



Hello Council,

Happy New Year to everyone! I hope you were all able to take some time off while the University was closed. Business was quiet in the SGPS during much of the exam period, and here's a brief overview of what I've been up to over the last month.

Provost Advisory Committee

The final rounds of interviews for our new Provost were held in mid-December, and I am happy to announce that the Board of Trustees has approved Benoit-Antoine Bacon's appointment as Queen's next Provost and Vice-Principal (Academic). There were many strong candidates in the process, and I think that Dr. Bacon will do a good job, particularly in supporting the growth of the research enterprise at Queen's University, which will directly benefit graduate students.

Elections

I had a few meetings in December with individuals interested in running in the elections for Rector and AMS Executive. I spoke with them about the need for broad changes in the culture of graduate studies on campus and encouraged them to work with the SGPS to help students feel at home on campus and succeed in their endeavours. All individuals that I met with were very interested in strengthening the ties between their potential offices and the SGPS, and I am excited for my successors to work with them.

On that note, I would strongly encourage any SGPS members interested in running in the upcoming election to contact either myself or any of the other executive members to learn more about the positions. Executive positions are quite personally rewarding: you get to meet a lot of new people from across campus, and you get to learn a lot about how the University operates behind the curtain. Please do not hesitate to contact any of us and get more involved.

Other Matters

My work on other committees continues, with meetings of the Advisory Committee on Non-Academic Misconduct, the Severe Allergies Review Committee, and the SLC Management Board. I also met with the AMS to discuss space allocation in the JDUC, PSAC901 to discuss some outstanding obligations on our end with regards to our health and dental agreement, and a few external groups to address some outstanding corporate obligations of the Society.

As always, I would be happy to speak in more detail on any of the matters mentioned in my report, and am always willing to meet confidentially with any members to hear any concerns they may have about life on campus. Please do not hesitate to contact me.

Respectfully submitted,

Chris Cochrane
President, SGPS
president@sgps.ca



Dear Council,

Not a lot of things to report on, as everything slowed down for the holidays. I hope everyone had a relaxing and fun holiday and are glad to be back in the throws of the frigid Kingston winter. Although, with such a diverse makeup of graduate and professional students at Queen's, Kingston may actually be warmer than what you are used to. It happens every year, but in the hot summer I want winter weather and when it finally gets here I want it gone as fast as possible.

Student Advisor Program

The Student Advisor Program will reopen office hours beginning the week of January 11th. Keep an eye on the Student Advisor Facebook page for the hours when they become available. Based on experiences gained last term, some minor changes were made to the Advisor office to better meet the needs of both clients and Advisors.

Committees

The Graduate Studies Executive Council (GSEC) met for the fourth time this year and several program modifications were approved as well as information on graduate enrolment was shared. In lieu of a Spring Graduate Forum for graduate coordinators, a discussion of the current structure of the PhD (comprehensive exam and dissertation in particular) will be discussed. This will examine the alignment of the PhD program with student needs and labour markets.

The ITS Student Advisory Committee met this week where we were asked for feedback regarding the Queen's Events Calendar and possible improvements that can be made as they work towards version 2.0. If you have ever used the calendar, I would love to hear about your experience with it. A large portion of the meeting was regarding web accessibility and web compliance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA).

If you have any questions or comments about an issue, please feel free to send me an email at vpg@sgps.ca. Watch out for icy sidewalks and keep smiling!

Respectfully submitted,

Mark Kellenberger
Vice President Graduate
vpg@sgps.ca



Dear SGPS Council Members,


Welcome back from the winter break! I hope all of you are feeling rested, relaxed, and optimistic for 2016. The exam season and marking period of 2015 is now a distant memory, and it is time to return to the business of serving students. With the start of a new semester and my last four months in office I am hoping to complete some of my remaining major projects before I hand over the role of VP Professional to the next generation.

First off, I am forming the Human Resources Standing Committee to review our HR practices and produce new policies. Specifically the committee will be forming in mid January to create an SGPS progressive discipline system, formal performance review process, and assess general management practices. The group is estimated to meet approximately once a week for the duration of January and February. Members will gain experience with formal committee work, policy writing, and HR practices. Additionally upon completion of the committee mandate the SGPS will be happy to provide volunteers with letters of reference and support upon request. If you, or any of your colleagues and friends, are interested please send an email containing your full name, program, and any relevant experience you bring to vpp@sgps.ca. Applications are due Tuesday January the 12th at 11:59pm.

Secondly, I am pleased to report that the SGPS has had some promising discussions with our counterparts in the AMS regarding student clubs and organizations on campus. As some of you may be aware the current system of club ratification can be difficult or confusing. Student clubs are required to ratify either with the AMS or the SGPS, and both societies have specific and distinctly different membership and organizational requirements. The result is that it can be hard for mixed student organizations to become ratified or receive the financial support and resources that they need. Further, membership in clubs ratified with the other student society is sometimes limited, or discouraged because of these systems. As students have struggled with this system, the SGPS is also in a difficult position as the society has not reviewed its club ratification process in many years. The current ratification process does not collect adequate information about our student clubs, lacks any kind of legal consideration, and poses a serious risk for exploitation. As a result it is in our interest to either reform our ratification process, or pursue a joint solution with our friends in the AMS. The latter option appears promising as it would allow for more flexibility and a more realistic approach to clubs – which are usually made up of diverse members from different student societies, backgrounds, and programs. Furthermore this would mean a larger pool of grants and club spaces would be available to all student clubs. I am hopeful that by working together our organizations will be able to provide greater opportunities for our students and our innovative student organizations. Now, these talks are currently in their early stages, but I will keep Council apprised and any major changes will be brought in the form of bylaw and policy.

Finally, it is worth noting that the SGPS elections are just around the corner! As we head towards this important time of year please inform your friends and colleagues about the positions that will be available and encourage them to run. Working on the SGPS Executive allows students to lead our organization and contribute substantially to the community. It is also a tremendous learning opportunity and provides individuals with truly unique experiences. On a personal level I have found my time as the VP Professional challenging and yet deeply rewarding. If anyone has questions about the role and responsibilities of the VP Professional please free to get in touch with me. I am more than happy to get a coffee and chat casually about the position and the organization.

Cha Gheill,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark Asfar". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "M" and a long, sweeping tail on the "A".

Mark Asfar

Vice-President Professional

vpp@sgps.ca



Dear Council,

Happy New Year! I hope all of you are refreshed from the Winter Break and excited to get going with the winter term. I am especially excited given that we have so many projects that are well underway at the SGPS.

Bursaries and Grants

In December, we had an enormous amount of applications for both bursaries and grants. I believe this was due to how expensive the holidays are with everyone trying to get home and ensure that they have enough money to pay their bills for January. We provided \$2000 in Emergency Student Aid, \$700 for International Bursaries, \$1200 for grants and \$29.39 for Club Funding in December 2015. Our total expenses from September 1, 2015 until January 1, 2015 are as follows:

ESA	DBA	ISA	Grants	Clubs	Sports Fund
\$10,200	\$1,190.65	\$5,600	\$7,010	\$217	\$1,368.63

All our members are encouraged to apply for both bursaries and grants if they are in need of funds. Our policy outlines the eligibility requirements and what the Finance and Services Committee must consider in evaluating each application. Please do not hesitate to encourage other members to apply.

Audit

After having KPMG into our office in December to get the books ready for our audit, they will be starting this week to finish both the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 audits. They believe that we will be ready to go with the completed audits for the end of January. I hope to present both reports at the February AGM.

Permanent Staff Hiring

We are currently hiring an Executive Director and Finance Manager to add to our permanent staff. Both job postings have been posted since mid-December and will stay posted for another couple of weeks. The selection process will take the better part of the next couple of months, but we hope to have a Finance Manager starting in March and an Executive Director starting in April. More details will follow as we go through the hiring process. Please pass the word on that we are hiring.

Overall

Overall, December was a month of tying up loose ends and getting back on track after our month of drastic changes. We are well underway with our audit, activity fees have been dispersed, our health and dental provider is taking on more of a role in running our plan, bursaries and grants are being dispersed at a steady rate and we are in the process of hiring staff who will be able to assist the executive in the day to day running of the SGPS.

We are in a great position going forward and I look forward to our accomplishments over the next few months.

Best Regards,

Christina Huber
Vice President Finance and Services
vpfs@sgps.ca



Dear Council,

I hope that you all had a relaxing, restorative winter break. For the most part, I did.

Holiday Assistance Program

This year our program was well received. I'd like to congratulate Andria and the rest of our office staff for making another year of HAP the success that it was.

SGPS Parenting Room

Finally, it's done! I've been working on this for a while (it was one of the 'big ticket' items on my year plan), but my idea is to unveil it in a way that attracts the attention of the school, the campus community, as well as those services around campus that are related to providing for families. My hope is that this will be the start of a community effort to not only recognize and support those with children, but will spark further interest and discussions on what other resources should be made available to student-parents in order to meet their goals.

I'm further going to be meeting with like-minded groups, student, admin, and other, in the coming weeks to ensure that this effort will not be overlooked.

Graduate Departmental Societies

If you hadn't already done so, I'd like everyone to strongly consider forming a graduate departmental society. The benefits of such an arrangement are many, as these may serve as collectives whereby grad students might find support, friendship, and assistance with the issues and topics unique to their own department; and secondly, such societies are often warmly supported by faculty, and at times are invited to the table during departmental meetings, giving grads a much-needed voice on important matters.

I've had been in contact with a few prospective groups and am currently in the process of helping them become official societies, so if you or your department is interested please let me know.

Out-of-City Medical Accessibility Bursary

Over the break AMS-SIC Alex and myself have made significant advances on this project. We have since expanded the project proposal to encompass a wider array of potential healthcare needs, and having primarily only received feedback from staff and interested parties, we'd like to hear from you, the student body. We are primarily looking for feedback from students who have out-of-city healthcare needs, but also from students at large who just want to give their two cents on the project in general.

Please follow this link to the survey, and if you have any other questions, please let me know.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/OOCH>



Fee Renewals

There are 15 fees scheduled for renewal this year, 5 of which are subject to referendum, and 10 of which are able to be ratified by Council. On this Council agenda you will find the 5 questions to be placed on the referendum ballot, along with identification of the 10 questions that will be approved by Council at the February 23, 2016 meeting of council.

If you have any questions about the fee renewal process, please feel free to let me know.

University Rector Election

The Rector Election is underway, and I along with Travis am part of the Rector Elections Team.

The following are the timelines for the University Wide **Rector Elections**:

Wednesday January 6, 2016 – Nominations Open (pick up a package at the AMS or SGPS Office)

Thursday January 7, 2016 at 7pm – All Candidates Meeting, Queen’s Center 506

Tuesday January 12, 2016 at 12pm – Nominations Packages Due to AMS or SGPS Main Office

Friday January 15, 2016 – Campaign Period Begins at Midnight

Wednesday January 20, 2016 at 7pm – All Candidates Debate at Common Ground Coffee House

Monday January 25, 2016 at 8pm – All Physical Campaigning Materials Removed

Tuesday January 26, 2016 at 12am until Wednesday January 27, 2016 at 8pm – Online Voting

Voting for this will be done via Moodle for all SGPS Members. You should receive an email reminding you to vote, but you can also simply login to Moodle and look for a “class” regarding the rector election to access your ballot. If you have any problems voting, please contact me directly at speaker@sgps.ca and we will do what we can to sort things out.

Bylaw and Policy Document

I know this will sound like the most used excuse in the book, but over the Winter Break my laptop died and wasn’t able to complete the up to date version of the document to post. I am beginning work on this now and should hopefully have a fully up to date version available soon. However in the meantime, if you or any of your constituents require clarification on what is or is not in the most recent version of the document, please feel free to get in touch.

Respectfully submitted,

Eric Rapos
Council Speaker
speaker@sgps.ca



Graduate Studies Executive Council (GSEC) Meeting – December 17, 2015

Unfortunately I was unable to attend this meeting due to a conflict, so Mark K can fill in any details, however, here are the meeting highlights that were circulated:

- Dean's report:
 - According to the Fall 2015 enrollment count, there are total domestic FTE 1997.8 Master's, 710.8 PhD students, which is lower than the 2015-16 domestic targets. Several new programs are still ramping up and coming on board.
 - The School of Graduate Studies (SGS) annual funding memo will be coming out in January.
 - In January departments/programs will receive lists of Canada Graduate Scholarship-Master's (CGS-M) applicants who are prospective incoming students in 2016-17. The purpose of distributing the lists is to facilitate contact with and recruitment of these new domestic Master's students.
 - B. Brouwer and S. den Otter attended the Council of Graduate Schools meeting in Seattle in December which generated ideas to help expand our alumni mentorship network.
 - The SGS will hold a half-day retreat for graduate coordinators, in lieu of a Spring Graduate Forum. The purpose of the retreat is to have a fulsome discussion of the current structure and form of the PhD, and the comprehensive examination and dissertation in particular, vis-à-vis alignment with student needs and labour market outcomes. The SGS is conducting a survey about the comps/candidacy/field examination requirements to inform future discussion.
 - The Conference Board of Canada recently published a report entitled Inside and Outside the Academy which looks at graduate level education and the job market.
- Reports from Faculty Graduate Councils/Committees:
 - The Arts Graduate Council discussed a proposed new graduate program at a recent meeting, but further discussion will be required. Along with standard items of business, the Health Science Graduate Council discussed ways to identify student representatives for the council. The Graduate Committee for Business discussed incorporating skills development courses or requirements into the PhD program at their meeting. The Graduate Studies and Research Committee in Education began a discussion of creating a "capstone" project for their online Master's program, since this requirement would be useful to teachers from British Columbia who seek to upgrade their credentials.
- GSEC approved:
 - Proposed Major Modification, Change of Program Name, Public Health Sciences
 - Omnibus Report December 2015
 - December 2015 Report of the Fellowship Committee
- GSEC continues to discuss proposed revisions to School of Graduate Studies Regulation Visitors at the Oral Thesis examination.

And the University Senate has not met since my last report.

Respectfully Submitted,

Eric Rapos
Graduate Student Senator
senator@sgps.ca



Society of Graduate and Professional Students
Report of the Trustee
January 2016

No Report



Dear Council,

Firstly, I hope everyone had a wonderful holiday break. As the new Athletics Commissioner, I wanted to start off by introducing myself. My name is Dominic Kucharski and I am a first year sociology graduate student here at Queen's University.

Leading up to the holiday break, I can definitely say that the past month was very busy in terms of academics and varying deadlines. As I sit here writing this monthly report, I cannot help but share my excitement for what this semester has in store in regards to overall goals that I hope to accomplish and the work I plan on doing with the SGPS as the Athletics Commissioner. I am very excited for what this position has in store for the SGPS and myself moving forward. I look forward to working together this term.

In accordance with my yearly plan I submitted, I wanted to update the council with my vision and goals moving forward. I have broken down my objectives as Athletics Commissioner into three main goals:

- (1) Promote optimal mental health and well-being through physical activity and recreational sport.
- (2) Grow the overall existing 'sports hour' event.
- (3) Improve participation rates among people of all abilities, ages and skill levels.

With these three main guiding goals, it is hoped that we can accomplish a number of positive goals that benefit the student body. Through identifying and improving factors such as positive emotion, engagement, relationship building and accomplishment, we hope to promote positive growth and changes within these areas. Using recreational sport and physical activity as the driving catalysts, we hope these activities will translate towards improving mental health and well-being. By growing the weekly 'sports hour' participation numbers, we hope to create an inclusive environment with a sense of belonging via fun and active sporting involvement. Finally, by recognizing that not all individuals come from the same athletic background, we hope to improve participation rates among people of all abilities, ages and skill levels.

Regards,
Dominic Kucharski (athletics@sgps.ca)



Dear SGPS Members,

I hope you had a safe and happy winter break.

I am pleased to share that I have been reappointed as the Equity & Diversity Commissioner for another term. For those of you who I haven't had the chance to meet yet, my name is Erica and I am a Masters student in the School of Kinesiology and Health Studies. I have had the great pleasure of representing our membership on issues such as sexual assault policy and gender-neutral washrooms, and I am looking forward to continuing this positive work into 2016.

Over the last few weeks, I have begun working on a year plan for the Commission that will be our roadmap for 2016. I am excited to share more with you about the Commission's vision and goals in the upcoming months. However, here is a snippet of one of the larger priority areas that is coming into focus for the Commission this year:

Collaborative Networks – the Equity & Diversity Commission is striving to build stronger relationships with campus partners and allies in 2016. This includes the AMS Social Issues Commissioner and the SGPS Student Advisors. Moreover, we are working towards building a national network of Equity & Diversity Commissioners (and related positions) from graduate and professional student societies across Canada.

One thing I would like to emphasize is my open door policy. My job is to represent and serve the SGPS membership when it comes to equity and diversity-related issues, and I can do that best when we have open lines of communication. If you would like to be in touch for any reason, please feel free to reach out to me at equity@sgps.ca. I am more than happy to make the time to connect in person or by email to discuss ideas, issues, opportunities, and other pressing matters that are important to you.

Welcome back and best of luck for the new semester ahead.

Sincerely,

Erica Baker
Equity & Diversity Commissioner



Dear SGPS Council Members,

Happy New Year!

I hope everyone had a relaxing winter break and is ready for a prosperous and successful year ahead.

I am the newly appointed International Students' Affairs Commissioner and this is my first year at Queen's and in Kingston. I have been an international student for almost all my academic years having done my undergraduate studies in Glasgow, Scotland and the years prior to that in the Middle East. This experience opened my eyes to the needs, concerns and interests of international students.

My main goal as a commissioner is to improve the quality of the international student's experience and in order to do so, I set three main sub goals, namely:

- Integrating international students into Queen's and Kingston's student society
- Addressing the needs and concerns of international students effectively
- Ensuring international students have full knowledge of their rights and opportunities

I also put together a year plan highlighting the main events to be conducted each month and the objective behind each event. Beside these, I am looking into meeting students from different backgrounds to be able to address their needs specifically.

Queen's University and the SGPS offer several opportunities and resources that can be efficiently utilized to benefit the International students' society. I look forward to forming a team of facilitators and volunteers that will work together to achieve all the set goals hand in hand with the SGPS members.

Please feel free to contact me for any further suggestions and ideas that would improve our overall performance.

Best Regards

Sara SidAhmed
International Students' Affairs Commissioner

international@sgps.ca



Society of Graduate and Professional Students
Report of the Social Commissioner
January 2016

Position Vacant



Society of Graduate and Professional Students
Report of the University Rector
January 2016

No Report



Society of Graduate and Professional Students
Report of the Chief Returning Officer
January 2016

Hello Council,

The past month I have begun preparations for both the Rector and SGPS executive elections. Motions regarding both of these elections are on the agenda, so I will not go into great detail here. This year there are five referendum questions being brought before council for inclusion on the ballots during the SGPS elections. Again, all of these referendum questions are being brought before Council for ratification, so I will not describe them in detail. I would like to thank the SHRC, Queen's Athletics and Recreation, and the registrar's office for their quick response time in submitting the paperwork to have their fees appear on the referendum ballots. Due to a breakdown in communication they were given very short notice, but despite this all of them managed to get everything done on time.

Pending approval from Council, the nomination period for SGPS executive positions will be starting shortly. If you are thinking of running and have questions about the different positions or the election procedures, then feel free to contact myself or the executive member currently holding the position you would like to run for.

-Travis Skippon
Chief Returning Officer