



Hey Everyone,

A couple not so quick updates.

### **SGPS Elections**

The SGPS elections were held at the end of January and I am thrilled to announce the results. With a 36% voter turnout SGPS members elected Jeremy Ambraska as President, Leo Erlikhman as VP Graduate, Abel Hazon as VP Finance and Services, Cameron Wathey as Vice President Community and Ryan Adlem as VP Professional.

I am confident that this team will lead the SGPS forward. With two returning Executive (Leo and Abel) and three very capable individuals joining the team the SGPS will have continuity and fresh insight moving forward.

### **Aesculapian Society Referendum**

The Aesculapian Society represents all medicine students here at Queens. Last year I was approached by the Society about seceding from the AMS and joining the SGPS. Their team made it very clear that there was no ill-will towards the AMS and their motivation was purely motivated by demographics. As a second-entry program they felt they were in a period of their lives closer to those in the SGPS. Furthermore, they expressed interest in becoming closer with specific faculties and departments including Law, Physical Therapy, and Occupational Therapy who are all represented by the SGPS.

The referendum is scheduled for February 21 and 22, which means I will be able to report the results orally during my address. If the referendum is successful, the Aesculapian Society will join the SGPS as of September 2019.

### **Provincial Government Announcement**

As many of you have heard the Provincial Government has announced significant changes to the Post-Secondary Education sector. First, they have mandated a 10% tuition cut to eligible programs, second, they made significant changes to OSAP bringing it back to funding levels more equivalent to the 2016-2017 school year, and finally they announced the student choice initiative, making all 'non-essential' ancillary fees optional. I will deal with each one of these changes in turn

#### **10% Tuition Cuts**

The tuition cuts are going to affect all students who are eligible for provincial funding. This means international students will not be mandated to receive this tuition increase. Furthermore, it is unclear if this will affect PhD candidates in their 5<sup>th</sup> year or beyond since they are not technically funding eligible. More on this point to come.

What we do know is that this tuition cut will reduce the University's operating revenue by approximately \$24 million. No small number. This means the University will have to find alternative sources of revenue or cut expenses in order to balance the budget.

At January Senate I asked the Principal and Provost if they were looking at increasing international tuition. I also urged them not to do so since this would increase some of the already disproportionate onus on international students. The Principal was honest in his remarks saying it would be disingenuous to suggest this was not an option they were looking at. I acknowledged the difficult decision the University is in but again urged against raising international student tuition.

Later the same week I was informed by the Principal and the Provost that they would not be reducing the amount of money given to the School of Graduate Studies for funding packages. For more information see this [press release](#). In short this means the Queen's Graduate Award and the International Tuition Reward will maintain the same for the 2019-2020 school year. This decision shows the commitment from the University to Graduate student success and wellness.

### **OSAP Changes**

The threshold for OSAP is shifting from 170,000 household income to 140,000. The portion of funding from grants will be significantly reduced as well. Furthermore, in order to gain independent status, individuals will need to be 6 years out of high school rather than 4. This last change will disproportionately affect graduate and professional students.

Student groups including the Canadian Federation of Students which the SGPS is a part of, are actively lobbying the government to abandon these changes. There have been no budging as of yet, more to come.

### **Ancillary Fee Changes**

The government has said that all non-essential ancillary fees will have to be optional. Some essential fees include health and wellness, athletics and recreation, walk safe programs, student buildings, and academic and career supports. The SGPS fee slate is close to this already. However, there are some changes that will need to be made. For example, there is uncertainty about the SGPS fee itself. The SGPS provides academic support, career support and financial aid throughout grants and bursaries, we also supply Health and Dental Insurance, all of which are 'essential' fees. However, we also host social events, orientation week, conferences, and more that are not essential. We may have to split our fee between non-essential and essential services. More to come on this as well.



President  
Tyler Morrison



Society of Graduate and Professional Students  
Report of the Vice President Graduate  
February 2019

No report was provided.



Society of Graduate and Professional Students  
Report of the Vice President Professional  
February 2019

Dear Council,

I am pleased to welcome Ryan Adlem as the incoming Vice-President Professional! I know Ryan is excited to be starting this role in May and I look forward to transitioning him into this role over the next few months as well as the fresh perspective he will bring to the role for next year.

A few quick updates:

We will be planning another Professional Headshots session for the end of February, once everyone has returned from reading week. Stay tuned for the exact time and location.

We will be looking to host similar Excel Workshops to those that were held as part of the SGPS/SGS careers week back in October as standalone workshops sometime in March. Stay tuned for the exact times and location.

That's all for now,

**Lauren Peacock**

VP Professional

Society of Graduate & Professional Students (SGPS)



Council,

Most of my work has been processing a significant amount of bursaries and grants given my recent leave of absence and the busy time of the year associated with the release of decision on the Queen's General Bursary.

As a follow up from our November AGM, the SGPS Grants program has received considerable uptake: eight grants being processed with two more anticipated for next week; one sponsorship application.

The Finance Committee continues to function in good standing.

**Concerns Regarding Ancillary Fees & Provincial Government “Student Choice” Mandate**

Student Societies, Associations, and Unions are facing a significant challenge to their financial feasibility given the recent changes announced by the Government of Ontario. The primary issue is centered around the message that any “none essential” fee must be optional. To our current, speculative understanding, this would include the SGPS membership fee. To make matters worse, the messaging hints that post-secondary institutions must make collect those fees on an opt-in basis as opposed to the default option being that a student is opted-in. This development, if accurate, will surely create a substantial loss in monies collected by the SGPS and may impact services that are offered.

However, we are currently looking at ways to ensure that neither services nor the Society's capacity to function effectively will be affected. Our budget modelling is assuming a worst-case basis of the SGPS membership fee becoming an optional fee that students must opt into.

Happy to take your questions.

Abel Hazon  
VPFS



Dear SGPS Council,

To begin, I'd like to give a big congratulations to next year's newly elected VP Community Cameron Wathey! It's nice to see some new and returning faces on next year's executive team, and it will be an exciting couple of months as they transition into their new roles. Unfortunately, I am travelling this week so I am unable to make the February Council meeting, but if you have any questions or comments about anything in my report, please feel free to send me an email at [vp.community@sgps.ca](mailto:vp.community@sgps.ca).

**SGPS and AMS Winter Donation Drive for United Way has finished!**

It's been such a pleasure working with the United Way this year and I'm pleased to let you know that our Winter Drive has finished, and we received a number of donations from SGPS and AMS members. Even though the drive is over, the need in Kingston for clothing, non-perishable food items, hygiene products and more continues. The Kingston Youth Shelter, for example, is always looking for donations to support their emergency shelter and transitional housing locations. They have an amazon wishlist with items they need that range in prices (from cleaning supplies to furniture), This is a very easy way to make sure that they get items they need and I recommend sharing the link on to your department: [https://www.amazon.ca/registry/wishlist/1O50LDPOD65LB/ref=cm\\_sw\\_r\\_cp\\_ep\\_ws\\_hm8SBb82JM6S4](https://www.amazon.ca/registry/wishlist/1O50LDPOD65LB/ref=cm_sw_r_cp_ep_ws_hm8SBb82JM6S4). There is also always a need for volunteers, and during my final months in my VP Community position I will be working on trying to make these volunteering opportunities more visible to SGPS members.

**Traffic Control Light/Pedestrian Crossing on Sir John A. MacDonald Boulevard**

As per my previous reports, I've been sharing information on the work by the Sir John A. MacDonald Boulevard (SJA) Working Group who were advocating to City Councilors the need to have a traffic control light or pedestrian cross by An Clachan due to it being a very dangerous cross for pedestrians trying to access the bus route across the road. I'm happy to report that Councillor Bridget Doherty has received assurances from City Staff that the work to install a pedestrian activated traffic signal will be in the upcoming budget as a priority for 2019. Engineering design studies are currently underway to be ready to begin this work following the approval of the upcoming 2019 budget. Thank you to those of you who sent me letters to share your support for the project and to those of you who signed the petition! More than 350 signatures were collected including a large number of comments documenting the community concern and support for this work.

**International Student Working Group**

Over the past couple of weeks, I have been meeting with the International Caucus at PSAC 901 to hear their concerns and see how we at the SGPS can further support the needs of international graduate students. These issues are especially pressing in the current political climate in Ontario. I encourage anyone who has an interest in issues affecting international graduate students to join us at the SGPS International Student Working Group, send me an email if you have any questions or want information on when and where they're meeting next.

Sincerely,

Isabel Luce  
SGPS VP Community



Hi all,

I hope your semesters are going well and that you are all surviving the yoyo weather of the last couple weeks.

### **ELECTIONS**

It was quite a month of January with the SGPS' Annual General Election. I am proud to say that Chief Returning Officer, Nick Stefan and I worked closely together to have the process run as smoothly as possible. I would like to say thank you to all those who decided to run, and wish those who won, the very best as they move forward with their new mandate.

I also want to congratulate all the fee groups who sought to have their fees established or continued. Your engagement with the SGPS community can only be considered a positive. Similarly, I wish all the groups the very best as they move forward.

### **BYLAW AND POLICY**

Given the election, there is not as much progress on this issue as I would have wanted. The Committee is scheduled to meet this Thursday. Should things go smoothly, Council/General Members will see some recommendations very shortly.

I look forward to seeing everyone at Council.

Best,

Simon Gollish  
SGPS Speaker  
Simon.Gollish@queensu.ca



Society of Graduate and Professional Students  
Report of the Graduate Student Senator  
February 2019

No report was provided.



Society of Graduate and Professional Students  
Report of the Trustee  
February 2019

No report was provided.



Dear Council,

Apologies for a missed report last council. There has been a staffing shift where Devon Blaskevitch will be facilitating the events in Kingston on behalf of the Athletics and Wellness team while Larkin Davenport Huyer will organize from a distance.

Great news! Within the last month, the fee referendum passed that SGPS students will still have the opportunity to pay and utilize the ARC as we currently do.

**Semester Events**

Soccer Hour: Tuesdays from 7-8pm in MacBrown gym we are holding weekly indoor soccer games. We have rebranded this from sports hour to soccer hour. We have had a great turn out this far and expect it to continue as the semester continues.

Thesis Therapy: Starting February 28<sup>th</sup> the Thesis Therapy events will begin again on a monthly basis for the rest of the semester. St. John's Ambulance Therapy Dog program has been a great partnership and will continue to work with them.

One key event to look out for next month will include a Stress-Busting Workshop on the 27<sup>th</sup>. In March we are hoping to complete the organization of a mini basketball tournament as well as a collaboration event with our International Commissioner with cricket and chess.

We are happy to take any suggestions or comments about future and past SGPS athletics and wellness events as well as general questions or comments about athletics and wellness for graduate students. We can be reached at [athletics@sgps.ca](mailto:athletics@sgps.ca).

Sincerely,

Larkin Davenport Huyer and Devon Blaskevitch

Athletics and Wellness Commissioner and Deputy Athletics and Wellness Commissioner, SGPS



Dear Council,

Along with the International Commissioner I have been working hard to secure funding, speakers, and panelists for the upcoming Queen's International Women's Conference, which aims to celebrate Women's Leadership in International Graduate Research. The conference will take place in Robert Sutherland Hall, room 202 on March 15 and 16. If you have questions or would like to hear more about the conference please feel free to reach out. We are looking to highlight graduate work at Queen's, and if you feel that your research fits within our frame work please take a look at the call for papers and submit an abstract.

I would like to inform council that applications for 2 students (1 AMS and 1 SGPS/Professional) and 1 faculty member to serve on the University Council on Anti-Racism and Equity (UCARE). Those interested in applying to join UCARE should complete an application prior to February 26th at 11.59 pm. UCARE will maintain at least 51% representation from racialized groups. For more information, or to apply, please visit the UCARE web page. Serving on this council has been a highlight for me as Equity and Diversity Commissioner and I encourage you to apply if you are interested.

I would also like to inform you that Queen's will be hosting the 2019 Matariki Indigenous Student Mobility Program (MISMP), which will take place on the traditional territories of the Anishinabek and Haudenosaunee peoples from June 23 to July 6, 2019. The program will bring together students, faculty members and Elders from across the Matariki Network of Universities to participate in community and land-based learning on the theme of Learning, Language and Land. This year's MISMP is being led and developed by Dr. Lindsay Morcom, Assistant Professor of Aboriginal Education, Faculty of Education. More information about the program can be found in the attached call for applications and on the International Programs Office website <https://www.queensu.ca/ipo/matariki-indigenous-student-mobility-program-2019>. Participation is funded with the exception of some meals. The application deadline is February 15, 2019.

I sincerely hope that Winter Semester is progressing smoothly for all of you. As always, I welcome any questions, comments, or concerns.

Respectfully,

Catrina Mavrigianakis  
**Equity and Diversity Commissioner**  
**2018-2019**



Dear Council,

Season greetings to you all,

We, international and equity commission, are excited to share that we are organizing a two days conference “Queen’s International Women’s Conference” on March 15-16, 2019. The Queen’s International Women’s Conference is a platform to celebrate the scholarship and leadership initiatives of graduate women researchers in international graduate research at Queen’s University. This conference will include a panel on graduate student research at Queen’s and will provide our students an opportunity to showcase their scholarly accomplishments. We will have a second panel that will bring together alumni from Queen’s to talk to graduates about their career paths and their experiences post-graduation. As part of this conference, we will be running several professional development workshops and will be bringing in a keynote speaker to talk about the intersections of internationalization, research and the experience of women performing international research. Hosted just a week after International Women’s Day (March 08), our conference on March 15-16th, 2019 aims to promote empowerment and leadership on Queens’s campus. Through this conference, we hope to create a dialogue for change, and contribute to fostering an inclusive and equitable Queens’s campus for everyone. The concept note and call for papers are attached here. We seek your support to promote and participate in it to make it a grand success.

With regards to our educational research project, we have gathered data from 100+ graduate students and 30+ faculty members on the academic writing challenges faced by graduate students who have English as their second language. We are thankful to all of you who participated or promoted the survey information. Through our findings, we hope to highlight challenges towards successful academic writing at the graduate level. Understanding these challenges will inform the mechanisms adopted by Queen’s University to strengthen the existing services and the development of an academic writing support model to support graduate students and their supervisors towards successful academic writing.

Past week, we also had a meeting with members of international students’ caucus at PSAC. Based on the findings of open letter shared by them, we hope to form a working group of international students at SGPS to advocate for the supports and services for international graduate students on campus.

We are also planning to organize a chess tournament in this month and a cricket tournament in the next month for our members. Stay tuned with our Facebook notifications. We will post the events details soon and we encourage you to attend those.

We look forward to interacting with you all at the various events that will be hosted throughout this term. As always, we welcome any suggestions or comments, my email address is [international@sgps.ca](mailto:international@sgps.ca)

Best wishes for the winter term,

Atul Jaiswal & Uchitta Vashisht

**Commissioner & Deputy Commissioner - International Student Affairs Commission  
2018-2019**

Dear Council,

I hope you had a great first month of this Winter Semester! It was fantastic to see you all at our Winter Welcome Week events, meeting new students and catching up with friends. Many of you attended our 'Greetings at The Grizz' and played pool all night long! We also had our first monthly SGPS Game Night of 2019, taking place in the SGPS lounge where we played ping pong, board games, and online multiplayer party games (Jackbox). Our January events ended with both teams successfully escaping from the rooms at Improbable Escapes.

February events have already started! We recently ran a day trip to Ottawa to experience Winterlude. Students toured the Parliament buildings, skated along the Rideau canal, ate some good food in Byward Market and saw ice sculptures being made. Thanks again to everyone who spent the day with us!



*Students in front of Parliament on our Winterlude Day Trip to Ottawa*

Here's a few of our upcoming events:

- SGPS Observatory Tour [Feb 6]: A private and free tour for SGPS members. We'll get to take a look through the telescope in the Ellis Hall Observatory. This event is sold out!
- SGPS Game Night [Feb 28]: Meet us in the SGPS lounge, challenge your friends to a new game and enjoy some snacks! This event is from 6-9PM.
- Laser Tag [March 7]: We're inviting you to live like you're 13 and attending your friend's birthday party at Putt n' Blast. This event is at 6:30PM.
- Maple Madness [March]: Spend a day at the Sugar Bush at the Little Cataraqui Creek Conservation Area!
- Anatomy Museum Tour

- Recharge in the Phytotron 2.0: we will plan another chance to tour the greenhouse atop BioSci as it was a popular event last semester!
- Hikes (QUBS, Lemoine Point)

Additionally, we're assembling the Awards Committee. If you're interested in being a part of this committee, please e-mail me at [social@sgps.ca](mailto:social@sgps.ca).

As always, I welcome any suggestions or questions regarding social events. Feel free to contact me at [social@sgps.ca](mailto:social@sgps.ca).

Kind Regards,

**Beatrice Suero**

Social Commissioner 2018-19

Society of Graduate and Professional Students (SGPS)

Queen's University

[social@sgps.ca](mailto:social@sgps.ca)



Society of Graduate and Professional Students  
Report of the University Rector  
February 2019

No report was provided.



Society of Graduate and Professional Students  
Report of the Chief Returning Officer  
February 2019

SGPS Council,

Thank you all for making election period as smooth as it was and once again congratulations to the hard work everyone put forward and especially to those elected to next year's Executive team and the approved fee groups.

I'd like to extend a further thank you to Simon Golish and Andria Burke for their hard work in coordinating with me during the election period to handle the questions and comments we received by all those involved. President Tyler Morrison also helped on election night as we awaited the final votes – we had a great voter turnout!

I will continue to be monitoring the [elections@sgps.ca](mailto:elections@sgps.ca) email address and providing direction for any questions pertaining to the elections and fee referendum.

Best,

Nick Stefan