

Rector Elections

I would like to congratulate Mike Young on being elected Queen's University Rector. Mike showed a keen interest in graduate and professional student issues before and during his campaign. It is my deep belief and hope that Mike could be an engaged and impassioned advocate for graduate and professional students. We have already made plans to meet so I can give Mike more guidance on engaging with graduate and professional students and advocating for our issues.

Beverage Exclusivity Fund

After negotiations with the university and the AMS, the SGPS has entered into an agreement in principle to share with the AMS the \$70,000 per year for student-led, campus improvement initiatives that comes from Queen's University's exclusivity agreement with Coca-Cola. This agreement will carry us until the 2021-22 academic year and will allow the SGPS to significantly increase our grant and other financial support programs.

Further, since there is already \$140,000 from the two previous years of the program that has not been allocated, the SGPS is looking to partner with the AMS and the City of Kingston to expand the Blue Lights program into campus adjacent areas that have carried safety concerns in the past, such as City Park and Victoria Park. More details will follow on this particular initiative as negotiations with the City advance.

Monitoring of New Graduate Credentials

I have begun to mobilize the interest of various units across campus to design a comprehensive model for monitoring, categorizing, and assessing the new short-term, distance and other credentials that are being promoted by the administration and are starting to be approved by the Senate Committee on Academic Development.

While I do see these programs as a genuine opportunity to a) attract new students, b) better serve existing students, and c) generate revenue to direct at core academic activities, I also have clear concerns about these programs. First, will they maintain a high academic and teaching standard that we all want from Queen's? Second, how will the SGPS, the School of Graduate Studies, Student Affairs, and other group on campus service such students? Our structures are principally meant to service full-time, permanent, on-campus students. What services can these students access and how will we ensure they can get these services. Third, will these programs truly generate significant revenue? Fourth, what impact will the programs have on already stretched teaching resources? Lastly, what do the terms certificate, diploma, etc mean at Queen's? We need a stronger adherence to clear nomenclature in order to protect the value of the institution's credentials.

I think that a coordinated exercise to track and evaluate these credentials across units of interest could answer these and other questions and, what's more, provide templates and best practices to encourage departments and faculties seeking to implement similar practices to do so responsibly and effectively.

Emergency Housing

After our deliberative discussion last week, one particular issue that stuck out for me was the need for Queen's to have emergency housing that is available specifically to graduate students. As such, we have begun conversations with Student Affairs, Queen's Housing and the Principal to find furnished spaces on campus that could be set aside as spaces for those needing emergency housing due to disaster, displacement, landlord disputes, safety issues, or any number of other reasons.

Time to Completion

At Senate this past month I raised my frustration with the slow moving nature of the Graduate Studies Executive Council's working group on time to completion. Requested by Senate almost a year ago, the purpose of this group was to investigate policies, procedures, incentives, and rules that could help encourage and assist graduate students to complete their degrees as quickly as reasonably possible. This was in response to the School of Graduate Studies policy on time to completion, that merely sets deadlines for completion and demands status reports. It remains the position of the SGPS that the impact of this policy on completion times

is likely to be modest at best, while simultaneously placing greater strain on graduate students to report their progress.

This group has only met twice, and will soon and will only be providing a preliminary status report before the end of the academic year. Given that this is an unacceptably slow amount of progress, the SGPS' plan is to formulate a clear set of recommendations that we feel could address time to completion issues and compliment, if not supplant, the School of Graduate Studies time to completion policy unveiled last year.

As I will do every month, I encourage you all to follow me on Twitter @sgpspresident, where I will keep all my followers up to date on my activities and views. As always, never hesitate to contact me with ideas or concerns at president@sgps.ca.

Respectfully submitted,

Iain Reeve

President
president@sgps.ca

Dear SGPS Council Members:

Student Advisor Program

Advisors hold office hours (JDUC Room 203) on:

Tuesdays from 2:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Wednesdays from 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Thursdays from 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.*

*Note the change in office hours on Thursdays from 9:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
The Advisors will NOT hold office hours during Reading Week.

Spring/Summer Term Reports:

The Advisors' Fall Term Reports were completed last week; they will be posted online before our next SGPS Council meeting in March.

Parisa, the Program's work-study student presented information regarding the varied quality, and in some cases, lack of, graduate student handbooks in departments at a Graduate Assistant Forum on January 21. The information she provided was generally well received.

SGS-SGPS Meeting

The Dean, Associate Deans, Iain and I met on January 23 and discussed the new focus on credentialing, the tuition framework, transcripts, the medical leave pilot program, completion time extension procedures, and the OGS procedures.

Time to Completion Task Force

The time to completion task force continues to investigate barriers to degree completion. Associate Dean Kim McAuley and I have begun to draft a report based on the group's discussions. The priorities identified include supervisory relations, program structure and funding issues. The Task Force will make recommendations to the Graduate Studies Executive Council (GSEC) by the end of Winter Term 2014. The group's next meeting will be held on February 10.

Arts and Science Faculty Board

At the last meeting of the Faculty Board for Arts and Science, on January 17, the Board moved into Committee of the Whole to discuss the implications for students and faculty within the Faculty of Arts and Science of the School of Graduate Studies' new time to completion policies. There was an average turnout of around 40 people, but there was not a very good turnout of people who seemed to feel strongly (either way) about the T2C issue. The Board expressed interest in continuing to follow the policy to determine what affects, if any, it might have on students and faculty in the Faculty. Thank you to those of you came to the meeting.

Graduate Councils and Committees

I would like to coordinate a meeting with all graduate council and committee student members this month to discuss council/committee activities and strategize actions moving forward.

Academic Affairs Standing Committee

The Academic Affairs Standing Committee met at the end of January and the group intends to consider how best to rethink current tuition policies as well as provide a few specific recommendations to SGS regarding the time to completion policies. The AASC will report on this in the near future.

For more information, please contact me at vpg@sgps.ca.

Respectfully, Becky Pero, VP Graduate

Senate Committee on Non-Academic Discipline (SONAD)

In the fall, SONAD expressed concern with the SGPS's approach to jurisdiction; our approach sees us find that cases are not within our jurisdiction when they have already been addressed by another campus NAD system or when they are better handled by police services. The SGPS executive does not think that this is a problem. They have asked me to report back on this question at the February SONAD meeting, on the 26th.

Human Resources

We are looking to fill this position. We will interviewing candidate in February, with the new person starting ASAP!

Human Resources Committee

The Human Resources Committee continues to work on the reporting template and review of the EA position.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Respectfully submitted,

Cody Kolsteren Yorke

VP Professional
vpp@sgps.ca

Dear SGPS Council Members and Members-At-Large,

CFRC

I sit on the CFRC's board as the Grad student representative. We have been super busy adjusting to the shift away from being an AMS service this year. CFRC can no longer operate as an AMS service, due to changes in federal broadcasting regulations, but continues to operate on campus with a high level of student engagement and involvement. There have been a lot of ups and downs and it's been a great learning experience. We recently had a pretty big success.

On January 30, CFRC student volunteers asked the AMS Assembly to approve an increase in the mandatory annual fee CFRC receives from undergraduates, from \$5.03 to \$7.50 per year. The Assembly approved the increase but it still needs to be ratified at the AMS Annual General Meeting on March 18.

The fee increase will help offset increased costs the station is facing as a result of its separation from the AMS. We approved a similar increase at the SGPS last year.

The fee increase will also help CFRC to implement a Revitalization Plan that will complete long-overdue equipment upgrades to the station's technical, IT and facility infrastructures. The Revitalization Plan will greatly improve CFRC's training environment, increase access to online streaming, archives, and podcasts, and make CFRC a more welcoming and accessible space. All of CFRC's stakeholders (the AMS, the SGPS, Queen's University administration, alumni, Kingston community members and different levels of government) are being called upon to support the plan, and the AMS fee increase is a crucial component of its success.

So- in this line remember that

CFRC's 9th annual Funding Drive kicks off with a fundraising concert at the Toucan on Friday, February 7. The Huaraches and Teenage Frankenstein are headlining a great show. Admission is free: donations will be collected to support CFRC, so please give generously as you pass the hat! Music starts at 9pm. If you can't make the show you can find out how to donate at the website

CFRC.ca

Not In The Syllabus

Mental Health has been a hot topic at the last couple of councils. Graduate student mental health is an important issue and needs to be addressed on a number of levels. As you know Queens recently hired an embedded counselor to deal with people who need some help and we at the SGPS have the advisor program to help deal with some of the structural issues that arise. Graduate students have unique needs that relate to the multiple roles they take on in the institution including student, teacher and researcher. We interact regularly with faculty, administrative and technical staff, undergraduate students and other graduate students. Since graduate students play various roles we often have complicated relationships these campus stakeholders. With additional pressures like high expectations and stress levels, and constant competition with peers for resources like funding, the graduate studies environment can lead to issues of bullying and harassment. Bullying and harassment are serious behaviours that can have negative impacts on graduate students' scholastic environment. Graduate students may also experience barriers to accessing services because of stigma and fear of personal reprisal in their employment and academic position.

These issues are behind the CFS' not in the syllabus campaign. Right now the main aim of this campaign is to gather data/information on Grad student life through a survey which you can find at www.notinthesyllabus.ca

Expect to see some Big things coming from this campaign in the future!

Post-Residency Fees Campaign

I have been spending a lot of time lately working with the Graduate caucus of the CFS on their Post-residency fees campaign and we are expecting to launch a provincial day of action early in March.

Post-residency fees are reduced fees paid by graduate students after they have completed the course work component of their degree and are undertaking the independent research and thesis-writing stages of their programs. During the early to mid-1990s, post-residency fees were phased out in Ontario universities. Outside of Ontario, many graduate students have access to these reduced fees. The Ontario Graduate Caucus has a campaign to pressure the government to mandate the re- introduction of post-residency fees in Ontario and to increase the funding to institutions to do so.

We have been collecting petition signatures to send to Queen's Park demanding increased funding for graduate students and the reinstatement of post-residency fees in Ontario. If you haven't signed the petition yet and would like to let me know!

More CFS

Speaking of the CFS, I will be heading to the National Graduate Caucus annual general meeting in the middle of the month (during reading week). I expect to have some exciting things to report back next month.

Thanks,

Meagan Crane

VP Campaigns & Community Affairs
vpcca@sgps.ca

Hello Council,

This month's meeting is going to cover quite a lot of material, so I encourage you to take a critical look at the Council Package as we will hopefully be passing a first reading of bylaw changes associated with the Council Working Group mandate. You may also note several policy changes pertaining to Council attendance. I have taken the feedback from our previous meeting and incorporated that into a new document. If you have any questions or concerns about this material prior to Council please feel free to contact me.

Electoral reform will also be addressed and we aim to implement this for our upcoming elections in March. Should you have any questions about these policy changes please direct them to the Chief Returning Officer (cro@sgps.ca), the President (president@sgps.ca), or myself.

Finally, please be advised that the next meeting of the Board of Trustees will be on the 7th and 8th of March. The Capital Assets and Finance Committee will also be meeting on the 7th of March. I will be able to report on any relevant activities after these meetings.

Respectfully submitted,

James Macleod

Speaker & Trustee
speaker@sgps.ca

Dear SGPS Council and Members-At-Large,

Here is a brief update:

1. Senate Meeting on January 21st, 2014

Senate meeting agenda and minutes can be found here:

(<http://www.queensu.ca/secretariat/senate/agendasminutes.html>).

- There was a discussion around ombudsperson. There are still several concerns to be addressed. Senator Duchaine and some other Senators met with Lon Knox (university secretary) about this matter recently. I am planning to meet with Senator Duchaine or Senator Reeve soon to get more info on that.

2. Graduate Student Executive Council (GSEC) Meeting on January 16th, 2014

- We had a relatively short meeting. Nothing critical came up. The registration for three minute thesis competition is now open. The heats will be held during the week of March 24th.
- We are told that the dissertation boot-camp is back and will be during the reading week 2014. The registration is now open.

3. GSEC Time to Completion (TTC) Task Force meeting on January 23rd, 2014

- Becky Pero (VP Graduate) and I attended this meeting. The discussion was around various TTC barriers mainly funding. We also looked at the SGPS and SGS TTC surveys. We are going to meet again in February. We expect to have a report out in March 2014. I am looking for all SGPS members' inputs. I will provide you with more updates soon.

Respectfully submitted,

Hamid Falahati

Graduate Student Senator
senator@sgps.ca

Dear SGPS Council,

The Social Team is busy at these winter months, trying to get students to brave the cold weather and socialize! We co-hosted the Grad Club's Disco Bingo January 21, which was a great success. It was the first time attending the event for many of the students who came, and they were happy to have heard about it through our advertising. Throughout January we've also been holding our regular Friday night sports nights, playing basketball, volleyball, and even cricket last week ! The Queen's cricket team kindly lent us their equipment and several members came out to share their expertise with us. It was a great success!

Plans for February include a mixer/Olympic watching event at Fanatics on February 13, 2014. We'll have some free appetizers, and be cheering on team Canada (in re-runs, unfortunately, because of the time change between here and Sochi) from 8:00 pm – 12:00 am.

Our annual ski trip is cancelled for this year. There were several other groups hosting ski trips, as well as a trip to Ottawa's Winterlude through QUIC which was happening the same weekend as we planned skiing. Given the circumstances, we did not believe it would be financially feasible to go on the ski trip this year.

We have tentative plans to host a curling event at the Garrison Golf and Curling Club at the end of February or beginning of March. There has been a lot of students in the past asking for a curling event, and we think we could get a great turnout for it!

Respectfully submitted,

Margaux MacDonald

Social Commissioner
social@sgps.ca

SGPS Computer Network

- I have completed the necessary work to test and quality assure a new server framework that we will use to update our mail and wiki server. The new framework is installed and working as expected.
- I am working on a public facing wiki system so the SGPS is able to share documents easily with the membership.
- The server running the public website www.sgps.ca finally failed. It had been running the SGPS website non-stop for the last 6+ years and (minor, inexpensive) patch work had been done over the last couple of years to keep it running. With the total failure, I have installed a new piece of hardware to run the public site. I also took this time to update and upgrade some server-side software that will allow me to do some new things with our website.
- I have determined the source of digital calendar issues we were experiencing at our office (the calendars were working fine but the availability framework was broken). I have a working fix for the issue and have completed the fix for most @sgps.ca addresses. 2 calendars remain to be fixed and I will do so as soon as I get the chance to meet with the people that require the fix (I need the people on site for the fix).

SGPS Website

- The website is fully up-to-date for services and pricing for 2014.
- Queen's has purchased a year license for software that tests the accessibility of websites. I have gained access to this software for the SGPS and I will be going through the reports and correcting any issues our site may have with respect to accessibility guidelines and web accessibility standards. I have and will continue take the accessibility of our website very seriously and I look forward to correcting all issues on our site. After the initial check from the software, our website appears to require only small fixes and updates.

Communications

- I am working to update the signage at our office to make sure people that visit our office are aware of our services.
- I have generated 2 new forms for our website. The new forms are the International Student Bursary and a Space Request Form. The forms can be found at:
<http://www.sgps.ca/services/downloads/fund-international-bursary.pdf>
<http://www.sgps.ca/services/downloads/space-request-form.pdf>
- Our office reception area has been totally redone. We are very pleased with the new layout and hope members experience improved service and accessibility. I am working on a few more tweaks to the reception area. I will report more on this soon!
- Ian continues his work on coffee hours, where the SGPS is visiting different lounges across campus. There is a fair amount of work involved in working with various units around campus to find suitable times and locations.
- Ian is consulting with SGPS President Iain Reeve about the possibility of producing a series of informational videos about the SGPS to communicate its activities, initiatives and services to its members.
- Ian is keeping a detailed log of his activities in order to help define the role and duties of the Communications Coordinator position.

Respectfully submitted,
Sean Richards - info@sgps.ca

Hello everyone!

It has been a busy month for our international team due to the major events.

First of all, the resume and cover letter workshop for international students achieved a great success on Jan 30th. The career service workshop room was full-packed without a single empty seat! We would like to appreciate Sean and Shadi in terms of promoting the event for us, and we would like to express our sincere appreciation to Debbie, who delivered a great presentation in the workshop. Kris and I attended the workshop in person to make a “judgment” in terms of the difficulty of the content. As suggested by SGS, we should judge the level of difficulty for the international students and make modifications based on the feedback, then launch more sessions in the summer to cover the international student population. At the end of the workshop, Kris and I made an announcement for the next incoming event on Feb 18th.

Secondly, the networking tour is on the way! I have been working with people from Kingston Immigration partnership to launch this networking tour starting from 2014. As agreed with KIP, we may continue this networking tour every year if we are successful this time.

The purpose of the networking tour is to help international students to build up their networks with local businessmen. And hopefully those networks can help them to find a job once graduated. So the networking tour will be on Feb 18th from 2:30pm -5:00pm (tentatively), where students would visit Kingston Innovation Park for a tour, then break into smaller groups to visit one-on-one with some of the businesses in the centre. At the end, they will come together for a networking reception/mixer with the staffs from the building. This event is free for our grad international students; however KIP will cover all the costs including transportation for our students. Participants are required to meet at Queen’s campus (tentatively QUIC), KIP will provide taxis to send students to the Kingston Innovation Park. Also, they would also provide taxis for return to Queen’s. The spots are limited to 18-25 students, thus registration is required by sending an email to international@sgps.ca.

Thirdly, Kris has been working on the mental health working group. He is hoping that SGPS may be able to help with, including setting up a focus group with international graduate students so that we could get their perspective on the issues they face and the types of resources they would like provided. In the meeting, Kris and I have decided to start promoting the mental health focus group to gather enough international students.

If you have any questions regarding the networking tour or would like to register for it, feel free to email us! Also, if you have any mental health issue, please contact us.

Tian Lu

International Student Affairs Commissioner
international@sgps.ca

Kris Singh

International Student Affairs Coordinator
isc@sgps.ca

Dear Members of the SGPS Council,

The election for a new Rector was held on January 23rd and 24th in conjunction with the AMS Executive election. Mike Young was elected to the position of Rector after receiving a majority in the first round of balloting (68 percent). A full breakdown of the results is available on the SGPS website at <http://www.sgps.ca/events/rector.html>. Congratulations to Mike, and to the other candidates, Aman Partap and Marcus Threndyle, for their efforts to engage with the Queen's community and the positive and constructive tone of the campaign. Special thanks to the SGPS DRO Eric Rapos and the AMS contingent of the Rector Election Team for their efforts.

With the Rector election over, the focus has now turned to the upcoming SGPS elections. To that end, some proposed changes to SGPS electoral policy are in the works.

The first such reform includes the introduction of a formal extended nomination period, which is intended to address issues of overlap between the extended nomination and campaign periods that have been problematic during previous elections.

The second reform is intended to encourage more SGPS members to participate as candidates in the SGPS Executive Elections by offering reimbursement of campaign expenses up to \$100 per candidate, conditional on the use of SGPS facilities for the printing of all campaign material. Although this will require SGPS funding, it is hoped that making campaign participation more accessible and providing candidates with additional resources will increase competitiveness and stimulate wider debate.

A third reform would allow candidates to display signs and engage in other campaign activities during the two-day election period. This is a significant departure from previous policy, which forbids campaigning during the election period, but the intent of the reform is to boost voter turnout by stimulating debate during the election period and allowing candidates to encourage voters to participate. In this way, the proposed reform would better reflect election practices outside the university setting.

Motions introducing the proposed changes will be tabled during this evening's meeting.

Finally, the 2014 SGPS Election and Referendum will be held on March 26th and 27th. Once again, voting will be done online via Moodle.

If you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to get in touch.

Respectfully submitted,

Laura Levick

Chief Returning Officer
cro@sgps.ca

Since the start of the new year I have attended two meetings of the Time to Completion Task Force. The task force is reviewing SGPS and SGS reports on time to completion to identify barriers and facilitators of timely completion and making recommendations on how the university can promote timely completion. So far the focus of these meetings has largely been on departmental and program-related factors influencing completion (e.g. coursework, comprehensive exams). Since I'm sitting on this Task Force as the Equity Coordinator, I am encouraging the group to also consider whether there are any equity issues that underlie time to completion problems. While we don't have any empirical data to indicate that there are specific equity seeking groups who are at risk of delayed completion, the Task Force is open to discussing the question. We have invited one of the SGPS student advisors to attend a meeting to hopefully provide better insight on this issue.

I am currently the SGPS representative on the Senate Educational Equity Committee. At our last meeting in January the chair requested that all members come to the February meeting with ideas or issues that they would like SEEC to address. While I have a couple items to bring to the Committee, I would also really like to hear feedback from graduate and professional students regarding the issues that they think are important and could be addressed by SEEC. If you have anything that you would like me to discuss at the committee, please feel free to send me an email (equityco@sgps.ca).

Finally, I am also working with the Equity Commissioner to organize an event on campus for International Women's Week. We are just in the process of finalizing the details, but you'll be getting an email soon to announce it!

Respectfully submitted,

Colleen Webber

Equity Coordinator
equityco@sgps.ca