

Dear Councillors:

Hope you are all well. As the term of this year's executive winds down, I think we have to start speaking about initiatives that may not be completed by March 30th. To this end - I am listing a few of the initiatives that we have begun but have not been able to resolve yet. I do this so that people who are planning to run for positions can see if they would like to continue with any of these as they get elected for next year. But first an update ...

Update on Alumni Mentors:

We are starting to plan an event around the Board meeting in March at the JDUC. If there is interest from departmental reps - we can go ahead, but it will be disappointing to invite alumni if the departmental reps are unavailable on the afternoon of the 5th of March. Please come prepared for a straw poll on the issue at Council - concrete departmental interest would be nice. The people on the invite list for this first event would be from the Board of Trustees, here are their bios: <http://www.queensu.ca/secretariat/trustees/bios.pdf>

Incomplete initiatives:

1. Mentorship Program: SGPS members who would like to mentor undergrads or new MA's should have the ability to do so. The SGPS could facilitate this - it doesn't, yet.
2. Advancement: We do not yet have the independent ability to tell our members about all the student awards to which they have access currently, so we are unable as an organization to ask careful questions and raise specific demands about awards to the Office of Advancement. This could be a strategic priority - it isn't, yet.
3. Career Networking: This is a work in progress, but as the list of alumni interested in helping students with career / advice and networking grows, this will require some SGPS input and facilitation.
4. SGPS Scholarships: The SGPS has a number of awards that it gives out every year, but we currently have limited ability to develop or attract awards that we administer ourselves. This could change if there was interest at Council in developing awards for departments for example.
5. Senate Committee Interface Improvement: We at the SGPS do not quite know about the details of what takes place at all Senate committees despite having graduate /professional student presence on them through our membership. Information flow within the executive has improved, but the interface between Senate and the SGPS remains largely limited to the Executive and Senators. We need to develop a better handle on the nomination process to these committees and ensure that we hear back regularly.

I will add to this list if there is some interest in following up. As always, questions would be welcome.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jawad Qureshy
President@sgps.ca

Equity

The Equity Climate Survey Committee met to look over the survey's findings. Though the quantitative findings are somewhat limiting, the qualitative data appear, at first glance, noteworthy. SGPS Research Assistant Mikhail Bullard is currently coding the qualitative responses, and I will be writing a report to summarize the results once the task is complete. I have compiled a detailed report on the history of the survey, which you will find in the Council package, with a recommendation (and motion to Council) to improve and reintroduce the survey on a yearly basis.

Sustainability

Queen's is hosting its first 'Conference on Water' on sustainable water use. The conference, co-sponsored by the SGPS, will take place February 5th in the BioSciences Auditorium between 3pm and 6pm, and will feature talks by Maude Barlow and Alanna Mitchell.

I am currently working with SGPS Research Assistant Gayathir Vijay to organize events for the upcoming Bottled Water Free Day, March 10th, 2011. I have prepared a motion for Council to this effect.

Senate Residence Committee

Responding to the tragic losses of a few of our fellow students in the last year, Vice-Principal John Pierce announced the creation of a new set of committees to address student life and wellness on campus, including in residence.

Community Housing Board

At our request, the Community Housing Board has agreed to create an internal paid position for a live-in "Community Assistant" in An Clachan. Broadly, the Community Assistant will liaise between An Clachan and the Community Housing Board, assist tenants in adjusting to life in the complex, and develop an inclusive and safe climate. One of the required qualifications will be knowledge of the particular needs of international students. The Board has also agreed to put together a survey to identify any needs that remain unmet for housing complex residents.

On a much less positive note, rents in An Clachan and John Orr Tower are projected to increase significantly as of the next academic year. Rent prices, which used to be calculated according to guideline, will now be averaged around market price.

Copyright

Last December 23, the Copyright Board of Canada granted Access Copyright an "Interim Post-Secondary Educational Institutional Tariff," which continues the terms and conditions of the license agreement we had prior to Access Copyright's filing for a new Tariff. Though Queen's is not obligated to operate under this license, we have nonetheless decided to do so to buy ourselves some time while preparing to transition towards operating license-free, likely at the end of August of this year. In the meantime, the interim Tariff provides us with a safety net.

The Copyright Working Group will meet again mid-February to discuss a policy recently issued by the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC), which restricts the range of activities which would normally fall under 'fair dealing'. The purpose of the new AUCC policy is to protect the University from copyright infringement challenges and to support the legal opposition to Access Copyright's proposed Tariff. At the same time, however, the AUCC's risk-averse position provides an overly conservative interpretation of fair dealings, which could, as a result, constrain faculty members' ability to provide students with single-use copies (particularly problematic for research at the post-graduate level), and further defer the costs of reprography onto students. After attending a day-long workshop on copyright, held by Queen's University Engineering Society Services Inc. (QUESSI) last month, I am only more convinced that the AUCC's policy is overreaching and hazardous, particularly for the work many of us do as post-graduates.

Respectfully submitted,

Anne-Marie Grondin

Correction on New Fee System for Graduate Students

The Office of the Registrar clarified the concerns we raised last month about PeopleSoft's impact on graduate student tuition due dates. Due dates for tuition will not change with PeopleSoft, even for students who are not on debit memo. Tuition will still be due each term.

Advisor Support Group

The Student Advisor Support Group will run twice this term (Feb & March 10, Thursdays @ 5:00, hosted by the Ban Righ Centre). Please advertise this event in your departments. Any SGPS member is invited to a friendly and confidential circle of colleagues and Student Advisors to discuss best practices of working and communicating with faculty – including but not limited to graduate supervisors.

GSEC

The Graduate Studies Executive Council tabled a number of items at the end of its February meeting last week. The Chair reported on Principal Woolf's letter sent to Ottawa, which raises concerns over recent changes to citizenship criteria for current students studying in Canada from abroad. Right now, students cannot request residency during studies but may do so upon graduation. Deputy Minister Neil Yeats – the chair reported – indicated that this new policy was an unanticipated outcome of other changes to citizenship application regulations. The chair, Dean Brouwer, also reported on a new agreement Queen's University signed with Saudi Arabia regarding graduate students from Saudi studying at Queen's. The agreement creates a number of positions for students to pursue research at the university fully-funded, including living expenses (incl. UHIP) and, in some cases, compensation to Queen's for research costs tied to the student's department.

At the meeting, GSEC members passed a number of interesting items, including a draft for a program proposal from the Faculty of Engineering and Applied Science, the "Graduate Diploma Graduate Diploma in Community Relations for the Extractive Industries (GDCOMREL)." Interestingly, while the majority of students to this program, the Faculty expects, will be professionals corporately funded, the proposal mentions: "Depending upon the net revenues from the program, at least one tuition bursary (funded out of net revenues by the The Robert M. Buchan Department of Mining) will be offered to enable individuals (such as members of aboriginal and remote communities) who are not funded by employers to enroll in the program." When we inquired about the faculty's optimism whether this bursary would come to fruition, the faculty representative suggested that it seem very likely. The Faculty is committing to the above bursary, in addition to possible further bursaries funded by corporate dollars. I suggest the next VP Graduate or President follow up on this possibility when the program proposal returns to GSEC for final approval.

Free Queen's

I'm very pleased to announce the workshop instructors for this year's Free Queen's course: Kalanthe Khaiat, Carolyn Slattery, Carolyn Hoessler, Tim McIntyre & Sarah Tsiang, Maryanne Laurico, Paul Uy, and AnneMarie Grondin. The instructors come from a range of schools and departments – including Law, Medicine, Education, and the Faculty of Arts & Science – and submitted very strong class proposals. We look forward to giving them the opportunity to teach on their commendable topics in the Kingston community. We are planning begin weekly classes (hosted by KEYS, Kingston Employment and Youth Services) on Feb 24th. Our Executive Director and myself will work with KEYS to publicize the workshops in the community. If you would like to help, please email vpg@sgps.ca.

Academic Affairs Committee

Please see the AASC's separate report this month for the committee's activities.

Respectfully submitted,
VP Graduate,
Daniel Moore

ESS

Things are moving very well on the ESS Senator issue. I am also working on some other issues and hoping to assist them with some constitutional changes within their society that will facilitate our working relationship, etc.

LSS

I continue to work on the LSS report. I have also been meeting with individuals within the LSS to discuss law student issues, ways in which we as an organization may be of assistance and am setting up meetings within the law school to help entrench some lines of communication, etc.

Grad Club

A sound system and cameras have been installed to improve sound, decrease rental fees and address some areas of concern regarding safety and labour code requirements. These are great steps.

Human Resources

HR issues are positively incessant at the moment. It is becoming readily apparent that there is a need for increased procedures, feedback and discretion within the human resources “department” of our organization to act on these matters. The HRSC has met and is starting to work on implementing contracts, disciplinary procedures, memos regarding various HR issues and the like.

Respectfully submitted,
Shaughnessy Hawkins

Things progressed well over the last month and I feel as though the last seven plus months of discussions/negotiations and compromises have finally come into fruition.

SLC Discussions- The SLC Operation and Management contract as well as the new Constitution which are both attached for discussion and voting on at the meeting. These documents represent months (even years) of work and negotiations between the three stakeholders in the SLC-the SGPS, the AMS and University administration. I encourage all of you to thoroughly review the documents before our council meeting.

Finance & Services Committee-The Committee met and reviewed the fees that are to be voted on at council as well as the fees that need to go before the entire membership for referendum. A number of our members (in particular from Education) venture out of Canada to participate in various practicums teaching children in areas that lack school supplies. In the hopes of assisting these children to access education and develop a love of learning, I am hoping to begin a program that will allow our members to drop off any unused/unwanted (even gently used) school supplies at the SGPS office. If you have any paper, pens, pencils, erasers, pencil crayons/sharpeners, etc... that you do not use/need/want, please pop them in and drop them off at the SGPS office so we can pass these goodies on to those who can definitely use them. There will be a box set up at the office to facilitate these drop offs.

Space-I am hopeful that we will be moving our furniture into the new offices the beginning of February. The space is bright and I am looking forward to settling in just in time for the new Executive.

Retail Committee-The retail committee (SGPS, AMS and University Administration) have begun the preliminary meetings with a retail broker. It is anticipated that we will have retailers in the Queen's Centre in the near future.

Family Events-We are planning an event for February. Stay tuned to the SGPS newsletters and website for more information and details.

QTalks-I have met with the Alumni Association who is anxious to participate with us in promoting Graduate and Professional students. We are putting together a schedule for a series of talks where our members can share their research with each other, the community (Queen's and Kingston generally) as well as exchange ideas with Queen's Alumni. Although we are still in the preliminary planning stages, I welcome anyone who may be interested in presenting their work/ideas/work in progress to contact me vpfs@sgps.ca to arrange for a time for you to present. This is an exciting opportunity for all of us and I am eager to get things started.

Respectfully submitted,

Jillian Burford-Grinnell
VP Finance and Services

Dear Councilors,

Council/Committee Meetings

A number of important initiatives have come out of my committee meetings this month. The Queen's Accessibility Committee has given its endorsement of a Queen's proposal for the federal Enabling Accessibility Fund. The proposal calls for the renovation of (i.e. making accessible) Duncan MacArthur Hall, which was one of the only buildings at Queen's that met the EAF criteria of already having money in the bank for the project and of being heavily utilized by the community outside the university. This proposal also has the support of Physical Plan Services and VP Caroline Davis. I have also volunteered for two QAC subcommittees/working groups, and will be at meetings on Monday, February 7th for the Steve Cutway Accessibility Award committee and the Annual Accessibility Planning meeting. I will have more information from these meetings for Council on the 8th.

I've also been working with our Executive Director Sean Richards to create mechanisms to ensure all our students who experience a wide range of abilities are paying only for the services that can be utilized. To this end, we are working on an automatic opt-out system for students registered with Disability Services who are unable to participate in using the services of Kingston Transit and our Recreation Fee. Please let your respective departments know that these opt-outs are a possibility, and if someone thinks he/she/ze may benefit from this opt-out, please get in touch with me.

The Council on Employment Equity meeting was cancelled this week due to an overwhelming number of regrets, but the Positive Space steering committee met to chart a way forward for this coming semester. This Committee, along with OPIRG Kingston, have created an OPIRG Positive Space Award, which goes to a fulltime undergraduate or graduate student in the Queen's community who has contributed significantly to the recognition and celebration of sexual and gender diversity. For more information please visit:

<http://queenssus.com/2011/01/13/1092/>. The deadline for nominations is February 18, 2011. The award recipient will be announced at the Opening Ceremony for Queen's Pride Week, to be held on March 14th at 2:30pm. Finally, the Transsexual/Transgender Policy Group's proposed Gender Neutral Washroom Policy has been endorsed by both the Senate Education Equity Committee (SEEC) and the Council on Employment Equity (CEE). The Group will be working with Campus Planning in the near future for implementation of this proposal.

We will be holding our next Equity Issues Standing Committee meeting soon. We have two vacancies on this committee for Council members, so please get in touch with me at equity@sgps.ca if you are interested in working with us.

Campaigns and SGPS Internal

I have spent significant time this month working on GREB revisions for our Accent Discrimination Campaign and it looks like we'll be able to get into full research swing in the near future.

The Equity Team is also engaging with the AMS and Heidi Penning of the Equity Office to plan a number of events for Disability Awareness Month (which is March). Specifically, we are working on a joint interview for OnQ to raise awareness of accessibility issues on campus, and we are speaking with a graduate student representative on the AMS Able publication to see if we can assist in their work. If you'd like to get involved please contact me.

Respectfully submitted,

Carolyn Prouse
Equity Commissioner

Hello All,

The SGPS social team is excited to inform you of the great events that we're going to be holding this month. Our events range from a variety of purely social, athletic and healthy living events. We hope to see everyone come out and interact with the diverse community that is our SGPS members.

Speed Meeting

As our most popular Orientation week event, the SGPS Social team is organizing another round of Speed Meeting to kick off the 2011 term. This event will take place on Tuesday, February 8th at the Grizzly Grill (395 Princess st) from 7:00-10:00pm. Come out for a chance to meet other professional & graduate students in a speed meeting fashion, similar to speed dating minus the romantic agenda and with an added twist of fun. The number participants for this event will be limited due to capacity issues, thus register promptly at the SGPS office (or online <http://www.sgps.ca/events/social.html>) before we reach capacity. The cost of the event is \$10, which will include appetizers and a free drink. For information please contact us at social@sgps.ca

Queen's got talent

The SGPS and ESS are excited to welcome you to the first annual Queen's Got Talent competition! We have a very entertaining line up of talented individuals for your viewing pleasure. There will be a variety of unique acts, including singing, dancing and memory tricks. We will also be handing out some great door prizes for our audience members. The show will take place on Tuesday the 1st of February at Duncan McArthur Auditorium (West Campus) from 6pm to 9:00 pm.

SGPS Billiard Tournament

The SGPS is excited to be hosting our second annual Billiards tournament at the Grizzly Grill (935 Princess st). Come join us for an entertaining night of billiards and a chance to mingle and get to know your fellow SGPS members. We will have some great prizes for the top players, and a couple of participation prizes. This event will take place on Wednesday the 16th of February, from 6:30-9:30 pm.

Lastly, the social team would love to hear your feedback regarding the types of events we are organizing and ways we can make them more appealing to our SGPS members. If you have any general inquiries or feedback don't hesitate to contact us at social@sgps.ca.

Respectfully Submitted,

Abdullahi Abunafeesa
Social Commissioner
(social@sgps.ca)

SGPS Computer Network

- I have started the process of purchasing the necessary hardware for our new office space. Once the space is secure, I will begin installing the new hardware.
- I have installed 3 new software components to our mail/wiki server. The new software allows users to change their password remotely, allows for vacation messages for e-mail and allows the application of server-side e-mail rules. The server-side e-mail rules are most useful for users that access their e-mail via the webmail engine.
- I have started the process of migrating data from older computers to newer computers. The purpose of this is to ensure the most used computers are the fastest and most reliable.
- We have reached a point where it would be a good idea to have a backup mail/wiki server. This would make sure we would be quick to replace our main server in case of server failure. It would also allow us to have a staging server to test software updates and do server development (which is not a good idea on a production server). I will speak more about this at an upcoming Council meeting.

SGPS Website

- I have updated the SSL certificate on our mail/wiki server. The new certificate is set to expire in January of 2013.
- I have started to install the necessary components to allow our public website to be automatically backed-up to an off-site server. This will ensure there is an up-to-date backup of our website in case of serious office damage (such as a fire).
- I have started work on a sub-section of our website for "The Lamp", which will use the SGPS webserver to post their journal online. More details will be provided closer to the launch of the website.

SGPS Communications

- I have prepared the nomination package for the upcoming election and have posted it online. I have also created an FAQ document pertaining to the election and referendum process. As more questions come in, I will expand the FAQ document. I welcome suggestions.
- I am working to tweak a couple of our bursary applications.
- I have added some new features to our upcoming printing service. We will now have the ability to allow members to do on-site binding of their documents. We will also have specialized paper such as coloured cardstock and transparent covers. I await approval from the Finance and Services Committee to roll this out to the membership.
- I am working to update our transition documents on our wiki in preparation for the new Executive and Staff.
- I continue to work on the election server, which will run the upcoming election. I anticipate having a test instance of the election in the next week or two. Please contact me if you are interested in helping with the testing phase.

Respectfully submitted,
Sean Richards – info@sgps.ca

In January, I attended the two day Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations' conference in Toronto on the globalization of higher education in Canada. This conference consisted of approximately 200 people from universities and related organizations across Ontario, including administration and staff members, faculty, delegates from student governments, union representatives, and more. Public opinion and government policies on internationalization, as well as the experiences of students and faculty both in Canada and abroad were some of the main topics that were discussed at the conference. While no official action plan was set in motion conference participants widely agreed that more communication on the issues was needed. A report was submitted to the SGPS and may be viewed by request to isc@sgps.ca.

As a member of the Equity Team's Accent Discrimination campaign, I gave feedback on the GREB application that is currently underway, which will help access levels accent discrimination on Queen's campus. As a member of this group, my initial project was to liaise with individuals on campus who would be able to provide further insight into areas of accent discrimination. I am currently trying to organize a meeting with a staff member at Health, Counselling and Disability Services in order to gain more insight into the processes of accent discrimination on campus. I worked to secure a meeting with the International Students' Standing Committee, but again it was difficult to coordinate the Committee's members. It appears that the Committee will meet in early February to develop a foundation for Committee's future. In early January, I met with Amir to communicate about projects for the coming term. As a result of that meeting I had the opportunity to provide feedback on Amir's policy recommendations to redefine the International Students' Coordinator positions for the incoming coordinators. I promoted several events to International Students via the SGPS' Facebook page, particularly, one of QUIC's international lunches and Principle Wolfe's visit to QUIC. Finally, I followed up with the Kingston Immigration Partnership (KIP) session in December by meeting with Project Supervisor Scott Clerk as well as one of the Council's Co-Chairs, Monica Stewart, to better understand the role in which international students will play in KIP's Strategic Action Plan.

During the month of February I intend to work more closely with the International Students' Standing Committee in an effort to solidify the Committee's role within the SGPS and the Queen's community at large.

Respectfully,

Becky Pero
ISC

Recyclemania 2011 Starts!

Queen's is participating in Recyclemania 2011 this year – Recyclemania is an international competition with over 600 participating schools in the North America and UK taking part. The event provides colleges and universities with a vehicle for promoting their campus recycling programs and their waste reduction efforts. The event is spearheaded by the Queen's Sustainability Office, but both AMS and our SGPS Sustainability Offices are helping facilitate and organize the event. I have booked tables in JDUC and Queen's Center for Info Sessions which will be used to inform the campus community about the event and increase awareness about recycling methods on campus. There will also be a waste audit performed, Solar Compactor set up near Queen's Center, Trash to Art project organized by Environmental Studies Master's students, and Paper Purge / recycling parties. We have also created a facebook page and recorded an ad for CFRC. Recyclemania lasts till April 2011

Bike Shop @ Queen's

We have had another productive meeting Jan 27th working to establish a bike repair shop on campus. It would be a joint enterprise between AMS and SGPS offices, as well as other stakeholders who would like to be part of it: Yellow Bike Action, MCRC, Sustainability Office, Bike/ Cycle groups and store owners, etc. Currently we are developing the organizational structure, working out any liability/ insurance issues, funding options (AMS, SGPS, Principal's Innovation Fund etc), outsourcing for tools and other items. We have been granted a free location for the shop in MacGilvery-Brown which is not ideal given the fact it is located down 2 flights of stairs, but it is a free spot and we are looking into a system that would make it easier wheeling in bikes. We are working toward a possible move-in date for February 28th to set up the interior and get the place going. More info to come in February!

Queen's Sustainability Advisory Committee - QSAC

Our last QSAC meeting was also held in January. Several items were part of the adgenda:

- Trayless Dining is being assessed for a green light – MCRC is polling students' feedback and any info to try to set up a system that would not inconvenience the students but cut down on food waste and save water.
- Solar Project is still a go, the administration is negotiating a contract and in meantime Johnson Controls is doing physical feasibility assessment and preparing paperwork to submit to the OPA as soon as possible
- The Spring Anniversary of Queen's signing Climate Change agreement is almost here and this includes preparing a GHG curbing plan. The GHG working group which I am part of will be developing strategies present to the committee in April.
- Student Thesis 4th year examined attitudes in residences to gauge whether taking part in sustainability events helped raise personal environmental awareness – the result was a no. We are to find out who was the sample group and how many students took part. To get more info on how the research was done the student will present at the next QSAC meeting.
- An issue with possible pigeon poisoning on campus by a chemical Avitrol – given that several species at risk birds also frequent Queen's campus (Pelegrine Falcon, Chimney Swift and Common Nighthawk) this could potentially be an issue and will be looked into by the PP Services.

Dear Council Members,

I would like to apologize for not having been more productive equity-wise this past month. I have only some very brief updates.

1. Understanding Each Other: GREB approval for this projects is pending some changes that have yet to be made to our application, which is a process delayed by the current busy-ness of all researchers. As a result, the project will be operating about a month behind anticipated schedule.
2. Website: I have created a calendar for February that should be available in PDF form. Following a meeting with a student dedicated to raising awareness of accessibility resources at Queen's, I have added to the Accessibility Resources list.
3. I am in the process of (and perhaps by Council Meeting will have succeeded in) facilitating a transfer of funds from Accessibility Queen's to the Four Directions Aboriginal Student Centre, promised last year, but not carried out until brought to my attention.
4. Equity Committee: The winter semester membership list has been confirmed, so we expect to be meeting very soon to discuss upcoming projects/initiatives.
5. Accessibility Awareness Month (March): On Wednesday February 2nd, Carolyn and I are meeting with the Social Issues Commissioner and representatives from other groups to coordinate activities, campaigns and events throughout the month.

Technically this falls outside my Equity Coordinator responsibilities, but I am stage managing this year's double feature of Eve Ensler's *Vagina Monologues* and a newly-developed set of performance pieces to address gaps in Ensler's work, *Re-Vulva-Lutions*. I encourage all council members to consider checking out the show, which runs from Thursday February 10th to Saturday the 12th in Convocation Hall, on the second floor of Theological Hall. The SGPS has been instrumental in providing for all the production's printing needs – thanks again, Sean! We are in tech at the same time as this meeting, which is why I send my regrets for not being in attendance.

Respectfully submitted,

Kalanthe Khaiat
Equity Coordinator

Highlights of the Principal and Provost's Reports

- The Principal met with the Ontario Minister of Training, Colleges, and Universities on a tour of universities. Discussed issues of tuition fees and the ability to transfer credits between institutions.
- The Ministry is pushing for a better transfer system, and Queens' must formulate a response that takes into account our low capacity in the upper division.
- Made a strong pitch to the minister about the proposed teaching complex to be built at Union and Division.
- Continuing to meet in Ottawa and internationally, this time on a trip to Australia, to discuss internationalization. Hopes to learn from the positive and negative experiences of similar sized institutions in Australia.
- The Provost reported that the Enrolment Planning Task Force is recommending a growth of 100 students, which puts us at capacity.
- They have also released a preliminary long-term enrolment report which is available and open to feedback.
- The end of year financial update forecasts a \$4.6 million shortfall, higher than the \$3.8 predicted. It is available at: www.queensu.ca/financialupdate.
- There will also be a completed Equity Report released soon.

Senate Academic Plan Task Force (SAPTF)

- As per the Senate motion in November, a task force composed of three faculty, one undergraduate student, one graduate or professional student, one staff member, one dean, and a chair was created. Their mission is to draw on existing reports, consult broadly with the Queen's community, and draft an Academic Plan that will guide the university's academic, research, and spending priorities.
- The committee has started meeting and has made early progress on a framework for how to proceed and where to focus in the plan.
- I was selected as the graduate and professional student representative on this committee and will be reaching out in the coming weeks to connect with the concerns and ideas of my fellow graduate and professional students.

Reports of Committees

- The Senate Advisory Research Committee is currently working on the regular review of the university's long-term Strategic Research Plan as mandated by the provincial government. This plan aims to lay out the university's research goals and will be consulting broadly across the university.

Respectfully Submitted,

Iain Reeve

Below updates Council on the main agenda items the Academic Affairs Committee's January meeting.

Grade Change

The Acting Director of the Centre for Teaching and Learning attended to discuss the university's transition to the grade-point scale, which the school implements May 2011. While much student discussion on the change has come from undergraduates, the AASC and the Director of the CTL feel that graduate students – especially as TAs – will be invaluable to a smooth transition. The Senate Committee on Academic Procedures delineates the percentage value of letter grades and the meaning of non-evaluative grades (http://www.queensu.ca/secretariat/senate/Apr22_10/SCAPRpt.pdf), but remains silent on how to make the transition. While it's feasible for departments and individual markers to convert percentile grades onto the grade-point system, following SCAP's rubric, the new scale values letter grades differently than percentages. Percentage scores near letter-grade thresholds, for instance, do not translate into a grading system that amalgamates multiple percentage scores into single categories. There is also a new non-evaluative grade (FR: Failure with Review), which will likely require new policies at the department, faculty, and school levels. According to its report to Senate, "SCAP urges instructors, departments, and Faculties/Schools to be sensitive to any potential impact from the grading change and to strive to ensure that continuing students are not disadvantaged by the changes." Similarly, our Academic Affairs Committee encourages TAs to practice care and attention to the ways they evaluate their student peers. Moreover, we encourage all SGSP members to participate in the transition in home departments as they are able. Graduate and professional students too will see changes in the way they are evaluated. With less room for differentiation among A-class students, departments, faculties, and schools will need to re-evaluate criteria for merit-based awards. In the case of Tri-Colour Council Awards, nomination committees will likely place more emphasis on grant proposals and other methods of criteria, with less differentiation between course marks available. (The university has struck a special committee to look into award criteria.)

RA Employment Option

AASC members have tirelessly been in communication with the School of Graduate Studies regarding a new option for RAs to claim stipendiary rather than employee status. We hope to present a report and a FAQ about the new option to Council and SGPS members very shortly.

MA & PhD Progress Reports

The AASC has been collecting graduate-student progress reports from a number of departments. We hope to analyze the many ways departments at Queen's (and elsewhere) evaluate and document graduate student degree progress. Our goal is to create greater awareness among our membership about how progress reports function, how they impact degree completion, and determine relative standing of students within a department. If you would like to participate in this study, feel free to contact the VP Graduate @ vpg@sgps.ca.

Respectfully submitted,
Academic Affairs Standing Committee
(Chair, VP Graduate)

Hello Council,

We apologize for our lack of report last Council Meeting, over the holidays time just seems to fly and the deadline came and went. Lucky for us, not too much went on and we didn't have a lot to say, but we sure do now!

We have a lot of details to share with you about our upcoming conference. The Second Annual Queen's Graduate Computing Society Conference will be happening on Friday, March 11, 2011 and Saturday, March 12, 2011. We have an expanded program from last year's conference and are very excited to have planning underway.

Participation from members of the SGPS is welcome, just ensure you visit the webpage to register, and be aware of the registration fee (amount TBD).

The tentative schedule for the conference is as follows:

Friday

Time	Location	Event
3:30-3:45pm	Bio 1103	Opening Ceremonies and Address by Conference Chair
3:45-4:30	Bio 1103	Keynote Speaker – Dr Scott Knight
4:30-6:00pm	Grad Club	Afternoon Social
6:30-8:30pm	WLH 310	Programming Competition

Saturday

Time	Location	Event
9:00am	Bio Sci Atrium	Registration and Morning Refreshments
9:45-10:30am	BioSci 1102	Opening Speaker – Speaker TBD
10:30-11:30am	Atrium	Poster Display Session
11:30am-12:30pm	Atrium	Lunch and Break
12:30-3:00pm	1102 & 1103	Short Talks – Final Schedule and Speakers TBD
3:00-4:00pm	1102	Panel Discussion
4:15-5:00pm	1102	Final Speaker – Speaker TBD
5:00-5:30pm	1102	Closing Ceremonies

More details, and the registration form will be available on the conference website (currently under construction), which is <http://ggcsc.cs.queensu.ca>.

If you have any questions, feel free to contact us. See you at council!

Respectfully submitted,

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