

Year Plan Update

To start the New Year, it is important to check in on the priorities I set at the beginning of the year to see what progress has been met on the goals I set at the start of my term.

- **Internal Review:** We are in the process of reviewing the contracts of the SGPS staff. In addition, the recent departure of the Executive Assistant will allow us to determine the best way to craft this position in advance of any new hiring.
- **Council Working Group:** The group's initial report was delivered at December Council. A pilot project of many of the recommendations will be occurring over the next few months before a final report is drafted for the Annual General Meeting.
- **Communications Strategy:** My review of our communications procedures led to the creation and hiring of the new Communications Coordinator position that will assist us in creating more innovative and effective communications and outreach strategies.
- **Ontario Municipal Board Appeal:** As noted in the previous months, our OMB appeal was successful and I am now working to spread the word to other universities in hopes that our decision can be an effective precedent for other university communities.
- **Examining Expansion of the SGPS Membership:** In the coming month we will be opening talks with departments on campus that we feel may be better represented under the SGPS umbrella.
- **Possible New Services:** We have successfully negotiated for new funds to be directed to the SGPS from the university's Coke Exclusivity Fund. This will allow us to either expand existing grant programs or create new ones. My hope is that the deliberative session of Council today will generate possibilities for where to direct these funds.
- **Representation Goals:** Most notable here are gains in the realm of tuition where we continue to negotiate with the university to make tuition fees more stable, predictable, and clear for students, while also adjusting tuition timetables to fit the needs of graduate and professional students. At the same time I have begun discussions to ensure improved university-based housing options. Also, I have engaged in discussions aimed at ensuring the academic integrity of Queen's programs while also increasing the versatility and flexibility of graduate degrees.

Rector Elections

On January 28th and 29th Queen's students will elect a new Rector. Since the Rector represents graduate and professional students as well as undergraduate students I strongly encourage all SGPS members to engage with the campaign from the 17th-27th of January, attend the all candidates' debate, ask the Rector candidates questions, and vote. It is essential that the Rector be aware of graduate and professional student issues and the SGPS will be working with whoever is elected to ensure this.

Collective Agreement

A few weeks ago the members of PSAC 901 voted to approve the collective agreement that was negotiated by the bargaining team over many previous months. The agreement made some important gains for TAs and TFs and I would like to applaud the work of the PSAC team for their hard work. From here it is important for all graduate TAs and TFs to familiarize themselves with the new CA and ensure that their departments follow the new rules. As always, PSAC and departmental stewards are a key resource if any issues are encountered.

Election Reform

I will be working this month with the CRO and some other interested parties to bring forward a series of electoral system reforms to next month's Council. The aim of these reforms is to promote greater competitiveness, engagement, and voting in SGPS elections. I'll report in more detail next month.

Student Survey

We will be instituting a new annual survey of graduate and professional students to be distributed towards the end of this semester. The purpose of this survey will be to check in on all elements of the graduate

student experience, including workload, research, teaching and supervision, services, health and wellness, and general satisfaction with Queen's and the SGPS. If anyone would like to be part of the development of this survey, or if students have ideas for issues or questions that should be included, please contact me.

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

Respectfully submitted,

Iain Reeve

President
president@sgps.ca

Dear SGPS Council Members:

Welcome back! I hope your holidays were restful and fun.

Student Advisor Program

Advisors hold office hours (JDUC Room 203) on:

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

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

Thursdays from 9:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.

Spring/Summer Term Reports:

The Advisors presented their Spring/Summer Term Reports to the School of Graduate Studies (SGS) on December 17, 2013. Recommendations included clearer communication of the appeal process on the time limit extension form as well as of the Medical Leave Bursary available through the SGS. Additionally, the Advisors requested that the SGS require departments to refer students to the Advisor Program when they receive “unsatisfactory” progress reports. Parisa, the Program’s work-study student presented information regarding the varied quality, and in some cases, lack of, graduate student handbooks that provide students with degree policies, regulations and expectations. The SGS would like to follow up with Graduate Assistants and Faculty Graduate Councils on this issue.

Time to Completion Task Force

The time to completion task force held its first meeting on December 16. The group had an initial discussion and reviewed key documents including the policies and degree completion data. There is a consensus that the general barriers to degree completion must be better understood. The Task Force will make recommendations to the Graduate Studies Executive Council (GSEC) and Dean Brouwer by the end of Winter Term 2014. The group’s next meeting will be held on January 13.

Arts and Science Faculty Board

At the last meeting of Faculty Board for Arts and Science, Jordan Morelli gave notice that he will be introducing a motion at the **January 17 Faculty Board meeting** that the Board “move into Committee of the Whole to discuss the implications for students and faculty within the Faculty of Arts & Science of the School of Graduate Studies’ new Time to Completion policy”. I hope to mobilize a strong turnout of faculty and students who have strong views on this topic so that a productive discussion occurs at the Board meeting. **If you are a student in the Faculty of Arts and Science, please consider attending the meeting on Friday 17 January at 3:30pm in room 001 of MacDonald Hall.**

Graduate Councils and Committees

I will attend several Faculty Graduate Council meetings this month to get a better sense of how these Councils operate, what items are discussed, and to ultimately provide better insight and support to student members sitting on these Councils.

Academic Affairs Standing Committee

The Academic Affairs Standing Committee will meet at the end of January to plan for the term.

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

Respectfully,

Becky Pero

VP Graduate
vpg@sgps.ca

Senate Committee on Non-Academic Discipline (SONAD)

SONAD has expressed concern with the SGPS's approach to jurisdiction; our approach sees us find that cases are not within our jurisdiction when they have already been addressed by another campus NAD system or when they are better handled by police services. The SGPS executive does not think that this is a problem.

Human Resources

Sadly, our Executive Assistant Anne-Marie has moved on. We wish her all the best in her new endeavors. We will be performing a review of this position and posting in the near future.

Annual reviews were conducted for staff members.

Human Resources Committee

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

Professional Students' Standing Committee

I was unable to schedule a meeting time that facilitated all the committee members for December. I will try to reschedule for January.

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

Respectfully submitted,

Cody Kolsteren Yorke

VP Professional
vpp@sgps.ca

Dear SGPS Council Members and Members-At-Large,

Not much to report for the month of December!

I co-sponsored/co-organized a celebration/meet and greet with PSAC 901 (TA/TF union) that was very well attended. As you may know PSAC 901 recently ratified a new TA/TF collective agreement. That was good news for the SGPS as it means a lot more money towards our benefit package through our joint MOA. If you haven't seen the new CA yet I suggest dropping in or messaging PSAC 901 for more information.

This month I have motion going forward in support of the Quebec University Students Federation's campaign which recommends that the Indirect Cost Program increases its refund to 40%. You can see the attached letter and motion for more details.

Happy January! I'm looking forward to a great ending to my term, the wrapping up of initiatives I have been working on all term and I just might have some new surprises in the works.

Thanks,

Meagan Crane

VP Campaigns & Community Affairs
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The month of December, despite it being short was incredibly busy. The Holiday Assistance Program was able to assist over 20 student parent families this year. I want to take a moment to thank all of our donors & the council as well for making this possible. I spent the week of December 16-20 requesting and receiving donations as well as putting the goodies together to allocate to the various student families.

The finance & services committee continued to adjudicate emergency student aid bursaries, dental bursaries and Grant applications.

I am delighted to confirm that we have negotiated a plan with PSAC 901 with respect to our health and dental plan as well as our bursary programs. More information on this endeavor will follow next month at the latest.

Apologies for the short report but given we were essentially off for three weeks, I don't have much more to report this month.

Respectfully submitted,

Jillian Burford-Grinnell

VP Finance and Services
vpfs@sgps.ca

Hello Council and Members-at-Large,

Welcome back & Happy New Year – I hope that you all enjoyed the holiday! As promised at our last Council meeting, I will report on the activities of the Board during the December 6/7th weekend meeting. Participating in decisions surrounding Queen's strategic moves is something that I find very exciting, and a role I am honoured to hold on behalf of Graduate and Professional students. As always, I have attended every meeting to date and feel well versed in the issues Queen's faces.

As many of you may be aware, the Ministry of Training, Colleges, and Universities (MTCU) is initiating a system-wide planning exercise which involved the submission of a Proposed Mandate Statement by Queen's. This occurred in early October 2012, and the province has just released its Differentiation Policy Framework and invited all institutions to update their submissions. At the time of this writing, our updated statement will have been submitted. One of the components Queen's has integrated is the expansion of graduate credentials. This is a particularly exciting prospect as these credentials will include professional study in areas including the social sciences, humanities, and the physical sciences. This may dovetail with changes to admission requirements to accommodate these new graduate certificate programs.

The Library and Archives Master Plan has been in the works for quite a while now and will guide the development of Queen's Library and Archives facilities over the next 20 years. The consultation process began in May 2012, and passed through Senate in October 2013. There are a few key elements I would like to bring to your attention. Firstly, there is substantial focus on increasing the amount and range of learning space that exists in our current libraries, and this will be accomplished through some archiving activities and construction work. An overhaul of the archiving program will also be undertaken to improve stewardship of our research collections, which I am sure our humanities/social science members will be delighted about! The scope of the plan is not limited to libraries only, and will also include the creation of new small clusters of study spaces across campus, connected through a virtual Library Information Network at Queen's (LINQ). This plan was met with Board approval, and will be undertaken through fundraising initiatives in alignment with the *Initiative Campaign*.

The Campus Master Plan was also presented once again, and will conclude in the Spring of 2014. Phases I-III are complete, and this plan should guide how the university evolves over the next 10-15 years. I found the presentation to be quite informative, and certainly appreciated how the plan took into consideration our evolving financial situation. The final Master Plan is scheduled to be completed in March 2014. I have copies of the panels which were on display should any SGPS member wish to take a look.

Owing to numerous confidentiality issues, there are a number of items which I am unable to report on. However, let me say the following – there is no question that Queen's has faced financial hardship over the past few years. The development of the new budget model has certainly helped to alleviate some of these pressures, however it remains to be seen how the changing financial structure at Queen's affects Faculties and Departments. The impact of this budget model rests not only in the hands of the Provost, but also in the hands of Deans and Department heads, so I anticipate that a spectrum of effects will be felt across campus. I would like to convey to the membership that our financial pressures come from a number of angles, and without being too cryptic, we are attacking this problem on a number of fronts. I am confident that both the Board, and the administration, are on the correct path to improving our financial situation and ensuring that Queen's will remain a competitive institution in the coming years.

Once again, Happy New Year to all. It has been a pleasure serving as your Trustee and I certainly hope to be re-elected in the coming year to serve a further term.

Respectfully submitted,

James MacLeod

Speaker & Trustee
speaker@sgps.ca

Dear SGPS Council and Members-At-Large,

Happy New Year 2014! I hope you enjoyed all the festivities of the season and had a chance to spend some time with family and friends over the holidays.

Here is a brief update:

1. Senate Meeting on December 2nd, 2013

Here are a few highlights of the senate meeting (<http://www.queensu.ca/secretariat/senate/agendasminutes.html>):

- Principal Woolf has mentioned about the possibility of a new funding opportunity (Advantage Canada Research Excellence (ACRE) Fund). This is designed to attract and help world-class technological entrepreneurs in Canada. I will provide more updates possibly in my next council report.
- There was a discussion around Strategic Mandate Agreements which is mainly about universities differentiation based on their programs' strengths. I also asked Dean Brouwer, during the Graduate Student Executive Council (GSEC) meeting, about the likelihood of taking university rankings into account towards differentiation. The response was negative and different criteria set by the ministry will be used.
- Provost reports on the Ellis hall renovations to create active learning spaces. When the project is completed, there will be three more classrooms with various types of learning technologies. More information can be found here: <http://queensu.ca/activelearningspaces/>
- I am very excited to let you know that Queen's board of trustees unanimously approves Library and Archives Master Plan (LAMP) in December 2013. "The Library and Archives Master Plan will guide the development of Queen's Library and Archives facilities over the next twenty years, in the context of the University's strategic framework". More information can be found here: <http://www.queensu.ca/connect/lamp/>

2. Graduate Student Executive Council (GSEC) Meeting on December 12th, 2013

- There will be some renovation work in the school of graduate studies (SGS) main office (Room 425 Gordon Hall), therefore this might adversely affect the thesis defence sessions. This is scheduled to be finished by the end of January 2014.
- We were told that the internal review and adjudication for the Canadian Graduate Scholarship-Masters (CGS-M) will be between January 15th and February 14th, 2014.

3. GSEC Time to Completion (TTC) Task Force meeting on December 16th, 2013

- Becky Pero (VP Graduate) and I attended this meeting. There were discussions around different TTC barriers. Also, I suggested conducting another survey for supervisors to collect their opinions about various TTC barriers. We will meet twice in January and February 2014. I will provide you with more updates as we proceed.

4. Mental Health Working Group

- As we are fast approaching the deadline, I would like to help promote a new fund for student-led mental health initiatives established by the Jack project at Queen's. The Jack project at Queen's Student initiative fund provides funding opportunities starting in fall 2013 for projects and initiatives that support student health and wellness, specifically on mental health. The deadline for application submission for

events and activities scheduled after February 2014 is **February 1, 2014**. I would be happy to help with your application submission, etc. All details can be found here <http://queensu.ca/studentaffairs/fundsandawards/TJPSIF.html>.

Respectfully submitted,

Hamid Falahati

Graduate Student Senator
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Society of Graduate and Professional Students
Report of the Social Commissioner
January 2014

Dear SGPS Council,

Happy New Year!

The Social Team started the New Year off by co-hosting a pub night at the Grad Club with the Education Student Society, as part of their Winter Welcome Week on Monday January 6. Unfortunately due to extremely cold weather, the turnout was lower than expected. Those that did attend though had a great time, and we provided food and drinks for the students.

The Social Team has lots of great ideas planned for the winter semester, including a games night and Grad Club bingo (or open mic) night in January, a ski trip in early February (either at Calabogie or Mount Pakenham), curling in March, mixers, movie nights, and of course our regular Friday night sports.

Respectfully submitted,

Margaux MacDonald

Social Commissioner
social@sgps.ca

SGPS Computer Network

- I am working with the CFS to update the registrant name on our domain. Queen's requires a change to the registrant name in order to maintain compliance with our secure certificate provider. The CFS has yet to complete this rather simple request.
- I have completed the necessary work to test and quality assure a new server framework that we will use to update our mail and wiki server. I am in the process of installing the new framework.
- I have installed OS X 10.9 on 2 test machines in the office and everything is working smoothly. I anticipate being able to update other machines in the near future.
- Over the holiday break, there were several power outages due to the winter weather we experienced. The mail/calendar/wiki server was fine but unfortunately our public webserver did not fare as well. I came in over the break and fixed the webserver. Everything is working as expected at this point.

SGPS Website

- I am working to update the website with details for 2014 including new forms and pricing details for our health and dental plan.

Communications

- I am working on the notice boards in the JDUC and MacCorry with a hope to be completed in January.
- I am working to update the signage at our office to make sure people that visit our office are aware of our services.
- Our office reception area has been totally redone. We are very pleased with the new layout and hope members experience improved service and accessibility.
- Our Communications Coordinator, Ian, is organizing a series of weekly SGPS coffee hours across campus in order to foster awareness of and involvement in the SGPS.
- Ian is consulting with SGPS President Iain Reeve about the possibility of producing a series of informational videos about the SGPS to communicate its activities, initiatives and services to its members.
- Ian is keeping a detailed log of his activities in order to help define the role and duties of the Communications Coordinator position.
- Ian and I are working on a new series for our E-Newsletter that will better define what SGPS members are paying for and what services they may use. For example, exactly what does your Athletics & Recreation fee actually get you?

Respectfully submitted,
Sean Richards - info@sgps.ca

Hello Everyone,

Happy New Year! As the new Equity Commissioner for the SGPS, I am very excited to be on board. I still have some catching up to do in terms of transitioning myself into some of my roles (eg. Committee memberships) but that will hopefully transpire within the next few weeks as the University gets back into its regular schedule.

In the meantime, I had a chance to catch up before the holidays with Colleen Webber, Equity Coordinator and we have tentatively planned a few activities for the upcoming semester. As this is a tentative schedule pending budget, space, speaker availabilities, etc it may be preemptive to share the details but generally, we are planning activities to align with other University events:

January: Islam Awareness Month
February- Black History Month
March- International Women's Week
April- Disabilities Awareness Month
May- Women's Breakfast
June/July- LGBTQ, Aboriginal issues events

It may be beneficial to align our activities with University events not only to share costs and raise awareness, but also to develop a stronger relationship and collaborate with other University groups/offices/teams/etc. We are also trying to engage the Kingston community in as many of our events as possible. If you have any ideas or suggestions on how we can best do this, we would be thrilled to hear them. We will be having an Equity team meeting in the coming week, if you are interested in sharing your wisdom or volunteering on the Team, please let me know!

My apologies for the short report, I intend on sharing a more detailed and concrete report for the next month's meeting. In the meantime, I am excited to be on board here, and I am looking forward to getting to meet some of you in the near future,

Warm Regards,

Tabasum Akseer

Equity Commissioner
equity@sgps.ca

Hello everyone!

Happy New Year! We hope everyone had a great holiday season!

The most important event we are about to launch is the Resume & Cover Letter Workshop designed explicitly for International Grad Students on January 30th, 2014 from 3:30pm to 5:00pm. The registration is available on the Career Service Website events calendar. This is the first workshop that Queen's Career Service along with SGPS and SGPS designed explicitly for international grad students. Please note that there will be a Job Fair organized by Queen's Career Service in February, 2014. We are hoping that for those international grad students who attend this workshop, can edit their resume after the workshop and bring the polished resume to the Job Fair in February. It will greatly help you to find a Canadian full-time/part-time/summer job.

Please read the workshop description below:

Seeking Canadian working experience?

The resume workshop designed explicitly for international grad students

Queen's Career Service and SGPS is cooperating to launch a resume & cover letter workshop designed explicitly for international grad students on January 30th, 2014 from 3:30pm to 5:00pm. Registration is available on the Career Service website events calendar.

This workshop is for international graduate students who want to make their resume and cover letter have a Canadian look. Please note that the resume in Canadian format is the key element to move you forward to the interview stage. The workshop will help students learn the BASICS of how to make decisions about and communicate important idea to potential employers. Students will begin to focus their documents and get a chance to articulate some of their skills and accomplishments. Examples as well as do's and don'ts will be shared. Please bring a job posting or a job description with you, as you will be using this throughout the workshop.

If you have any questions/suggestions regarding the resume & cover letter workshop, feel free to contact us. We are happy to provide more details regarding the workshop.

Tian Lu

International Student Affairs Commissioner
international@sgps.ca

Kris Singh

International Student Affairs Coordinator
isc@sgps.ca

In December I helped run the December 6th memorial along with members of other student and community groups. The event was very well-planned (evidence of all the hard work that the group put into it) and was well received by people who attended. I am continuing to work with members of this planning group to organize events for International Women's Week, which is being held the first week of March.

In December I also attended my first meeting of the Time to Completion Task Force. This was mainly an introductory meeting to review the terms of reference and set the agenda for the coming meetings. I am really looking forward to working with this committee and hopefully producing some meaningful change that will help graduate and professional students as they work their way through their studies. I will be sure to keep all SGPS members up to date on the work of the task force and bring any questions or concerns that I may have to council meetings. I will also be providing updates on the progress of the taskforce to the Senate Educational Equity Committee.

I hope everyone had a relaxing holiday and best wishes for the New Year!

Respectfully submitted,

Colleen Webber

Equity Coordinator
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