

University of Victoria Graduate Students' Society

Executive Board
(HYBRID) MEETING MINUTES

JULY 22, 2026

EXECUTIVE INVITED:

Violet CIESLIK, Chair; ☐

Hannah BROWN, Director of Internal/University Relations;

Eleanore TODD, Director of Finance;

Victor MARRUGAT, Director of External Relations;

Manuel CENTENO DUQUE, Director of Student Life

REGRETS: Kyla TURNER, Executive Director (non-voting);

GUESTS: Neil Barney (non-voting)

STANDING ITEMS PART 1

A. CALL TO ORDER

Call to Order: 11:05 AM by CIESLIK.

B. TERRITORY ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

MARRUGAT gave territory acknowledgement. Hopes the summer will have a mild fire season, and that indigenous stewardship is a key part of our relationship with the land. Wildfires and dry weather are well known to indigenous communities, we should consult more than we do.

C. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion: to approve the agenda as presented.

M/S: MARRUGAT/CENTENO DUQUE

CARRIED

NEW BUSINESS

1. ANNUAL PLANNING!

Lead: CIESLIK

REF DOC: Previous Annual Plans available here: [Exec Duties - Strategic Planning](#), [Bylaw 15: Executive Board Annual Plan Policy](#)

For: Discussion

CIESLIK went over annual plan (AP) documents. Plan needs to be done by September GRC, and needs to be done sooner for our Exec meeting on September 8th.

Primary Items for AP:

- BPC rewrite for elections
- Respond to PSI review and take action
- Strengthen feedback channels with members and board
- Long term financial vision out 20 years

- Advocate for environmental sustainability and climate resiliency, lab safety, public transit.
- Welcoming new members and FGS orientation overhaul.
- Supporting RAs through reclassification by FGS
- Supporting fairness such as Ombudsperson and FGS accommodations

Timeline: Complete by September 4th

- Wednesday 12-1 PM August 12th, meeting to plan individual tasks.
 - o Three goals to achieve, with subdivisions for overarching goals, specific projects, and plans of achievement.
 - o For this meeting, review the brainstorming for the aforementioned bullet point.
- Letter to Membership attached to our overarching themes; Draft by Aug 25.
 - o Those who are assigned individually to each theme will write up the about section.
 - o Grad students have limited time, succinct wording recommended.
 - o We need to ensure that our tasks are nonspecific and general, to allow us flexibility.
- Exec-to-Exec September 8th, 1:30-3:30 PM for CIESLIK.

2. INSURANCE RENEWAL UPDATE!

Lead: TODD

Some Context from conversations with our Alumo Representative

Our broker is Alumo, our provider is Pacific Blue Cross (PBC).

Each year Alumo comes to us with the deal they have brokered with PBC.

Last year we switched from Aon to Alumo, going on market, but eventually remaining with PBC. We had a modest reduction in cost, likely due to PBC wanting to keep us.

Our plan utilization has moderately increased this past year, mostly in paramedicals (mental health care, physio, massage, chiro, etc).

We have one of the most generous plans in Canada amongst other student associations and societies.

The Current Situation

- We have met with our Alumo representative, who gave us a report on our plan usage, and the cost of next year's plan.
- The new cost is high (25%-35%) increase, and we will need to utilize our UDA, a savings account carried over from AON, we cannot do so long term.
- Finance Committee+Staff has a suggestion for a fee referendum campaign in the new year.
 - o July: Inform GRC, context but wait for detailed plan
 - o October: at the SAGM, Robyn, our Alumo rep, will give a presentation on comparable plans for student organizations, framing the need for a fee increase.
 - o November – Host a town hall with general membership to both explain the situation and ask for feedback. Do we want to raise rates, if so by how much, or should we reduce services, some combination of both also an option.
 - o January – Host another town hall, begin campaigning for the fee referendum.
 - o February – Continue campaigning and fielding questions from membership.
 - o March – Hold Referendum.

For: Discussion

Agreement on timeline, spreading out fee increases. BROWN notes that any such additional requirement or reduction of coverage, though reducing fees, is ultimately a barrier to service. MARRUGAT agrees that fee increase is likely. TODD outlined plans, increases in paramedicals (Physio, Psych, etc) along with context of recent switch of plans.

3. BC POLICY SOLUTIONS REPORT ON PSI FUNDING

Lead: CENTENO

Reference:

Rebuilding post-secondary education as public infrastructure in BC (or how we fix the predictable fa...
News articles relating to the BC Policy Solutions Report: Castanet: New report proposes solutions for B.C. post-secondary sector in throes of financial crisis

The Tyee: <https://thetyee.ca/News/2026/06/09/Post-Secondary-Crisis-New-Report/>

Peninsula News: B.C. post-secondary system facing worst funding crisis in its history, report finds - Peninsula News...

For: Discussion

TURNER notes that the BC Policy Solutions report has a lot of excellent material that could be incorporated into any future advocacy efforts to address the chronic underfunding of PSIs by the BC government. CENTENO brought forward the idea of advocating for awareness for PSI review and implications for removal of the 2% tuition cap during our last board meeting on July 8th. This discussion is meant to get the ball rolling on these efforts and hear the overall perspective from the BC student movement meetings that CENTENO has been attending.

CENTENO notes that comments for the review will be released along with plan made on review. We want advocacy beforehand, so that Victoria and UVic folks (amongst others in BC) will be aware. We met with Minister of Post Secondary Education (TODD, CIESLIK, CENTENO). Showed them documents for our major advocacy points. Output was not promising, favoring waiting for review results. BC appears to be hesitant to further direct investment. We have been meeting with the alliance of BC students to form a coalition of student societies of BC for an awareness campaign. Should be ready in a month or so. Met with Debbie, BC federation of students? Campaign called "Cut's Suck".

MARRUGAT met with SFU D-Internal. Updated on our current advocacy efforts, was onboard with our campaign. Meeting with BCFS, larger in members, but from smaller institutions often. CENTENO mentioned UBCO recently joined. CIESLIK mentions we may want to wait to act until we know who is in, but when we do to act decisively. MARRUGAT mentions desiring a short statement response for immediate response to PSI review decisions.

BROWN mentioned reaching out to faculty (Unions, faculty association, etc) as they are also impacted by any budget cuts. CIESLIK desires waiting before starting those conversations. CENTENO mentions that our campaign is one of broad appeal, countermanded by decisions of budget reality. It is up to us to convince them that the decision is not so clear cut. We do not currently have a plan, in development, then larger

advocacy. BROWN mentions draft letters, CENTENO mentions draft letters are responses to government releases, emergency advocacy, rather than preventative advocacy.

STANDING ITEMS PART 2

D. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion: to approve the minutes from the July 8, 2026 Executive Board Meeting as presented.

M/S: CENTENO/TODD

CARRIED

E. BUSINESS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

Lead: TURNER

Note: To ensure motion log is updated, ensure completed items are reported in the minutes.

Items assigned to board members that Kyla thinks are complete or abandoned will be listed below and highlighted in yellow. If there's an item you were assigned below highlighted in yellow, please confirm if the task was completed, revoked, or abandoned!

Tasks Completed/Decisions fully acted upon:

TASK: Advocacy and Campaigns Committee to consider Councillor Phelps Bondaroff's offer of consultation and support.

TASKS: CIESLIK to review the forthcoming board and GRC meeting schedule and Wednesday Coffee schedule at June GRC prior to nominations opening. CIESLIK to prepare slides for June GRC to set the tone for elections prior to nominations opening.

MARRUGAT to meet with new board member to onboard them to Advocacy and Campaigns Committee work.

CENTENO to meet with new board member to onboard them to GSAW planning.

CIESLIK to meet with new board member to onboard them to the D. Internal Role, i.e. pass off information received in her own onboarding one-on-one with Sarah. CIESLIK to provide Appeals Committee training to new board member.

TASK: MARRUGAT to take minutes for the June 24 board meeting.

TASK: CENTENO to take minutes for the July 8 board meeting.

TASK: TODD to take minutes for the July 22 board meetings.

TASK: CIESLIK to circulate the minutes from the prior board meeting and the agenda for the forthcoming meeting for the July 8 and July 22 board meetings. CIESLIK to include planning the July 28 GRC agenda during the July 8 board meeting. CIESLIK to provide Irfan Tanveer final copy of the July 28 GRC agenda for circulation on July 21.

TASK: CIESLIK to draft/revise the welcome letter for the 2026-27 handbook and submit to Petri by Monday, June 29.

TASK: CIESLIK to ask the new board member if they are interested in Senate Committees and Provincial Sexualized Violence Advisory Group.

TASK: CENTENO to prep for a powerpoint slide and other information on the September orientation events to announce at July GRC and seek volunteers.

TASK: CIESLIK to prep an anonymous feedback survey for GRC reps to circulate in July.

TODD to copy June 24th tasks to July 8th motion log.

MARRUGAT To reach out to ACBS on matter of PSI review response.

TASK: Board to review brainstorming list for Annual Plan and come up with themes from that list attainable for this year.

TASK: TODD to bring to July 22nd board meeting healthcare concerns.

CIESLIK to forward welcome email

CIESLIK to contact Neil Barney who will contact computer help desk for addition of roles based email and teams access.

BROWN to review all materials prior to ~~July 8~~ July 22 and return onboarding paperwork (TD-1s, board information form, conflict of interest) to Neil BARNEY.

CIESLIK to update Neil Barney on updated Board meeting time for August 19th from 11:00-12:30 to new time of 10:30-11:45.

TASK: CIESLIK to prep slide for anonymous feedback form with link and qr code for July GRC.

TASK: MARRUGAT to fill out lobbying report for meeting with Councillor Teale Phelps Bondaroff on June 18th on topic of ongoing campaigns including transportation concerns.

TASK: MARRUGAT to send CIESLIK BC Transit campaign and VRTC seat information.

Tasks revoked or abandoned:

F. COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS

No committee appointments made

G. CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED (APPENDIX C)

Item 1 Email concerning UVSS opt in and opt out of transit pass

Item 2: Email Concerning letter to Prime Minister Mark Carney related to Gazan Graduate Student admission to Canada

GUESTS: Neil Barney (non-voting) provides institutional knowledge around writing letters surrounding these issues.

H. AGENDA PLANNING, OR MEETING DEBRIEF

Reference: Meeting Debrief Template

1. Meeting debrief:
2. Meeting agenda planning: July 28 GRC agenda: any prep, strategizing, or planning still required for this meeting? The agenda should have been circulated yesterday.
 - i. Agenda out, slides created, no debrief. Will need zoom link for July GRC.

I. LOBBYING REPORTS

Reports due at the first meeting of every month.

J. ANNUAL PLAN CHECK-IN:

CLOSING ITEMS 12:28

EXECUTIVE INFORMAL DISCUSSION/UPDATES/QUESTIONS

Chair: CIESLIK

No Major updates.

Director of Finance: TODD

1 appeal rendered, alumna renewal discussed, TODD and CIESLIK to go in person to Vancity Re: GIC.

Director of Internal/University Relations: BROWN

Q: CUPE 4163 wants to attend Wednesday Coffee. (Yes! please) Q: Board report. Find at GRC/Board Reports/Outline. CIESLIK to send email.

Director of External Relations: MARRUGAT

PSI advocacy, heat on campus campaign, will do more today. Data to be delivered for advocacy purposes.

Director of Student Life: CENTENO DUQUE

Orientation discussion, people will sign up at the Tuesday GRC meeting. Next board meeting will need board sign ups for orientation. Email to be received from DAVIS. Beach day cancelled. August event for board members to attend, more at next board meeting.

Executive Director: TURNER no report.

NOTICE OF MOTIONS, AGENDA ITEMS FOR NEXT EXECUTIVE MEETING

Aug 5: Catching Kyla up on what she missed!

UPCOMING MEETINGS AND IMPORTANT DATES

****Task Reminder:** Please be sure your meetings and events are up to date on OUTLOOK CALENDAR**

Next Executive Meetings: August 5, 2026

Next GRC Meeting: July 28, 2026

AGM: October 27, 2026

Office, Staff Scheduling: Neil BARNEY is on vacation August 3-7.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion: to adjourn the meeting.

M/S: MARRUGAT/TODD

CARRIED/FAILED

X

Violet CIESLIK
GSS Interim Chair 2026-27

X

Eleanore Todd
GSS Vice Chair 2026-27

APPENDIX C – CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED

ITEM 1 EMAIL CONCERNING UVSS OPT IN AND OPT OUT OF TRANSIT PASS

From: Alena Gavrilenko <alenagavrilenko@uvic.ca>

Sent: Wednesday, 08 July 2026 17:35:15

To: GSS Director of Finance <gssfinan@uvic.ca>

Subject: Finance Meeting

Dear Eleanore Todd,

I hope you are well. My name is Alena, I am a director at large with UVSS at uvic. Our finance committee is planning to organize a meeting regarding a bus pass opt out modernisation proposal to BC Transit.

Before bringing it forward to the whole graduate student union, I wanted to have a conversation with you about why and how we are envisioning this because it would concern the finance departments most directly. Would you be available this week for a meeting in person or over zoom?

BR Alena Gavri

ITEM 2: EMAIL CONCERNING LETTER TO PRIME MINISTER MARK CARNEY RELATED TO GAZAN GRADUATE STUDENT ADMISSION TO CANADA.

From: Louisa Calame <lcalame@pssar.org>

Sent: Thursday, July 9, 2026 8:41 AM

To: GSS Chair <gsschair@uvic.ca>; GSS Director of Student Life <gsslife@uvic.ca>; ssexternal@uvic.ca <ssexternal@uvic.ca>; GSS Office <gssoffice@uvic.ca>

Cc: advocacy@pssar.org <advocacy@pssar.org>

Subject: URGENT CALL FOR ACTION: Immediate Intervention for Admitted Gazan Graduate Students

Dear University of Victoria GSS Chair Cieslik, Director of Student Life Duque, and Director of External Relations Arnal,

I hope this message finds you all well.

My name is Louisa Calame and I am reaching out on behalf of the Palestinian Students and Scholars at Risk (PSSAR) network, and the 130 Palestinian students waiting on their study permits to come to Canada. PSSAR is an organization dedicated to helping highly achieved graduate students and scholars in Gaza find opportunities to study in Canadian universities.

We are writing to you today because the University of Victoria is one of the 30 Canadian universities where Palestinian graduate students from Gaza have been admitted, yet remain unable to begin their studies due to prolonged and ongoing visa delays from Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC). All of these students have already overcome immense barriers to access higher education, and

have been accepted to Canada's most prestigious graduate programs—many with *full scholarships*—on the basis of demonstrated and outstanding merit.

These students remain barred from travelling to Canada for their studies because of IRCC's negligence. Many are trapped by the biometric requirement, while even those who *have* managed to obtain and submit biometric data have been waiting for up to *two years* to hear back from IRCC. As a result, these students not only face the threat of losing their admissions, but also are held under life-threatening conditions in Gaza.

We need your urgent support in signing a collective letter to Prime Minister Mark Carney, advocating for these students who have been admitted to Canadian institutions but continue to face long and dangerous delays in receiving their study permits.

This letter is part of an ongoing advocacy campaign that has been active for almost two years. It aims to demonstrate the widespread support from academic communities nationwide in giving these students a fair and equitable chance at education. The campaign has already garnered widespread support from over 900 academics endorsing the campaign's demands to Minister Diab, and from advocates, professors, University presidents, and Members of Parliament across Canada—but the federal government and the IRCC still refuse to take action. **Continued pressure has never been more important than it is right now.**

These Palestinian graduate students admitted to the University of Victoria should have been on campus long ago. As graduate students, and these Palestinian students' potential colleagues, your voices carry significant weight. By signing this letter, you are sending a strong, unified message to policymakers about the urgent need to expedite study permit processing for these students.

We kindly ask you to take a moment to review and endorse the full letter using the Google form attached [HERE](#).

In addition to asking for your formal endorsement of our campaign, this form also includes a request to send a representative from PGSS to speak in support of the campaign at the PSSAR press conference in August. This public demonstration of support is particularly powerful in ensuring that these students are given the opportunity they have worked so hard to earn.

If you have any questions about this letter or participating in the press conference, please contact advocacy@pssar.ca. Thank you for your time, solidarity, and commitment to equitable access to education.

All the best,

Louisa Calame, *on behalf of the PSSAR Network*

