

Restructuring Report

At next month's session of Council, my final one as President, I will be putting forward a motion that will task me, at the completion of my term, with producing a report on the internal structure and functions of the SGPS executive, commissioners, coordinators, and staff. This motion will also task the newly elected executive with considering the contents of the report and outlining any potential reforms by the October meeting of Council, such that they changes can be made at the Fall General Meeting. The idea behind the report is to investigate whether the current structure of executive and staff best meets the needs of the SGPS and its membership or if an alternative structure could better achieve these goals. To formulate my recommendations, I will consult other student society structures, as well as past and present members of the SGPS executive and staff.

SGPS Elections

By the time Council meets the SGPS executive, trustee, and senator campaigns will be underway. I encourage members of Council to engage with the candidates, ask them tough questions, inform them of issues in your department, and to encourage everyone in your department to do the same. It is, of course, also essential that people vote in the election, so we will be asking for Council's help to promote the election and to get out the vote in their respective departments. In addition, I will remind Councilors to encourage their peers to attend our Annual General Meeting, which besides the usual annual business of the SGPS will include an all candidates debate.

Board of Trustees

My final meeting of the Board of Trustees was this past Friday. At the Board I emphasized two key issues. First, I asked the board to consider the use of financial incentives or reliefs as the best possible way of lessening completion times for PhD students. Second, I raised the possibility of the university initiating a university-wide plan on faculty renewal. This affects all of us as students, since permanent faculty are an essential element of any program's academic integrity. However, it is also a chance for Queen's to set an example for other institutions, by showing that a long-term plan to renew faculty compliments can counter the current trend towards short-term, insecure adjunct employment.

Emergency Housing

Coming out of discussions at Council, I have begun a conversation with Student Affairs on emergency housing. My hope is that some of the vacant units in the West Campus graduate residences that are currently being ear-marked for short-term and flexible furnished leases can also be set aside to accommodate shorter-term emergency housing for students who may be facing any number of possible housing issues. Student Affairs is interested in both finding physical space in which we can create an emergency housing capability, but also in creating strong, clear procedures for accessing such housing that can be communicated to members.

Health and Wellness Report

Today at Council the graduate student results of the National College Health Assessment will be presented. I have had a preliminary discussion with the department of Student Affairs about how to react to some of the results of the report, but will be looking for guidance from Council as to what issues are most pertinent to pursue.

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.

Iain Reeve

President
president@sgps.ca

Dear SGPS Council Members:

Student Advisor Program

Advisors office hours (JDUC Room 203):

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.

Spring/Summer Term Reports:

Please find the Advisors' Fall Term Reports at: <http://www.sgps.ca/advisors/reports.html>.

SGS-SGPS Meeting

The Dean, Associate Deans, Iain and I met on February 27 to discuss the tuition framework at Queen's, the Student Advisor program, as well as elections and hiring at the SGPS. The Deans reminded Iain and I that registration for the 3 Minute Thesis competition is now open. More information can be found here: <http://www.queensu.ca/3mt/home>.

Graduate Studies Executive Council (GSEC)

The Quality Council approved new Graduate Programs in Biomedical and Molecular Sciences and a Graduate Diploma in Risk Policy and Regulation. Both will have their first intake in September 2014. Information about MTCU's Ontario Graduate Policy Challenge was circulated to the committee and an email also sent to departments encouraging participation. During the meeting, GSEC approved:

- Proposed New Collaborative Graduate Program, M.A. Philosophy, specialization in Political Thought/M.A. Political Studies, specialization in Political Thought
- The Graduate Committee For Law General Rules
- The Omnibus Report, February 2014
- The Fellowship Committee Report, February 2014

The Research Integrity Policy Review Group

This group, established as a subcommittee of the Senate Advisory Research Committee (SARC), intends to review the Senate Policy on Integrity in Research. The last review of this policy occurred in December 2012, to bring the Queen's policy in line with Tricouncil expectations. The current review stems from a request from SGPS to examine the "protection" that the policy provides for complainants, particularly those who complain about someone who may be in a position of power over them. The group expects to meet bimonthly, with March 4 and March 26 scheduled to date.

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 March 11.

Academic Affairs Standing Committee

A report will be prepared for the SGPS AGM on March 18.

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

Respectfully, Becky Pero, VP Graduate

Dear SGPS Council Members and Members-At-Large,

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 launched a provincial day of action March 4th.

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.

I'll be handing around a petition at council if you would like to sign! If you want more info please contact me.

More CFS

I just returned from the CFS national general caucus. This is by far my favorite CFS gathering as it gave me the chance to talk to grad students from around the country, to tell them about what we are doing at Queen's and to find out what they are doing. There is a growing interest in coordinating actions across campuses and we have been having weekly telephone meetings around actions, directions and information sharing for the last few months. We also elected a new NGC exec who are incredibly excited and engaged and will continue to make the NGC an increasingly useful and relevant resource for us.

I was pleased to see some of our student advisors at the conference participating in a panel on student/supervisor relationship. The panel was one of the best received during the conference and many of the other schools are now talking about implementing similar initiatives on their campus.

I came away from the conference with so many new ideas for campaigns! Unfortunately I'm almost out of time. I hope that I can pass some of these along to whomever replaces me!

Kahswentha Initiative

The SGPS is proud to be sponsoring a number of events in collaboration with the Kahswentha initiative. Check out a Tribe called Red on March 19th in the ARC!

Thanks,

Meagan Crane

VP Campaigns & Community Affairs
vpcca@sgps.ca

Hello Council,

I am pleased to report that the changes to electoral policy that were approved at the last Council meeting have been incorporated into our B&P and are effective immediately for our pending election. In this month's Council package you will find a number of motions pertaining to fee renewals. We will be addressing Class A & B mandatory fees (referendum), Class A & B optional fees (referendum), Class A mandatory fees (for approval by Council), and Class B optional fees (for approval by Council). Details relating to these fee classes can be found in the SGPS Bylaws and Policies P.1.2: Student Fees & Referenda. Please note that I will configure voting of these fees under an omnibus, which allows us to consider multiple motions with one vote. If you have any issues regarding a specific fee please bring it to my attention and we can address this appropriately at Council.

On another note, our March Annual General Meeting (March 18th at 5:30pm in Wallace Hall, JDUC) is fast approaching. In accordance with B&P, a notice was placed in the Journal in advance of this meeting. If you have not yet had an opportunity to print out an advertisement poster for your department, please let me know and I will send you an electronic copy. Alternatively, the SGPS office can provide a hardcopy for you. All SGPS members in good standing are eligible to vote at this meeting (please bring your validated student card). We require a certain number of attendees in order for the meeting to take place, so please encourage your fellow Councilors and colleagues to attend! We will be providing refreshments!

I have received preliminary notice that we may have a case to process through the Non-Academic Discipline System. I will be able to provide more details shortly. I have also received proper notice of resignation of our Deputy Returning Officer in accordance with Bylaw and Policy, effective February 18th, 2014.

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,

First off, congratulations to the new AMS executives and Rector Mike Young. Here is a brief update on the meetings I attended last month:

1. Senate Meeting on February 25th, 2014

Senate meeting agenda and minutes can be found here:

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

- Principal Woolf reported on the federal budget 2014. The highlight is the new Canada First Research Excellence Fund. This will invest \$1.5 billion over ten years for research excellence. It seems the allocation of the funding is still not clear though. Furthermore, \$8 million will go for MITACS to expand Elevate Postdoctoral Fellowship and internship programs. More info on MITACS elevate program can be found here: <http://www.mitacs.ca/elevate>. This program supports postdoctoral fellows and Canadian companies/partners to collaborate on various research-based projects mainly in science and technology.
- Provost reported that Dr. Bruce Stanley has left his position as Executive Director of the Bader International Study Centre (BISC) but there will be a search for another Executive Director. BISC will continue to fully operate.

Unfortunately, I had to leave the senate meeting early.

2. Graduate Student Executive Council (GSEC) Meeting on February 13th, 2014

- The main thing was the Extension Request Procedure for graduate students which are beyond the degree time frame (2 years for masters and 4 years for PhDs). The extension request forms will be revised based on the new procedures. In our GSEC meeting in January, I also emphasized that all students should be able to receive a copy of their final progress report annually.

3. GSEC Time to Completion (TTC) Task Force meetings in January and February, 2014

- Becky Pero (VP Graduate) and I attended these meetings. We had several discussions around various possible TTC barriers (e.g. insufficient funding, number of courses, TA/TFships, student-supervisor relationship, etc). TTC task force members have reviewed several documents including 2012 TTC survey, SGPS TTC report, and Queen's and U15 comparator data. We also had a good discussion around ethics approval which can slow down the research progress. David Thompson (SGPS Student Advisor) joined us in one of our meetings and brought great ideas regarding student-supervisor relationship and some graduate students' issues. Becky Pero and Kim McAuley (Associate Dean, SGS) have drafted a TTC report for the task force. We will add more stuff to this report as we proceed (in March and April meetings). There will be several recommendations in this report as well. The report will be submitted to GSEC once it is completed. I am seeking for all SGPS members' inputs on any issue relating to degree time to completion.

Respectfully submitted,

Hamid Falahati

Graduate Student Senator
senator@sgps.ca

Dear SGPS Council,

The Social Team hosted a number of very successful events through February and the beginning of March.

On February 13 we hosted a mixer and Olympic-watching event in the skybox at Fanatics. The room was packed with students all evening; we had close to 100 students over the course of the night. Students who attended said they had a great time, and met a lot of new friends!

On March 1 we took a group of 40 students to the Garrison Golf and Curling Club for what will hopefully become a traditional SGPS winter bonspiel! The lovely people at the GG&CC gave us an hour-long lesson on the basics of delivery, sweeping, and being a skip. After the lesson we broke off into team and played a full game. There was some serious competition! All attendee's said they had a really great time, and were keen to take up curling again soon! We agreed that next year we should either book ice time for longer, or even host two curling events (there were many students who wanted to sign up after the tickets were sold out).

Later in March we plan to host a movie night, and are currently looking into the possibility of teaming up with the ASUS Movie Theater to show a movie in the Red Room in Kingston Hall. We also have a Speed Meeting event at the Agnes Etherington Art Gallery in the works for April. This will be a great opportunity to meet other grad students who are going to be in Kingston for the summer, and to check out the gallery (which is free for grad students!).

We continue to run Friday night sports at the ARC every Friday from 5:30-6:30 pm, and are getting a great turnout at those as always!

Respectfully submitted,

Margaux MacDonald

Social Commissioner
social@sgps.ca

SGPS Computer Network

- I have completed work on the public facing wiki system so the SGPS is able to share documents easily with the membership. This also gives us the opportunity to provide free web hosting and publishing for clubs and affiliated SGPS groups
- 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 everyone at SGPS.
- I have installed necessary patches to our servers and workstations.
- A couple of the office workstations have been upgraded to OS X 10.9. I am happy to report no upgrade issues. The systems are working very well and are able to access all necessary SGPS services.

SGPS Website

- 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. Work continues on this initiative and I expect completion by the end of April.

Communications

- I have been battling GreenShield for many years now about their policies surrounding gender. They have maintained for years that students had to identify as male or female for the purposes of their H&D plan. This bugged me to no end and so I bugged them to no end. Finally, they have agreed to no longer require identification as male or female. I have updated our health and dental form, having consulted with Heidi Penning at the Human Rights Office to determine how best to request gender information:
<http://www.sgps.ca/health/downloads/HDOptIn1314-Jan.pdf>
- I have added a digital display (to the reception area) that shows a slideshow of SGPS services. This is to promote the SGPS and SGPS services to those people that visit our office in person. We have already received several pieces of feedback that indicate people have learned something new about the SGPS as a result of the display.
- Ian researched cost-effective methods of video production for SGPS informational videos; we have purchased a monthly subscription to an animation program called VideoScribe to create the first of the videos.
- Ian also consulted with members of the SGPS executive and staff regarding material they would like to see included in the videos.
- Ian wrote and animated a 1:18 video encouraging nominations for the upcoming SGPS election.
- Ian continued promoting SGPS coffee hours/information sessions across campus.

Respectfully submitted,
Sean Richards - info@sgps.ca

Hello Council,

Please find below a report from the Equity Commissioner, and Equity Coordinator:

Equity Commissioner's Report:

1. I met with Jeanette Ramsay with the Disability Studies Office, and we discussed how the SGPS can support some of the initiatives/plans going on at the DSO. I sent an email to the SGPS exec with the following information:

"While I went with the intention of offering support for their note-taking program (which aims to encourage grad students to volunteer to 'take notes' for their peers with accommodations), Jeanette informed me that there are other options for note-taking, (ex. if grad student is receiving OSAP, there are options for note-taking there) and that our support will be best effective elsewhere. Jeanette mentioned that:

the deeper issue is not just that the DSO doesn't have money for note-takers (they do not), but that students should be encouraged beyond financial incentives, to volunteer in the program.

Asked how the SGPS can help grad students with DSO, Jeanette requested for us to consider two proposals:

1) collaborate/provide financial support in helping the DSO raise awareness of their services in a promotional video commemorating their 25th anniversary

2) support the DSO in purchasing an accessible computer/work table which will be located in their office for both grads/undergrads. Details on this are located in the attached proposal which she sent for the AMS (please note that the AMS will consider only a few of their requests and not all. If we do agree on supporting the DSO, we can negotiate with the AMS on what we would like to support.)"

I have not yet heard back from the exec on whether or not we can extend support to the DSO via our accommodations fund. I know that we have significant resources (\$30,000) to contribute to these types of initiatives. I am unsure if I should send a follow-up email to the exec on whether we can contribute anything? I would ideally like to connect with Jeanette before April, so any ideas on how I can help move this along would be appreciated.

2. Colleen and I met with Jennifer Hardwick who is deeply involved with some of the Aboriginal groups on campus. We discussed the possibility of coordinating a "teach in" with the Four Directions Center, and sharing the costs of bringing in a speaker(s), providing refreshments and space. There is a "teach in" on visual culture in the Union Gallery planned for Feb. 27, and another one during the end of April. We would like to support the one in April, whose focus will be on sovereignty. Jennifer tells us that these "teach ins" are usually quite popular and fully booked. We are hoping that the SGPS can help promote, support and help plan this particular one. However, funds are an issue. Without knowledge of our financial situation, it is difficult to make any commitments.

3. At the last exec meeting, I indicated the difficulty the Positive Space committee has had with the gender neutral washroom. I am pleased to announce that construction is well underway and we should have the washroom completed shortly. Thanks to Jean Pfeleiderer for her hard work and determination in seeing it through. Jean actually has requested for the SGPS to consider financial support towards getting the new signs for the existing washrooms. I don't know about the costs associated with this, however, if it is something the SGPS can be willing to support, I will look in to it.

Coordinators Report:

In the past month, the International Women's Week organizing committee finalized all the plans for the week, which kicked off with women's art show on March 1st and runs until March 8th. Over the past few months I have been working with this organizing committee to help put the event together. The SGPS also contributed to IWW by printing the event calendar that is distributed in the community. The committee was very grateful to have this assistance.

I am continuing to sit on the Time to Completion Task Force. As part of my role on this committee, I have been asked to examine how the ethics process at Queen's may impact students' time to completion. This was identified as a barrier in the SGPS Time to Completion survey and we are hoping to get a better understanding of the specific challenges of obtaining ethics approval. In the next month I hope to meet with the chairs of the General Research Ethics Board and Health Sciences Research Ethics Board to get their perspectives on where students may be struggling and how the university can better support students as they go through the ethics process.

I have also been keeping members of the Senate Educational Equity Committee up to date on the work of the Time to Completion Task Force. This committee is very interested in ensuring that any equity-related issues in time to completion are not overlooked by the Task Force. Also, as I mentioned in my last report, if any SGPS members have issues that they would like me to present to SEEC, please feel free to email me (equityco@sgps.ca).

Finally, in the next few weeks I will be meeting with staff from the Equity Office to move forward the proposed self-designation survey for graduate and professional students. The Equity Office has a lot of experience in conducting these surveys and so they will provide valuable input on the logistics of collecting and analyzing this data.

Best,

Tabasum Akseer

Equity Commissioner
equity@sgps.ca

Colleen Webber

Equity Coordinator
equityco@sgps.ca

Hello everyone!

Network Tour

On Feb 18th, we had the networking tour in the Kingston Innovation Park. It started with an introduction from the onsite staff and followed by a general tour of the Innovation building. Then students were put into smaller groups to visit some companies in the Innovation Park. We found that the Innovation Park is a great community for grad students who has a desire or ambition to start their own business. For grad students who have patent or ideas, Innovation Park can provide place, services and resources for students to make their ideas into real businesses. One simple example they mentioned in the meeting that they helped a small group of students who developed a coffee app to build up their business model. We encourage our grad students who want to start their own business after graduation to contact Innovation Park for free resources.

Overall, the networking tour was very successful and KIP would like to sponsor us to do it again next year. We collected some feedback and will do the modification next year.

Service Gap for International students' spouses

As mentioned early in the year, we noticed a service gap in Kingston for international students' spouses. Most international students' spouses are not permanent residence neither students. Thus, they cannot go to the government organizations, such as Ontario Employment, for help, neither for the Queen's career services. We have been working on this issue to fix this problem. Last year, I had a meeting with the Dean of Student Affairs, and she request the total number of international students' spouses. Knowing the number, she can further think tactics to talk to the government organizations. This month, I had a meeting with the advisors in the QUIC to seek for strategy. He suggested me to collect the total number of the spouses through the SGPS health and dental plan. I will do so in the following months and report back to the Dean of Student Affairs.

Mental Health Working Group

Kris has been working on the mental health working group and consistently attending the committee meetings. We aim to start a mental health focus group to gather enough international students, and collect the mental health problems reflected from international students.

Informational Video

The communication coordinator, Ian, is working on the informational video to promote SGPS, and he has contacted us to seek the information regarding our commission. Kris and I had several meetings to brainstorm the benefits to join our commission, and the projects/events/activities our commission offers to international students. We noticed that we have been working on the projects not just covering the grad and professional international students, but also their spouses, international staffs at Queen's and undergrad students. I had a meeting with Ian this month to discuss about the video audience and explained our projects and events. Hopefully, this video will gather more students to be actively involved with our commission.

If you have any questions regarding our projects/events, 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,

Preparations for the upcoming SGPS Executive, Board of Trustees Representative, and Graduate Student Senator elections are well underway. By the time of this meeting, the nomination period will have ended and the campaign period will have begun.

These elections are of particular significance due to several important changes in electoral policy that were recently implemented. For the first time, the SGPS has agreed to reimburse candidates up to a maximum of \$100 per candidate, in the hopes that this will encourage more interest in executive positions and allow candidates to engage with regular SGPS members on a wider scale. Also for the first time, the campaign period will be extended during this election. Whereas campaigning used to end at midnight before the first voting day, campaigning will now be permitted during the voting days. It is hoped that this will boost voter turnout. In my next report I will comment on the effects of these policy changes.

An all-candidates debate will be held on March 18th, coinciding with the Annual General Meeting. Every member of the SGPS is strongly encouraged to attend.

Vote! Voting in the upcoming elections will take place on March 26th and 27th. Kindly remind your departments, friends, and colleagues to take a look at the candidate profiles available on the SGPS website and cast their ballots 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