, did events at GSAW or EGRS support your academic, professional, or personal growth? Feel free to share specific stories/moments that stand out. Is there anything else you'd like to see?
  - 6) Do you have any other comments or feedback about your experiences? (positive or negative!) Please feel free to send any further comments or feedback to [gssinternal@uvic.ca](mailto:gssinternal@uvic.ca) or [gsslife@uvic.ca](mailto:gsslife@uvic.ca)

#### 4. ADDRESSING GRADUATE STUDENT CONCERNS WITH THE PROVINCIAL POST-SECONDARY SECTOR REVIEW PROCESS 6:20

Lead: BACKHAUS, WEBB

Reference: **Funding Review Memo**, GSS Letter to Don Avison

For: Discussion

BACKHAUS summarized the situation (see Memo), deadlines, and concerns for cuts to departments and especially the humanities. They worried that there was no room for graduate students to be heard with respect to this review. He also notes that the Graduates of Political Science (GPS) wrote and sent their own letter to Don Avison. BACKHAUS wanted to incentivize the GSS and other graduate students to get engaged and contact the province about the issue.

The GSS board sent a letter on Dec 15<sup>th</sup> to the province to outline the following calls to action:

1. Rescind the associated terms of reference and make amendments based on meaningful and transparent consultation with the post-secondary sector, including graduate students. Extend the consultation period and stakeholders to be engaged.
2. Release the 2022 PSI funding review results to promote transparency as to the cause of the current funding crisis and to respect the significant work done across our sector to support this review.
3. Remove the “no new funding” restriction for this review’s mandate. As our many colleagues have made clear, there can be no successful sustainability review of Provincial entities without Provincial funding.
4. Publicly commit to maintaining the 2% cap on domestic tuition. The Province has made multiple attempts in the last 30 years to shift responsibility for sustainably funding PSIs onto different classes of students, whether domestic, international or “microcredential”. The only sustainable path to a strong public post-secondary sector is a provincially funded post-secondary sector.

5. Cap executive compensation for university Presidents, Vice Presidents, Associate Vice Presidents, and other executive management.
6. Provide direct funding for the student services that the Province mandates PSIs host.

In addition, the board is developing communication materials for our social media channels and website, and reaching out to media outlets and other student societies. However, we know that GRC voices need to be included, and want to support GRC and all GSS members in responding to this review. Kyla is initiating a working group, including trainings on Advocacy 101 and letter writing in the first week of January. Afterwards, she will hold weekly drop-ins for the working group.

1. Advocacy 101 Training Hosted by Kyla – 2-4pm Tuesday, January 6. First hour: powerpoint! Second hour: working through the flow chart. May include any and all advocacy campaigns.
2. Advocacy Letter Writing Training with Kyla – 1-3pm Wednesday, January 7: First hour: powerpoint! Second hour: applying those skills to drafting one or more response letters to this issue. May include any and all advocacy campaigns, if folks are prepared to work on their own letters independently.
3. Provincial Funding Review Advocacy Working Group/Drop in support with Kyla – 1-3pm, Wednesdays, Jan 14, 21, 28. Open two hours weekly for interested parties to come together to workshop advocacy ideas specific to the provincial funding review.

WEBB also reported that the GSS has contacted various internal university groups (FGS, Jim Dunsdon, etc.) as well as other student societies (UVSS, Alliance of BC Students, Camosun, Royal Roads).

THIESSEN notes that they have been communicating with CUPE4163 and working with other university unions, and that they plan on sending their own letter in early January.

REMPEL emphasized the alarming nature of this review, and how it is a danger to our education system and academic independence. Having institutions reliant on or directed by governmental priorities sets a dangerous and concerning precedent.

WEBB notes that the GSS is limited to what it says in an official capacity, especially as we have publically called for a review in the past (but not like this!). However, they encourage everyone to get involved, especially in a personal manner. Please come out to those sessions and get involved!

MARRUGAT requested a summary that can be shared with other students and departments. **LAWTON promised to provide their website blurb (pre-website) with the minutes and upload it to Teams.** RAY clarified that the workshops will be held at the Grad House board room.

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## STANDING ITEMS 6:35 PM

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES (APPENDIX A) 6:35

*MOTION: to approve the Minutes of the November 25, GRC meeting as presented [OR approved with minor corrections as provided].*

*M/S: DROZDETCKII/ANDEL*

#### EXECUTIVE BOARD STIPEND REPORTS – QUESTIONS ARISING AND MOTION TO ACCEPT – 6:40

LEAD: LEITE

REF DOCS: 2025-26 Board Reports

Councillors are required to read the Executive Board reports prior to the meeting.

Written feedback at this time has not yet been provided.

Informal feedback provided for LAWTON: Avoid presenting medical details. Should avoid presenting things as large block of work as one item. Please break it down for future items.

Informal feedback provided for NOUREEN: Should avoid presenting items as a large block of items without clear detail.

Informal feedback provided for PALAPARTY: A portion is confidential. Should avoid presenting items as large block of items without clear detail. PALAPARTY refuted the motion as provided, and requested additional information. LEITE noted that there were significant concerns about A&C preparation, responsibilities about the chair of the committee ability to prepare a comprehensive agenda and supporting information. Concern is about the ability of PALAPARTY to exercise their role appropriately, which led to increase in workload for other members. PALAPARTY points out that Bylaw 10 states that Stipend Review Committee can reject board proposals if they feel the board member did not sufficiently fulfill their role for the month of November – LEITE agrees that yes, Stipend Review Committee is exercising their right per Bylaw 10.

BACKHAUS and LEITE requested an in-camera session with just GRC members. RAY took minutes.

*MOTION: to approve the November reports for Rosemary Webb and Sarah Roberts, as presented.*

*Further to approve the November reports for Maggie Lawton and Asma Noreen with feedback provided.*

*Further to request a revised report from Jitendra Palaparty prior to considering approval.*

*Moved: Stipend Review Seconded: N/A*

SRC amended the original proposed motion to be as follows:

*MOTION: to approve the November reports for Rosemary Webb and Sarah Roberts, as presented.*

*Further to approve the November reports for Maggie Lawton and Asma Noreen with feedback provided.*



*Further to approve half stipend to Jitendra Palaparty and request a revised board report for the remainder to be assessed.*

*Moved: Stipend Review Seconded: BACKHAUS*

GRC Voted to approve this motion: 13 in favour, 0 against, 2 abstentions (LEITE and MARRUGAT).

PALAPARTY requests to appeal the motion. GRC requests that the appeal be submitted in writing by the appellant for GRC and/or stipend review committee, to be reviewed in January.

PALAPARTY announces their resignation.

#### REPORTS FROM GRAD REPS ON UVIC COMMITTEES 6:45

LEAD: WEBB

Open Floor to hear any reports from graduate student representatives on:

- Board of Governors:
- Senate:
- Faculty of Graduate Studies Council:
- Previously appointed committees:

Committee	Appointment Date	Rep Name
Senate Committee on Libraries		Bernardo Leite

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

This item was pushed to the next meeting.

#### GRADUATE REPRESENTATION ON UVIC COMMITTEES (APPENDIX B) 6:50

LEAD: TANVEER

Reps serve on one or more UVic committee(s) to ensure grad student interests are represented.

*MOTION: to elect graduate student representatives to the following UVic committees:*

*Committee: Child Care Advisory Committee for 2025-2026*

*Member:*

*Committee:*

*Member:*

*M/S:*

*CARRIED/FAILED*

This item was pushed to the next meeting.

REQUESTS FOR SUPPORT/ADVOCACY/PARTICIPATION 6:55

LEAD: WEBB

NOTICES OF AGENDA ITEMS FOR NEXT MEETING (APPENDIX C)

LEAD: WEBB

IMPORTANT DATE REMINDERS:

LEAD: WEBB

Next GRC Meeting: January 27, 2026

- Please have any potential agenda items, with supporting materials, to the Executive Board for consideration, in advance of January 13, 2026
- Agenda to be posted: January 20, 2026

Next General Membership Meeting: GSS Semi-Annual General Meeting! March 24, 2026

- Agenda to be posted: March 10, 2026


Office, Staff Scheduling Notes: The GSS will be closed December 22-January 2 inclusive for Winter Break

ADJOURNMENT

*MOTION: to adjourn the meeting.*

*M/S: ANDEL/BACKHAUS*

*CARRIED*

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Rosemary WEBB  
GSS Chair 2025-26

  
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Kyla TURNER  
GSS Executive Director

  
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Maggie LAWTON  
GSS Director of Finance