

Society of Graduate and Professional Students at Queen's University: Fall General Meeting

5:00PM – 8:00PM

Wallace Hall, John Deutsch University Center

November 22nd, 2016

Presentations:

1. Deputy Provost: Teri Shearer
 - a. Fall Term Task Force
 - b. Recommendations for implementing the fall term break.
 - c. Fall term structure.
 - d. Constraints: there are factors that make starting orientation activities before labor day difficult. Including: when labour day is early, problems with the residential summer camp, student job opportunities take up the time, there's no room to push back the exam period because exams can be as late as December 23rd, etc.
 - e. Discussion Questions:
 - i. How important are fall term orientation activities and pre-exam study days in relation to each other? There needs to be at least one day for each.
 - ii. When should the break be? Thanksgiving?
 - iii. Should orientation activities be later in the evening while classes are during the day?
 - iv. Student question: How long is the current examination period? Can it be condensed?
 1. Response: It's long, but it's because of scheduling conflicts for students that take many classes. 13 is the minimum number of days that can be in the exam period, and this is what is in place.
 - v. Student question: Do the exams run on weekends?
 1. Response: Yes.
 - vi. Student question: Having two days of classes during orientation could be beneficial.

1. Response: Yes, good suggestion.
- vii. Student question: Could the fall term break be in line with the law students' break?
 1. Response: Good suggestion.
- viii. Student question: If they're important activities that currently exist, could they not be rescheduled?
 1. Response: That is a big concern.
- ix. Student question: Will the break disrupt all classes?
 1. Response: Yes. It has to affect everyone. Unless a course or seminar is informal, it will be affected.
- x. Student question: Will this affect the minimum number of classes required for a degree?
 1. Response: We couldn't include the break without reducing the number of classes. There would be some benefit to increasing the number of teaching days to reduce the compression of courses and requirements in a short time.
- xi. Student question: Most assignments tend to be due directly before or after a break, so it may be beneficial to just have an extended weekend as a fall break.
- xii. Student question: Could we not reduce the resident orientation period?
 1. Response: It's not within our mandate to deal with that because it requires trade offs. It would require some groups being willing to reduce their orientation days in order to achieve a fall break.
- xiii. Student question: What is the purpose of the fall term break? Is it for extra study time?
 1. Response: It's in the period when students are experiencing the most stress. To help with mental health.
- xiv. Student question: One concern with the fall break is the decrease in services at this point. Most people may not be on campus, but services should still be available, and may actually be a better time to offer career and counselling resources.

1. Response: Yes.
- xv. Student question: Workload for TAs may end up shifting to the break, rather than providing more time to catch up on other work.
 1. Response: Good point.
- xvi. Student question: If we push the term to end even later, international students have no opportunity to go home.
 1. Response: Yes.

Adoption of the Agenda

All in favor. Motion is carried.

Executive and Speaker Reports:

1. Executive Reports:
 - a. President: Saba Farbodkia
 - i. Year plan: making work more evidence based. Regular monthly meetings with members, social commissioner events or self-held meetings. Start research projects and collect data about what matters to students most. General academic satisfaction and equity based issues are found to be most important. Due to ethics clearance, research needs to be put off a little longer.
 - b. VP Graduate: Sebastian Gorlewski
 - i. Student advisor program is being run consistently, it will be mass marketed in social media. More statistics will be presented on its use in the December meeting. Evaluating SGPS member mental health has been delayed, there were some unforeseen circumstances but the survey should be out in January. The new grad student space is open, looking for opinions, offers a place for meeting other students and relaxing. The final goal was to increase networking opportunities for students, 175 mentors, and expanding horizons workshop.

- c. VP Professional: Kishan Lakhani
 - i. Careers week has been delayed to try to provide the most opportunities. Hired a new communications facilitator to increase marketing of the SGPS, as well as Andrea Burke as the executive director to continue assisting students. Working on workshop series, the first is next week on Wednesday, 6-8. The equity commissioner will share more details. These will be held weekly in the new student lounge.
- d. VP Campaigns and Community Affairs: Anastasiya Boika
 - i. Liaison with the commissioners to increase cooperation and support and increase collaboration. Currently working on equity survey and working with the international affairs commissioner. Looking over activities for orientation week, building off the survey completed after the previous orientation week. The goal is to create the schedule early and plan activities and welcome package. Discover what resources are available to minority groups and perhaps increase availability of resources and funding. Undergrad and grad student clubs are now under a single umbrella. The clubs office will be fore everyone. There is also a radio show available. Creating an editing service for students, as this can be difficult to find, however getting permissions for this may take longer than expected. The hope is to have this available by the end of winter semester. Expanding horizons workshop to facilitate teaching international students and making the class as inclusive as possible.
- e. VP Finance and Service: Stuart
 - i. The annual plan is on the SGPS website. Structural and governance review of the SGPS to increase accountability and improve decision making. Certain parts of the project were abandoned as they weren't useful. The AMS plan, due to the inability to measure student concerns, no longer has a trajectory for the five year plan. A future executive may be able to do so in the future when data has been gathered. Evaluating grants and bursaries has been very successful due to the help of certain members of the committee. The awards may be escalated to reflect inflation. May want to

create an accessibility fund for students in need that require additional accommodation. Grant fund is on track, but they need to be changed to reflect inflation as they haven't been changed every year. JDUC revitalization was a 10 year project, a space audit was conducted to determine what the needs for the space are. Plans will be drawn up and brought to the next meeting. Currently in the process of writing up documents to help transition students to a new opt-out policy.

2. Speaker Report:

a. Speaker: Jennifer Williams

- i. There will be an election in the winter for SGPS council member position, and there is a vacancy for a chief returning officer.

3. Approval:

- a. Issues raised by Jared and Ciara. Approved by all. Motion carries.

Jared: Hiring policies and procedures handbook, will the manual describe new changes?

Kishan: There's no significant changes in the manual, apart from the hiring of the executive director.

Stuart: Yes. Changes were included in the office policy manual.

Ciara: Will the editing service be available sooner if there's a fee?

Anastasya: The biggest issue is proper training of editors and academic integrity. The goal is to solidify a training module and try to integrate it as soon as possible.

Senator, Trustee, Commissioner, Committee and Other Reports:

1. Senator Report: Ciara Bracken-Roche

- a. Attending senate and other meetings. No updates from the previous monthly report, other than stating that all agenda items were addressed. A racist Commerce party was a big issue, and more disreputable activities on campus have been reported. This is a larger concern for the SGPS that must be addressed.

2. Trustee Report: Adam Ali

- a. Photos of the racist activities of the Commerce department have surfaced, and it appears this event has been running since 2007. These activities are being defended by participants. There are serious concerns about racism on campus. This is a twofold process: Intervention and discipline. The university has released a statement, action will be taken.

Motion to reopen the agenda. All in favor, motion carries. Motion to add the Queen's party discussion item. All in favor, motion carries. Motion to add the discussion about the JDUC space. All in favor, motion carries. Motion to close the agenda. All in favor, motion carries.

3. University Rector: Cam Yung

- a. IBT awards available for service to the queen's community that is non-sportive and non-academic. Nominations will be available and should be directed at the SGPS or AMS offices by December 21st. Focus on culture on campus. Diversity inclusion, mental health, sexual assault, and drinking culture events and resources. Consultation for the truth of reconciliation. An event is tomorrow at 5PM, how we can implement the ideas brought forward during the consultation process.

Motion to close reports. All in favor. Motion carries.

Question Period:

Cam: Internal cultural changes needed to take place, but what does this mean?

Stuart: Changes to the structure are just with regards to internal decision making process. Cultural changes in financial due diligence and keeping proper records. Streamlining finances and process. They're not policy changes, just internal manual that show people how to better do their jobs and reduce training gaps.

Nima:

Kishan: Concerns are being reassessed and future issues can be emailed to me. We're in the process of putting together a committee that will achieve goals rather than maintain a status quo.

Korey: Certain departments need internal SGPS sanctioning processes. Is there a timeline for the creation of a committee for this?

Kishan: Are you speaking specifically about the faculties?

Korey: Event sanctioning protocols brought up in the may meeting.

Kishan: Do you mean departmental registration?

Korey: Yes.

Kishan: There's no strict timeline, but for specific concerns they can be sent to myself.

Korey: I'm referring to the motion that was carried in the September meeting.

Stuart: The slack can be picked up by myself and Kishan until a committee is established.

Chris: What role will the SGPS play in interacting with alumni?

Sebastian: It would be great to have them involved for various activities. We're trying to get a fund started that alumni can use to contribute to SGPS.

Anastasya: Non-academic jobs post-graduation. This could be great to include alumni and create more opportunities. The goal is to set up these connections by the winter semester.

Ciara: The alumni council is small, but it would be good to speak with them.

Discussion:

1. Is the fall break a good idea?
 - a. No name: It won't really affect SGPS members as TA work will likely be put off to the break, law students already have a break. So, rather than taking a hard stance, we could just support the AMS as undergrads are going to be affected more strongly.
 - b. Chris2: Faculty likely won't be affected either, so I support the idea of supporting the AMS in their decision.
2. Queen's Party
 - a. Stuart: There can be a discussion in the grad area to have a more free discussion.
 - b. Dylan: Is there SGPS involvement in the event?

- c. Adam: To our knowledge, the SGPS was not involved, but knowledge is limited at this time. The report stated that queen's students were involved and that they are defending the event, but not much else is known at this time.
- d. No name2: Can you elaborate on what else we know? Has the university responded to it previously?
- e. Adam: It's associated with a particular program and is believed to have occurred since 2007.
- f. Saba: As far as they know, the event did not occur on campus, and it likely was not sanctioned by the university.
- g. Korey: How the SGPS can lend to support to those affected.
- h. Stuart: Information is currently scarce, we will have to take appropriate steps when the time comes.
- i. Saba: It's important to have a culture that people can express themselves freely. The equity commissioners will be hosting workshops on gender, disability, and culture. This should open a venue for discussion of these things. Many people who attend these workshops are those who are interested, but those engaging in the racist behaviour are unlikely to attend. If the side that argues the event isn't racist and become criticized, they likely won't change their views.
- j. No name: There's been a lot of things said by both sides. Some say there is no problem, while others are calling for executions, but neither get anything done. It may be easy to paint them as bigots, some part of them doesn't understand that what they did was wrong. If there's some kind of forum where there can be reasonable discussion, rather than wild accusation, there might be some education.
- k. Valerie: It shouldn't be staged as a debate in order to avoid competitiveness or conflict. Things could get heated and be less constructive than hoped for. Perhaps a panel would be a less aggressive approach.
- l. Equity Commissioner: This is good feedback. It can be difficult to get people to attend. Looking for suggestions on how to make things educational, not confrontational, so that all can benefit as this needs improvement.
- m. Alison: How are these activities advertised? We haven't heard about it.

- n. Equity Commissioner: Waiting on approval, but the posters are ready.
- o. Max: The SGPS should have a more active role in fixing the issue.
- p. Ciara: There are codes of conduct on what can be said or done. They are easy to set up, but only treat the symptom rather than the problem. Discussions or a panel may be a good way to deal with the situation.
- q. Adam: Not keen on a debate either. In these cases it becomes the responsibility of the marginalized, and this is a burden. I'm very curious about the workshop, would be a great idea. Strategies for dealing with implicit racism would be beneficial.
- r. Saba: There are things the SGPS can do. The council of Ontario universities can set standards, and has set certain expectations. There is nothing about equity and inclusivity or human rights, perhaps a petition could be made to ask them to include these items. There can't be a course or module implemented because students will complain about paying for a "useless" course, so it needs to be made available in other ways.
- s. Korey: Seeing photos of this nature speaks to the attitudes that can manifest throughout the university. Students trying to intimidate women and minorities in the tutorial classroom. I agree with Saba for a need for education. It should not be posed as a debate as this would create a lot of aggression, but these are attitudes that need to be addressed. Are there SGPS activities or AMS activities to increase awareness around equity issues during orientation week?
- t. Ciara: I was going to bring up the same point. Perhaps equity issues could be addressed during teaching day. A statement by the SGPS community should be made to demonstrate our values with regard to this issue.
- u. Anastasya: With regards to orientation week, focus is typically on social facilitation but the education aspect is very important and we hope to implement it in January.
- v. Dylan: We should put out a statement as soon as possible, address it sooner than later.

- w. Kishan: The SGPS is committed to promoting inclusion, so these situations are interesting as they stir conversation. We want to be sure to make an informed statement that promotes a fair and inclusive environment for all.
 - x. Jen: Bring all other comments or concerns to the SGPS.
3. JDUC Space Feedback
- a. Valerie: If it wasn't for SGPS, I wouldn't know it existed. The space looks great, but we need more advertising.
 - b. Sebastian: For this week knowledge will be limited to a smaller group, but we hope to generalize soon.
 - c. Dylan: How will the SGPS prevent the space from being monopolized by undergrads?
 - d. Sebastian: To get access to the room, you will need to get a key and prove that you are an SGPS member.
 - e. Ciara: It used to be difficult to get rid of undergrads in the space, so this system should reduce their presence.
 - f. Equity Commissioner: The cubicles are a little small.
 - g. Sebastian: I hadn't thought of that, but it will be addressed. The JDUC in general is fairly inaccessible, hope to address that in the renovations.
 - h. Stuart: It's a fairly easy problem to fix.

Adjournment:

Motion to adjourn. All in favor, motion carries.