

2026-2027 Board Report

October 27, 2026, AGM

Membership

The GSS Executive Board consists of five elected graduate students and the Executive Director as a nonvoting member. Directors External Relations, Student Life, and Finance were elected during the March 2026 election, and the Chair and Director of Internal/University Relations were elected through the democratic process. Violet Cieslik was elected as Interim Chair as per our bylaws by the executive board in the May 27th Executive board meeting. Hannah Brown was elected as Interim Director of Internal/University Relations per our bylaws in the June Graduate Representative Council (GRC) meeting. Thank you to Sarah Roberts for her time with us on the Board and all the work she completed and energy she put into her role during her appointment, from April to May, and subsequent years on the board.

Chair (April 2026 – May 2026): Sarah Roberts

- Interim Chair (June 2026 – March 2027): Violet Cieslik

2026-2027 members:

- Director of External Relations: Victor Marrugat
- Director of Finance: Eleanore Todd
- Director of Internal/University Relations (April 2026 – May 2026): Violet Cieslik
 - Interim Director of Internal/University Relations (June 2026 - March 2027): Hannah Brown
- Director of Student Life: Manuel Centeno Duque
- Kyla Turner, Executive Director, ex-officio, non-voting

Duties of the Committee

The Executive Board is guided by the purposes of the GSS as stated in our Constitution and Bylaws. The GSS' purposes are: a) To represent the interests of the membership in a democratic manner in matters pertaining to education and the welfare of graduate students; b) To promote the principle and practice of graduate student representation at all levels of decision making at the University of Victoria and on all agencies or other bodies that deliberate on the affairs of graduate students; c) To promote cultural, intellectual, and recreational activities among the members; and d) To promote the academic and social welfare of its members through the provision of services.

Overview of Work Completed

As a board we have bi-weekly board meetings where we hear updates from Directors and are updated on current/ongoing projects. In addition to these meetings, the previous Chair, Rosemary Webb, implemented meeting one-on-one with Directors on a monthly basis, to provide support where need, strategize on current projects together, and overall ensure directors are keeping on track with current

projects. As feedback from these meetings was overall positive, I have also implemented these meetings and so far, they have proved very useful to ensure we are all working like a well-oiled machine.

In the role of Director External, Victor Marrugat is excelling on multiple fronts. His advocacy work and ability to keep three large campaigns on track has been excellent. These campaigns consist of Heat on Campus, Accessibility to campus with BC transit, and PSI Funding. From the start of the heat on campus campaign, he has been very involved in advocating about the extreme heat in labs and workspaces at UVic as they pose a safety hazard for grad students and cost the university unnecessary financial loss. He has created reports to share with UVic Execs about how training on heat strokes with the already provided OHSE training would provide useful for student safety. In our first operational relations meeting we discussed this campaign and were able to connect with facilities management to present at an upcoming Grad council on the supports available to students who are struggling with heat concerns. For the BC transit campaign, he has been in contact with the Camosun representative on VTRC about bringing attention to BC transits lack of available transit from Langford and the airport, as well as the overcrowding and increased frequency of bus drivers missing stops. In regard to PSI funding, he has been working with other student societies to advocate for both the release of the PSI review and more awareness on the limited funding of PSI from the provincial government. In the summer he also worked with the GSS Health and Benefits coordinator to have easy to read information on the GSS website regarding options for supplementary health care coverages available for grad students. Overall, Victor has been doing a great job in his role, continues to bring the boards attention to important matters, and is a reliable contact for communication with external parties and the GSS.

In the role of Director of Finance, Eleanore is truly on the ball. Starting off her term, she drew her committee's attention to the potential of investing our capital funds into GICs. This goal was achieved in September when she, Kyla, and I met with Vanity to finalize GSS investments. As for another major project, the Audit, she has navigated it well and kept the board up to date on its progress. I have full confidence that when we learn about the outcome at the AGM, she will be able to guide us, and our budget, in the right direction. Additionally, a large portion of her time has been spent discussing options and fees for our extended health plan ALUMO. She attended their conference at the beginning of July in Quebec and came back with an understanding that we at the GSS are truly receiving a great deal for our extended health care plan. That being said, this year's report from ALUMO on the cost of our plan illustrates that we will need to make a few adjustments this year based off the quote ALUMO has provided us for this coverage. As this is the case, Eleanore has a plan to ensure all members voices are heard and accounted for, which will start with her report at the AGM.

Even though they stepped in a few months behind to the role, Hannah Brown has been exceeding in their role as Director of Internal/University Relations. As they are well connected at UVic, Hannah has been able to keep their eyes and ears open to all that has been happening on campus. They are especially active in advocating for students' accessibility needs with their role in the SSD and grad students' rights as TA workers through their relationships with CUPE 4163. Their advocacy experience has also been incredibly useful in their role as Vice-Chair of Advocacy and Campaigns, as they are aware of how to approach this work and how progress is made effectively. They also Vice-Chair the Appeals committee which has also been going well. In terms of EGRS and GSAW they have also been working with Director of

student life to ensure the events are planned and go smoothly. Which, from what I hear, are pretty much organized and ready to go on November 4th and 5th. In addition, Hannah's experience with UVic societies means that they understand the context of many of our discussions and have institutional knowledge they can share long-term conversations/issues, which is an excellent addition to the board.

Manuel Centeno Duque has taken off in his role as the Director of Student Life. Over the past six months he has organized a variety of events that have had great attendance rates. To start off his board term he hosted a variety of events during the summer and helped to organize advocacy surrounding the PSI review and funding. Including attending a meeting with the myself and Eleanore to discuss the release of PSI review with the Minister of Post Secondary Education. In addition, to kick off the Fall 2026 term he set up multiple organizations tabling at Wednesday Coffee which allowed new and returning grad students to know about the resources available to them. Overall, the feedback provided by members is that orientation events ran smoothly, the events were unique, and members enjoyed themselves. Two of the largest events during orientation were the pub crawl and the welcome back BBQ both of which were sold-out events. As for GSAW and EGRS, he and Hannah made the choice to have the two events separate for grad students to have the EGRS in the Fall 2026 term and GSAW in January 2027. Splitting these events in two is not common but the idea is that students will have a little pick me up with GSAW once they get back to campus after being away for the holidays, and EGRS will be a solo event to acknowledge and celebrate all the great research that is being done across campus. This way members have two events to capitalize on rather than one that is a mix of both. With all the preparation and work that have gone in to planning both of these events I foresee them going quite well.

Kyla Turner, our fearless Executive Director. As always Kyla has been incredible over the past six months. First with onboarding us all into our roles and now with providing guidance on evolving situations such as the provincial and municipal elections. As this board was all new members expect for one, Kyla provided a great level of detail to training, so we were equipped to do our roles well. She also went through all the trouble recording videos of training, so we have it in our archive and available for grad representatives to watch if they are interested. This is hugely appreciated because even though it took a lot of time, I have no doubt it will benefit the GSS in the future. Working closely with Kyla as she onboarded me to my new role as Chair has allowed me to see how incredibly hard she works, alongside her staff and the board, to ensure the GSS runs smoothly. I have full confidence that the next half of term will run as smoothly as the first with her support and guidance.

Annual Plan

In creating our Annual Plan, the Board identified three key themes for our work this year: advocating for accessibility and fairness, planning our future, and bringing voices together. In Advocating for accessibility in fairness we are committed to providing clear communication with all our members to ensure our advocacy work is actionable and directly benefits graduate students. Planning our future means that as a board we are taking the needs of current and future students into consideration when we look at strategically planning in the GSS and to outside partners and organizations. Finally, bringing voices together speaks to the diversity of our grad student population and ensuring all students feel welcomed and cared for at the GSS.

As for completion of work, the board has been working hard to ensure the goals set out in the plan are being met. As such, we have already accomplished multiple projects mentioned in the plan (i.e., investments and work on the election bylaws and policies) and are moving towards completion and progress in others. In

addition, as one of our goals is bringing voices together, the board has been present at a majority of the events in an effort to speak to members and be an open and welcoming group that members can feel comfortable speaking with. Of course though, I cannot say that the beauty of the annual plan was the job of the board. This was in fact the work of our wonderful Events and Communications Coordinator Petranella Daviel. So, a huge thank you to her for making our vision come to life.

Overview of Incomplete and Outstanding Work

Overall, in the first six-months of the board term, and at a limited capacity due to transitions at the beginning of the term, the board has worked hard to keep on top of the work we have been doing. Going forward foresee our advocacy work with building heat, Transit, and PSI funding continuing, as well as our events and student appreciation initiatives. Moreover, a large part of this upcoming side of the term will be devoted to planning for our health and dental referendum. This is because we want to ensure students voices are heard in the changes that will be taking place with our extended health care coverages. I also think that we need to put more efforts into surveying graduate representatives on their knowledge of procedures when it comes to conflict with graduate supervisors. This is one of our annual plan goals that I think is quite manageable and will make a large impact if we are able to perhaps provide this information in an easily digestible way to our members. In addition, our work with the UVic Office of the Ombudsperson should also be a priority for the next part of our board term to ensure graduate students are supported through academic accommodation procedures set forth by FGS policy.