

SGPS Elections

The SGPS elections were held on March 26th and 27th. The elections themselves were a massive success, with competition for three of the five executive positions as well as for both the Graduate Senator and Trustee. The number of ballots cast was almost 40% higher than last year, and technical issues — contrary to reports in *The Journal* — were very minimal and dealt with expertly by our staff. While the competition in the races and the efforts of the candidates is a key driver in this increase, I also want to thank the Chief Returning Officer, Executive Director, and Communications Coordinator for their efforts in planning and promoting the election so successfully. Lastly, I want to congratulate all the candidates who were successful, and thank them in advance for their decision to serve their university and fellow graduate and professional students.

Transition

With the arrival of the new executive the current SGPS is already working on transition. While I am making an effort to pass my experience from the past year to all the new exec members, I am obviously working most closely with Kevin Wiener, the President-elect. Kevin will be accompanying me on many of my final meetings this month, will be meeting key partners from across the university, and I will be caught up to speed on key issues that will remain on the agenda for graduate and professional students in the year to come. I'm confident that even with the full turn over of the executive, we will be successful in giving them the knowledge and continuity necessary to hit the ground running on May 1st.

Executive Assistant Hiring

After an exhaustive search and interviews with a number of exceptionally talented applicants, the SGPS has hired a new Executive Assistant to replace Anne-Marie Grondin, who left the office in December. Andria Mahon will be in training this month to orient her to the SGPS, Queen's graduate and professional student issues, and the core duties of the EA position. However, we feel it will not take long before she is able to make a strong contribution to our activities, and we are confident she can have a massive impact on the SGPS for years to come.

Emergency Housing

Last week I reached an agreement with Student Affairs and Queen's Housing to develop a plan and protocol around emergency housing. For years Queen's has dealt with the needs for emergency housing in a more-or-less effective, but ad hoc fashion. The new plan will ensure that there are clear procedures and spaces for people who find themselves displaced from their housing for any reason. Once the protocols are in place, the SGPS will be promoting the availability of emergency housing on campus, so that student in need know that they have somewhere to turn that will quickly and effectively help them.

Enrolment Planning

The new enrolment plans for the university will be presented at Senate this week. They are likely to include a significant increase in the undergraduate population and modest growth in graduate degrees. The proposed 400 student undergraduate increase, if maintained across the four years, would mean a 1,600-student increase on campus. I am skeptical that such an increase can be accommodated when the Campus Master Plan notes that Queen's is already at a deficit in terms of many types of space — particularly student life and study space. This also puts into question plans to move graduate student housing options back onto main campus, rather than relying on the West Campus and Confederation Place Hotel options, the latter of which is inherently unstable. I also maintain that we cannot continue to use growth in the number of students on campus as the only way of addressing faculty budget shortfalls. I also remain skeptical that continuing to increase our intake of academic master's and PhD students benefits the campus and our grads, as competition for funding, jobs, and academic opportunities is already very heated. I will raise these issues and others at the Senate Committee on Academic Development and in Senate itself.

Tuition and Graduate Program Assessment Meeting

Towards the end of my term I will be meeting with the Provost, Principal, and Dean of Graduate Studies in an attempt to set a long-term plan for how to best manage graduate and professional student tuition at Queen's as well as setting out a framework for assessing the new graduate diplomas, certificates, and other credentials that are sprouting up around campus. I have three specific goals for the meeting, all of which are aimed at leaving Queen's, at the end of my term, with a clear direction on important issues: 1) to give graduate and professional students clear, predictable, tuition rates that facilitate, rather than detract from completion times, 2) to ensure that academic graduate students in particular have options to professionalize their degrees to prepare for work outside of academia — whether they choose to pursue a degree for that reason or decide to change paths during their degree, and 3) to ensure that the new diploma, certificate, and other credential programs meet a high quality, do not divert resources excessively from core programs, and that the students who take them can access the university services they need.

Lastly, I wanted to say that it has been an absolute pleasure and privilege to serve as SGPS President for this year. I have accomplished and learned more than I ever would have expected when I started transition last April. It has been an ideal capstone to my almost six year experience as a Queen's Master's and PhD student and I have come to understand in an intimate way the amazing potential of our students and of this institution. Queen's isn't always the most satisfying place to be, and I've seen frustrations and dissatisfaction arise in many forms this year. However, I want to argue that rather than lying back and cynically dismissing Queen's in these moments of frustration, that the better path is to get involved and try and make it a better place — not just for yourself but for everyone who cares about this place and about higher education. That has been my mission as a student here and I wouldn't trade my experiences, successes, and failures for anything else.

I want to thank my executive, the SGPS staff, Council, the graduate and professional students I've met and worked with all year for giving me an incredible amount of faith in just what postgraduate students are capable of inside the lab, classroom, and office, but also in the committee room and on the streets and in our community. I also want to thank the AMS exec and all of their staff as well as the Rector for working with me to craft what I think was the most cooperative year between undergraduate and postgraduate students in recent memory. Students are strong when we are united, and we were a testament to that potential this year. I want to also thank the Grad Club and all our graduate student run clubs and events for enhancing campus life for our students. Lastly, and perhaps controversially for some, I want to thank the university's administrators, deans, staff, professors, and the Principal and Provost. My goal this year was to engage positively and in good faith with everyone on campus in my capacity as President. Not only do I feel I was able to do that, but I was met with identical treatment across campus and feel most of my success can be attributed to this approach — respectful and calm, but firm and principled. I didn't always agree with the administration, but by engaging positively we found resolutions and compromises that otherwise would never have arisen. I encourage everyone who gets involved at Queen's to follow my lead. I'm somewhat sad to be leaving, especially when there is still so much to do, but I will likely be staying in Kingston for the foreseeable future and will always be a friend and resource to the SGPS.

Thank you again for trusting me with this office and for this fantastic opportunity. I will remember it for the rest of my life. As always, at least until the end of April, 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:

I would first like to congratulate the Executive-Elect and appointees of Council on their success in the SGPS elections at the end of March. I look forward to working with a number of you, through transition activities, during the month of April. Your incoming VP Graduate is Dinah Jansen, a PhD student in the department of History. Congratulations Dinah on your acclamation!

Student Advisor Program

Advisors hold office hours (in 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.

Or e-mail the Advisors at advisors@sgps.ca to book an appointment.

Time-to-Completion Task Force Meeting (T2C TF)

The T2C TF 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 concerns. 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 April 7.

Graduate Studies Executive Council (GSEC)

Dean's Report:

- B. Brouwer summarized the Graduate Allocation Process as per the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities recent memo.
- The School of Graduate Studies (SGS) has communicated with Canadian Graduate Scholarships-Masters (CGS-M) applicants and the departments where they plan to undertake their graduate studies, in an effort to recruit these highly qualified candidates to Queen's.
- B. Brouwer will attend a meeting in Ottawa at the end of March with Tri-Council representatives. The issues of managing interdisciplinary applications at both the Doctoral and Master's competitions levels and the administration of the CGS-M competition will be raised.
- The fee associated with the Ontario Visiting Graduate Student (OVGS) program is under discussion by the Ontario Council on Graduate Studies (OCGS). The OCGS will propose an increase to the current \$500 term-length course fee that is paid to the host institution by the home institution of the student.
- Jeanette Parsons will talk about accommodating graduate students at the spring 2014 Graduate Forum on Tuesday, April 8, 10:30-noon, in Kinesiology 101.
- An update on the Productivity and Innovation Fund (PIF) Ontario university consortium project to develop online modules on professional skills for graduate students was provided.
- The Quality Council conducted an on-site audit in February, and thanks are due to all who participated.
- The Queen's 3MT event takes place March 27/28. Departments/units are urged to promote the event to their Master's and PhD students.

Reports from Faculty Graduate Councils/Committees and SGPS:

- Revisions to the SGS Thesis Outcome categories were discussed at most Council/Committee meetings. The SGPS reminded members of upcoming SGPS elections, and of the Student Advisor Program.

GSEC approved:

1. Major Modification, Graduate Diploma in Accounting

2. Omnibus Report March 2014

Item for discussion: Proposed Revisions to SGS Regulation Outcome Categories of the oral thesis examination

Item for information: March 2014 application status report

The Research Integrity Policy Review Group

An established subcommittee of the Senate Advisory Research Committee (SARC), the Research Integrity Policy Review Group continues to review the Senate Policy on Integrity in Research. The current review stems from a request from SGPS to examine the protections/accommodations that the policy provides (none currently) for complainants, particularly for those who report the academic misconduct of someone in a position of power (student complaints against faculty). At the March 26 meeting, it was agreed that a draft of the revised policy would be circulated amongst the group in the near future. When the subcommittee agrees on the changes, the draft policy will be presented at SARC for final approval.

Graduate Student Life Advisory Group (GSLAG)

The GSLAG met on March 27 to review a number of agenda items. Of most interest includes a career week being planned for the fall term by the SGS and Career Services, a discussion surrounding the Registrar's Office and student needs, and changes to Queen's Community Housing.

Embedded Counsellor Special Review Committee

This Committee met for the first time on March 25 and continues to define the group's mandate and plans going forward. A second meeting will be scheduled for the month of April.

I've enjoyed my two terms as VP Graduate for the SGPS. Thank you all for being so wonderful to work with! I would especially like to thank my fellow Exec members, the staff at SGPS, the Advisors, and the AASC.

As of May 1 your e-mails to the vpg account will reach Dinah Jansen. You're in good hands!

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

Respectfully,

Becky Pero

VP Graduate
vpg@sgps.ca

Transition

Congratulations and welcome to the incoming exec, Senator and Trustee, and in particular to Thompson Hamilton, who will be taking over as VPP starting in May. Thompson is a law student and comes with experience as the Judicial Officer for the AMS. I have every confidence that he will do a fantastic job as VPP.

We have begun transitioning and will continue to do so over the next month.

Senate Committee on Non-Academic Discipline (SONAD)

SONAD is upcoming. We will be discussing the issue of fraternities and sororities. I welcome any input on this issue.

Human Resources

The new Executive Assistant, Andria Mahon, started on April 1st. Welcome to Andria!

The SGPS has hired Jillian Burford-Grinnell, the outgoing VPFS, for a two-month contract in May and June to help with the significant transition and training work that needs to be done and to help our Executive Director and Executive Assistant to get caught up on tasks from the four months we've had without an Executive Assistant.

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

Respectfully submitted,

Cody Kolsteren Yorke

VP Professional
vpp@sgps.ca

Dear Councilors,

Not much new to update this month. Seems like I've had to do all the reports this last little bit. I'm just getting started on transition for Lorne who will be taking my place next year. I think you are in good hands!

Below is a written version of the report I gave at the AGM.

First I want to say how much I've enjoyed being VPCCA this year. I have met so many members and learned so much. I'm going to miss the excitement next year.

I want to use this chance to talk about some of the bigger campaigns/ initiatives I've worked on this year.

My pet project as you probably know by now has been Academic freedom. Intellectual freedom in this country has been under attack on a number of fronts and as an academic I find this quite terrifying. Across Canada politically inconvenient research is being shut down or silenced from the top-down and Federal funding for graduate research has been changing rapidly. The result has been a loss of publically-funded laboratory space dedicated to long-term environmental sustainability and the changing biophysical environment, narrowing the breadth of graduate research opportunities and their academic freedom.

Graduate and professional student mental health is an important issue and needs to be addressed on a number of levels. 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 with 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.

While it is nice of the administration to hire us a councilor, and set up a boot camp for us, it's not enough and it doesn't get to the deeper structural issues surrounding graduate student mental health and does nothing to deal with the extensive financial pressure professional students contend with either.

Bullying and harassment all too common in student supervisor relationships. These 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.

I have been spending a lot of time lately working with the Graduate caucus of the CFS on their Post-residency fees campaign. 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 (which includes us) is stepping up a campaign to pressure the government to mandate the re-introduction of post-residency fees in Ontario and to increase the funding to institutions in order to do so.

One of the biggest things I've done this year is to meet with various students and groups on campus to find out what is important to them, how we at the SGPS can support them, and to initiate and plan various projects and campaigns. Out of this collaboration has come a variety of initiatives. the stand up for science rally and the jointly produced issue of the

901 Bite are 2 of the big ones. There are so many groups on campus who share members with us. I truly hope that this collaboration continues to grow.

I have also been working more closely with the National Grad caucus of the CFS. This year we have been holding weekly conference calls with graduate executives across the country. Collaborations like these can only make our campaigns stronger and our voices louder.

Thanks again to everyone for the fantastic year and good luck to all the candidates.

Thanks,

Meagan Crane

VP Campaigns & Community Affairs
vpcca@sgps.ca

It is with some sadness that I submit my final report to the SGPS after serving several terms on the Executive. I want to thank all of you for your assistance on committees and for bringing your concerns forward to the Executive so we can try to improve services and support Graduate and Professional students. One of the goals I set for myself in 2011-12 when I was President was to increase the presence of the SGPS within our Professional student constituency. I am delighted to see that I have in fact accomplished that given four law students ran in the last election!

The last month has been quite busy as I prepared for the upcoming transition month and created documents to try to institutionalize (or maybe I should say make coherent) the information taken from the various committees I have sat on as well as create documents to ensure that new Executive (and their successors, and their successors etc...) are aware of the hurdles we have been up against over the last five years. These have included a constant request for additional space (only about 15 yrs to come into fruition), the need to expand our services to support students (like the skate lending library and the new perks to our Health & Dental Plan, and finally the advocacy that SGPS Executive and team do for our members.

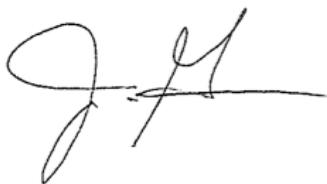
During March, I was part of the hiring committee to review, interview and finally hire a new Executive Assistant. I am delighted to introduce Andria Mahon who began on April 1st.

I am delighted to announce that Becky & I have been successful in negotiating the change to the PPL withdrawal date. Effective summer 2014 changes to the pre-authorized payment plan will come into effect. As of June 2014, the payments will come out on the 5th (or next business day) of each month.

Finally, the Finance & Services Committee has continued to adjudicate Emergency Student Aid, Dental Bursary and International Student Bursary applications will have one final meeting before I turn things over to my successor, Patrick.

In closing, thank you all for the opportunity to be a part of the SGPS Executive. Again, if I can be of any assistance, please feel free to email me at vpfs@sgps.ca which is where you will be able to reach Patrick from May 1st onwards.

Respectfully submitted,



Jillian Burford-Grinnell
VP Finance & Services
Vpfs@sgps.ca

Dear Council,

At this Council Meeting we will be electing a new Speaker for the 2014-2015 term. It has been an honour serving as your Speaker for the past two years. I have thoroughly enjoyed tackling the challenges associated with the job, and hope that with the policies we have passed through the Council Working Group, I will be leaving you with a framework for an even more engaged Council in the years to come. As is standard with this election, nominations will be opened to the floor during the meeting, and voting will occur by secret ballot. I encourage any interested parties to get in touch with me to ensure they fully appreciate the responsibilities associated with this job.

A quick update on the Non-Academic Discipline Case received on March 10th – I have been in contact with the complainant and they are currently consulting with their legal representative. The case has been placed on hold until I receive a response.

On a closing note, the Annual General Meeting went off without a hitch, and I was especially pleased with the number of attendees and the interest in the election debate. Council should note that the results of the election and referendum have been placed on the agenda for ratification. Voter turnout exceeded 10% of the membership, which meets the quorum for the referenda results as per P.9.5.f.

I would also like to extend a thank you for all the support I received in the election. I am ecstatic that I will be continuing on in the capacity of Trustee, and I look forward to seeing you all at Council in the future!

If there are any questions please don't hesitate to get in contact with me.

Respectfully submitted,

James MacLeod

Speaker
speaker@sgps.ca

Dear SGPS Council and Members-At-Large,

Here is a brief update on the developments from senate and GSEC, TTC committees since our March council meeting.

1. Senate Meeting on March 25th, 2014

Unfortunately, I could not make it to the senate meeting due to unforeseen personal circumstances. The senate meeting agenda can be found here: (<http://www.queensu.ca/secretariat/senate/agendasminutes.html>).

- The university's new campus master plan was approved by the Board of Trustees on March 7, 2014. The campus master plan will be used to enhance academic and campus experience at Queen's for the next 10 to 15 years. More information on that can be found here: <http://queensu.ca/cmp/qcmp>. There were also two presentations on campus master plan which can also be found on the Queen's governance portal (the link is given in the agenda of March 25th senate meeting).

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

- We were told about a new initiative from the Productivity and Innovation Fund (PIF) Ontario university consortium project to develop online trainings/modules for graduate students. These trainings are related to professional skills.
- We also had a discussion on the proposed revisions to the school of graduate studies regulation outcome categories of the oral thesis. There was a suggestion to revise the language of the document. This document will be updated and returned to our next GSEC meeting. I'll provide more update on that.

3. GSEC Time to Completion (TTC) Task Force meetings in March, 2014

- Since my last report, I have had a few tasks to complete including looking at other graduate schools to check their policies regarding the degree time to completion. My last task was to look into possible policies/practices offered by the graduate council in US with respect to degree time to completion. I have prepared two reports on various policies and practices which have been submitted to the task force to possibly be included in the final report. This report will be submitted to GSEC once completed. We will have our last meeting next week to finalize a draft of the report.

I want to finish by saying my term will be finished soon. I have enjoyed working with the wonderful SGPS executives. I wish incoming senator Eric Rapos all the best for the coming year.

Respectfully submitted,

Hamid Falahati

Graduate Student Senator
senator@sgps.ca

Dear SGPS Council,

The Social Team has had a great month in March. We started off by taking a group of 40 students to the Garrison Golf and Curling Club for an evening of curling lessons and a game. It was a ton of fun! The lovely people at the GG&CC gave us a fantastic hour-long lesson on the basics of curling, and then set us up to play a full game. All the students in attendance had a wonderful time, and the only complaint we received was that we didn't stay long enough! I would recommend next year planning a curling event for longer than 3hrs, or even holding the event more than once during the winter.

At the end of March we held a movie night in conjunction with the Queen's Cinema Appreciation Society. The QCAS is a primarily undergraduate organization that shows both popular and independent films in Sterling Hall on a weekly basis. They finish their events with a group discussion about the film. By teaming up with QCAS we were able to show Dallas Buyers Club in a movie theater-like setting. We had over 30 students come out for the event, which is the highest attendance we've ever had at a movie night! We will definitely be teaming up with QCAS again to show movies.

Going forward the SGPS Social Team has some great plans for April and over the summer. We're hosting a Speed Meeting event at the Agnes Etherington Art Centre on April 3, 2014. This will be a great opportunity for our members to meeting other graduate students and to check out the Agnes, which is free to all graduate students at Queen's.

Our sports nights will be going strong throughout April. For the summer we are working on plans to change the sports nights a little – hopefully hold them on a different day of the week, and start having them outdoors (weather permitting, of course!).

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 continue the update process of our office machines to the newest OS X release.

SGPS Website

- A lot of effort went into the website this month with respect to the Election and Referendum. There were constant updates for:
 - Candidate bio information with pictures
 - Election timeline information
 - Voting details
 - Election and Referendum general information
 - Election results
- 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 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.
- Many listserv e-mails were produced this month to highlight the Election and Referendum and to ensure SGPS members had the ability and information necessary to vote.
- I created a special Election Edition of the E-Newsletter.
<http://www.sgps.ca/events/newsletter/00146b-special-mar2014.pdf>
- Ian wrote and produced an animated video advertising the 2014 Winter GM and 2014 SGPS Election and Referendum. He is currently working on informational videos highlighting the function of and services provided by the SGPS.
- Ian continued promoting SGPS coffee hours/information sessions across campus.

Respectfully submitted,
Sean Richards - info@sgps.ca

Hello everyone,

March is a brainstorming month for myself and our commission team to gather ideas/projects for spring and summer term.

Firstly, we are considering a networking skill training workshop for international students. We noticed that there are networking skill workshops offered by Career Service every month for all the students. We are not sure whether these workshops are a good fit for our international grad students. We will attend those workshops in person to make a judgment and will talk to Career Service advisors to improve the networking skill workshop for international grad students. Secondly, as requested by GSLAG meeting, we need to create a document to reveal the real cost/budget for living in Kingston as an international student. This document is intended to help update the cost of living information on the Registrar's website for the incoming international students. As Susan Anderson mentioned, international students' expectations about their finances before they arrive and the realities they experience once they arrive are quite different, which cause so much difficulties for them. Thirdly, we are doing research to find out whether the RA Union is beneficial for international grad students. We knew the difference between T4 and T4A forms, and how do they affect the application for permanent residency. However, I have also talked to several grad program assistants in different departments. They said that, even with T4A, each department can still provide the working hour proof as research assistants for international students who apply for permanent residence. We will spend more time to explore this issue in the spring term.

If you have any questions/suggestions, feel free to contact us!

Tian Lu
International Students Affairs Commissioner

Kris Singh
International Students Affairs Coordinator

Dear Members of the SGPS Council,

The results of the SGPS elections are now available on the website. In addition to electing a new SGPS executive team, all nine of the referendum questions passed. Please join me in congratulating the new executive.

SGPS Representative to the Board of Trustees: James MacLeod
Graduate Senator: Eric Rapos
President: Kevin Wiener
Vice President of Campaigns and Community Affairs: Lorne Beswick
Vice President of Finance and Services: Patrick Gajos
Vice President (Graduate): Dinah Jansen
Vice President (Professional): Thompson Hamilton

I would like to thank all the candidates for their efforts to engage with SGPS members from all disciplines, and for the respectful tone of the campaign.

Despite the report of technical malfunctions with the online voting system that appeared in *The Journal*, to date I have received no reports from students who were unable to vote in the election due to technical difficulties.

I am pleased to report that the new campaign policies appear to have boosted electoral competition and voter turnout, which, at approximately 18% of the SGPS membership, was significantly higher than last year. As expected, the new rules will require some further clarification regarding eligible expenses and the use of SGPS resources, and I will recommend several minor modifications to my successor.

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