Hi everyone,

I hope that you all had a safe, productive and relaxing summer. The purpose of this report will be to give a general overview of what I feel are the main challenges facing the SGPS.

**Student Choice Initiative (“SCI”)**

Since I took over as President the main focal point has been the SCI. We have spent the spring and summer negotiating with the administration over which fees will be included on the mandatory side and which fees will be optional. Of importance is the fact that the SGPS membership fee itself will be optional. This means we will have some graduate and professional students who are not members of the SGPS. The goal for this executive has been to take a balanced approach to encourage students to remain members, but also communicate the differences between members and non-member students.

**Health and Dental**

Over the summer I worked with Abel and Andria to finalize our health and dental coverage for the upcoming school year. I believe that we have achieved a coverage that works and will point the SGPS in the right direction to ensure that the health and dental plan is sustainable.

**VP Community**

Unfortunately, we had our previous VP Community step down last year and the position has remained vacant for the summer. It is an urgent priority of the SGPS to see this position filled as soon as possible following a contested election process. I am hoping that we can use this opportunity to make students excited about the SGPS and its services as well as promote the position to ensure students have a choice at the polls.

I look forward to working collaboratively with everyone on council to improve engagement and ensure that the SGPS remains strong through this time of uncertainty.

President
Jeremy Ambraska
Hello Council,

I hope everyone has had a lovely summer so far and is enjoying the heat while it lasts! As the only executive member here on campus this summer there was quite a bit of work that I took on. Therefore, the majority of this report will be Oral with a more comprehensive report coming at our September meeting.

Our Graduate Peer Support Center is slated to open this fall! We are just negotiating an MOU with the University and hope to be running mid-September. The Center is always looking for folks to get involved in breakdown the stigmas associated with graduate mental health issues and if you want to learn more feel free to reach out!

Graduate Student Success Working Group Report – It has been sent for final review and edits and should be rolling out this fall which is super exciting. This will come on the backs of a new Student Supervisor Conversation Kit meant for all new graduate students to use when discussing expectations about supervision. It is the hope that with this document that we can work to breakdown some of the walls that lead to conflicts in the student – supervisor relationship and make Queen’s the model for excellent supervision. This project took 16 months to complete and I am happy to say that it is now a reality. I would like to personally thank Dean Quadir for his willingness to engage with graduate student issues from day one and will look forward to working with him this year. The future is bright for Graduate student life at Queen’s!

Graduate Writing Lab (GWL) – Graduate Writing Lab (formally Thesis Thursdays) is now in its 2nd year and after a smashing success in year one. GWL will now be operating on TWO dates a year on Monday and Thursday mornings from 9am – noon. This is a great win for student academic success work, and I would like to thank Val Ashford and Susan Korba for their willingness to work with us on this project. GWL is a space for graduate students to write and work in a non-judgmental space with the help of professional writing coaches to better their own writing. GWL can help you with any type of writing that you may need help with in the academic space and hope that you will all spread the word!

On pan-student matters this Summer the SGPS together with the AMS dealt with the following matters:

- The Student Choice Initiative (SCI) and the Opt-Out Portal for the University
- Equity Groups on campus and how to assist students with the new SCI
- The JDUC Redevelopment: We have now entered the next phase of design!
- A University Alcohol Policy
- The Campus Wellness Council consultations
- A review of Queen’s Orientation Governance

I will provide some insight on all of these during my report and will provide a full report in September.

Cheers

Leo Erlikhman
Hello Council,

I hope everyone has had a good summer and is excited for the upcoming fall term.

This has been somewhat unique summer at the SGPS, in that the executive has spent a lot of time dealing with the changes brought by the Student Choice Initiative (“SCI”). As Vice President Professional, I have assisted with decisions pertaining to both how the Society chooses to respond to the SCI, as well to how this information will be communicated to members and potential members of the Society.

I have also been involved in discussions and provided input into the Society’s new health and dental insurance program.

I am pleased to report that I have assisted in organizing a boat cruise for professional students that will take place in September. Tickets for this cruise will first be made available to students in professional programs with smaller enrollments, and may eventually be made available to students in other professional programs with larger enrollments (such as law, education, and medicine). The rationale behind the staggered ticket-sales is that students in smaller professional programs may benefit more from an inter-faculty event than those in larger programs.

As we move into the fall term, I look forward to meeting you all and continuing to advance the interests of professional students within the SGPS. Please email me at vp.professional@sgps.ca if you have any questions or comments.

Sincerely,

Ryan Adlem
Vice President Professional
Dear Council,

I am glad to be serving my new term as the Vice President Finance of the Society and I look forward to meeting everyone in the Fall.

Of note in this report is that, as of now, we are looking for two non-law SGPS members that will want to take part in the 2019-2020 SGPS Finance Committee. If you are interested or if you know someone who is interested, please let me know as soon as possible at vp.finance@sgps.ca. Here are the details:

**Finance Committee member:**
- reviewing needs-based bursaries and event-based grants application
- overseeing the distribution of $50,000 in funding
- reviewing the annual financial documents and auditor reports of over 30 student clubs and organizations
- ensuring bursary and grants program compliance with the SGPS by-laws and policies

This summer, I have kept the emergency bursary open for students and have been reviewing non-Departmental Student Bursary grants as they come in. I’ve also been in touch with dozens of students that have inquired about the status of the SGPS bursary program, to which, the response has been standardized to reflect the position that the bursaries will reopen in the Fall.

On another note, I encourage you folks to reach out to your friends and faculties to ensure that they remain opted into the SGPS so that they can benefit from the great of programming that the executives have planned.

For now, I wish you all the a great and welcoming transition into your academic studies.

Best regards,
Abel Hazon
VPFS
Dear Council,

I hope everyone had a great summer!

In September we will be hosting 2 equity & diversity training workshops. I HIGHLY recommend that all council representatives attend these training workshops. They are: September 12 at 4:30pm Equity, Diversity & Inclusion workshop and September 17 at 4:30pm Bystander Intervention workshop. We will also be hosting a Positive Space and Gender Inclusion workshop in October and will be continuing to explore other equity and diversity workshops throughout the year.

RSVPs for the two workshops in September will be available in September once room has been booked. **I really encourage everyone to come out to the September 12 workshop as it is specifically tailored by the Equity Office for SGPS student representatives.** There will also be an icebreaker event for new councilors to interact with each other. There may also be food. Please let me know if you have a conflict with the 4:30pm start time as we still have time to change to a 5:00 or 5:30pm start to accommodate. The goal is to have as much attendance as possible. These workshops are open to all SGPS members as well.

This year I hope to host a movie/documentary series throughout the terms themed around equity and diversity. The movie for October is TBD and I welcome any suggestions.

I will be seeking feedback for student voices on equity and diversity views throughout the term. The Equity Office is also seeking student views on the work of their office and how to improve the student experience on campus from an equity and diversity perspective. Please reach out and share any views you may have or share any forums for seeking feedback.

Please look forward to a few campaigns that will be coming up later in the term. A mental health awareness campaign will happen during Thrive Week & there will be an inclusive language campaign and a diversity campaign. I’m always seeking volunteers and ideas for these campaigns and future campaigns so please reach out if this is something you may be interested in.

Along with the other Commissioners, I am looking forward to a successful Orientation Week and a great school year. Please don’t hesitate to reach out any time with concerns, comments, suggestions, or questions. My email is: equity@sgps.ca

Respectfully,
Penny Zhang
Equity and Diversity Commissioner, 2019-2020
Hello everyone,

I hope you have had a wonderful Summer and managed to squeeze in some good time in the Sun.

I am terribly sorry that I am missing this critical meeting just before we get into the swing of Fall. Unfortunately, my dates away were already booked prior to being hired as the SGPS International Student Commissioner. Nonetheless, I am still available via email if you have any questions.

Below is an update on some of the activities in my portfolio:

**International Student Representatives**
One of core objectives this year is to try and put in place some soft infrastructure for international graduate students so that there is a means and way of communicating with and understanding them at the departmental level. Due to the decentralized nature of Queen’s University, this is vital. I am hoping to develop a communication channel between myself, International Graduate Representatives, and other international bodies on campus.

As such, please could you email me ([international@sgps.ca](mailto:international@sgps.ca)) the name and email address of your international student representative so that I can begin this process. If your Graduate Student council does not have an international student representative, I would encourage you to ask them to create such a position. To give you an idea as to what such a position might entail:

The International Student Representatives act as representatives of the department’s international graduate students providing the department with information about international students’ latest concerns and matters. These representatives also act as a connection to the university for incoming international students helping them to understand the university’s lingo, structures, and layout as well as the more specific details of the department. The position is not restricted to international students, but it would be ideal that it is held by at least one international student. The International Student Representatives should also try to be engaged with or at least knowledgeable of the workings of SGPS’ International Commissioner, Queen’s University’s International Centre, the International Student Working Group, and other international related bodies.

Of course, the above text can be edited according to your own departmental needs. I hope that you will help me to develop this university wide infrastructure and I look forward to hearing from your reps soon.

**Past Events: Game Night and Family Fun Day**
In June, I hosted a Games Night at Nexus downtown. Nexus is a fun environment with a deeply engaged community and they host games nights every Tuesday. In July, together with the Social Commissioner and Ban Righ, we hosted a Family Fun Day at the Splash Pad in the Park. Ban Righ was an excellent support, providing an array of food, services, and supplies. Despite having a wonderful collaboration and gorgeous weather our event was poorly attended. We think that this was a combination of potentially poor timing and it being a new event. Ban Righ is open to creating another of such family event and expressed enthusiasm for continued collaboration with the SGPS. You can see some photos of these events at the bottom of the report.

**Upcoming Events: Know your Services**
The intention of these workshops is to provide a comprehensive overview of the services and information that international graduate students need to be made aware of. In order to achieve this, I reached out to a variety of stakeholders to give 10-15-minute presentations and Q&A about particular topics. While these workshops are directed at international graduate students, they (especially the latter two) might be helpful for any graduate.
Know your Services: Funding and Work (16 September, 9-12 in Gordon Hall 302)

- Arthur Chen (QUIC): visas, work restrictions on and off campus and QUIC's tax assistance.
- Jenny Lee Northey (Career Services): Accessing employment and career support through Career Services.
- Chris Lambert (KEYS): How you or your family members/partners can access employment in Kingston
- Rohit Revi (PSAC 901): Speaks about worker's rights, the PSAC 901 union, and student advocacy
- Gillian B Berry/ and Beth Lake (Registrar Office): Managing your fees, when to pay, and payment plans
- Abel Hazon (SGPS): Emergency funding and jobs available through the SGPS
- A representative from Student Awards delves into the General Bursary and the Work Study Program
- A representative from the School of Graduate Studies talks about accessing funding through competitive scholarships such as the Vanier and the Trudeau.
- Kristen Spong (Mitacs): Unpacking Mitacs funding opportunities

Know your Services: Looking after yourself and your loved ones (19 September, 9-12 in Gordon Hall 302)

- Wendy Vuyk (ISKA): Integrating into Kingston and Community Health Centers
- Amanda Gray (QUIC): University Health Insurance Plan (UHIP) and QUIC activities
- Andria Burke (SGPS): Supplementary health care through the SGPS
- Arunima Khanna (Student Wellness): Health care facilities and services available on campus
- Kelly Smith and James Lighthart (ARC): Facilities and services available at the Athletics and Recreation Centre
- Kimberly Gascoigne & Jessica Bertrand (Hospitality Services): Food options and services on campus
- Heidi Penning (the Equity Office): About the Equity Office, its workshops and services
- Penny Zhang (SGPS): Equity spaces and groups on campus and in Kingston
- Susan Belyea (Ban Righ): Services for mature women and those with families.
- Anthony Lomax (SGPS): Keeping social, upcoming social events on campus and in Kingston
- Colette Steer (School of Graduate Studies): SGS Habitat, building community for you and your family, and accessing information about your services

Know your Services: Thriving as a Student (9 October, 9-12 in Gordon Hall 302)

- Colette Steer (SGS): Supervisor relations, Expanding Horizons, and Opportunities to Present your Research
- Leo Erlikhman (SGPS): Peer and Academic Advisors at the SGPS
- Hanna Stanbury (SGPS): Opportunities to speak and practice English
- Agnieszka Herra (SASS/QUIC): Expert writing and academic skills support for graduate students
- Douglas Ottney (Library): Library facilities, services and workshops available on campus
- Davin Carlson (ITS): Access to different software, technology through Queen's and SOLUS
- Andrea Reid (CTL): The services and resources available to you when teaching or working as a teaching assistant
- Dinah Jansen (CFRC): Opportunities to volunteer, be on radio, podcast and post PSAs
- Canan Sahin (ISWG): International Graduate Community Building and Advocacy

Upcoming Events: International Research Seminars
On the 25th of November, 9th of December, and 27 of January I intend to host a series of international research seminars. For each of these, I would ideally like 2-3 speakers about a specific region or country who are speaking about their research in that locale. If you have any ideas or suggestions about who might be good candidates for these sessions, please reach out to me (international@sgps.ca)

Upcoming Events: Beyond Boundaries Conference
The commissioners are collaborating to create a conference from the 29th of February to the 1st of March. We are in the final stages of creating the call for the conference and have already started forging some collaborations for its success with other bodies on campus. The aim of the conference will be to host a series of multi-disciplinary or multi-spatial panels discussing specific topics which will enable both graduate networking and academia. Keep your eyes peeled for the call coming out in September.
Beyond Canada Podcast
In a continued effort to showcase both the work of international students as well as the value and challenges of international research I have launched a podcast called Beyond Canada: International Thought & Scholarship. The first interviewee was Prince Michael Amegbor who discussed the blending health initiatives of sub-Saharan Africans living in Toronto. You can hear it on CFRC’s website and we are waiting for it to be released on other podcast channels soon. There will be one episode a month between now and April.

Other workings
Over and above the organization of events and the podcast I have been hard at work over the course of the summer to meet as many people as possible who work with international students. This has included meeting people in QUIC, SASS, Hospitality Services, Ban Righ, Career Services, PSAC901, SGS, ISWG, An Clachan and others. For the most part, these meetings have been about trying to understand the services they currently have for international students and the ways in which I can aid their efforts. I am slowly trying to create a catalogue of all of these.

To close
In a nutshell, it has been a productive summer and I have learnt a great deal about the services, opportunities, and potential challenges for international students at Queen’s University. I am looking forward to serving this community as best I can and hope that the above are a step in that direction. Once again, having departmental graduate student representatives would be an incredible resource in this regard and I encourage you to speak to your own Graduate Student Councils and reach out to me about who in your councils I can speak to about international student affairs.

I hope to see you at some of the events and look forward to any feedback, suggestions or ideas about anything I have already put forward.

Have an excellent start to your semester and I will see you in September.

Kindest regards,

Claudia Hirtenfelder
International Student Affairs Commissioner for the SGPS
Some crazy difficult games at Nexus! But so fun!

A beautiful day out in city park! Thanks Ban Righ for all the yummy food and awesome games!
Dear Council,

Over the summer I ran two events. The first, an Observatory Tour, was very successful. I chose to run this over the summer for a few reasons. First, because it has been popular in the past and it might draw people during the slower summer months. Second, because the skies are most clear during this time of the year. The event was well attended, and people continue to ask for it to be run again. This event was also attended by students with young families: six young children joined us for the tour! As reaching student families was one of my goals for this year, I was thrilled with this result. The second event occurred in partnership with Claudia (International Commissioner) and the Ban Righ Centre. We planned a Park Day that offered childcare, snacks, and activities. We had a lot of fun playing board games and getting to know SGPS members who attended. Unfortunately, while this event was geared toward families with young children, we did not see any families attend the event. While this was not the desired result, I believe that this was still an important event to run for a few reasons. First, the event recognized students with young families who are often overlooked. If we continue to create events like this, I believe that we can foster a more welcoming environment for these students. Second, we struck up an important partnership with Ban Righ that both institutions are eager to continue through cross-promoting events and sharing resources. I see this relationship as an important one to foster moving into the 2019-2020 school year.

Throughout the summer I was also busy helping to plan our Orientation Week events. A highlight of this work for me was developing a relationship with the Kingston Association of Museums, Historical Sites, and Art Galleries that led to a new museum tour event on our Orientation Week roster. This association has also expressed interest in running monthly or bi-monthly tours at various museums throughout Kingston, something I am very excited to pursue. I am also happy to announce that the Isabel Bader Centre has been willing to work with me to create a significant discount for groups of SGPS students on a list of events I have curated throughout the year. Students will be able to sign up for these shows in advance and we will buy the tickets in bulk.

Other than helping with Orientation Week, I am also planning a trip to the Lennox and Addington Dark Sky Viewing Area on September 27. At this location, the sky is as dark as it was 100 years ago. We will be participating in a laser-guided tour of the night sky. This is a new event for SGPS, but one that I hope will be popular based on the success of our Observatory Tours. I have also been helping to plan the Scholarship Beyond Boundaries Conference led by Claudia, where I have taken on the role of coordinating social events and catering.

Please feel free to contact me (social@sgps.ca) with any suggestions, questions, or comments about these or other events.

Sincerely,

Anthony Lomax
Social Commissioner, SGPS
Hello all,

The past couple of months (from May’19 till August’19) proved to be very productive for myself, as the Supervisor, in terms of learning while implementing to the maximum of my capabilities. Monthly events were finalized by all four commissioners in their respective year plans in the beginning of the session 2019-20. For the most part, all four commissioners were able to achieve their monthly event targets (successfully) except a few exceptions where the Equity and Athletic commissioners were not present in Kingston (with proper information to SGPS President as well as myself). This issue has been discussed and would be eliminated in future as the school year begins. All the commissioners would be in Kingston with Equity as well as Athletic commissions doubling up the events in the coming months.

My role: I, as Supervisor, have become more comfortable and familiar with SGPS and its operations in the past months. My prime target has been to make sure that the four commissions are meeting their targets in terms of engaging and benefitting SGPS members with the support of Andria (SGPS Director) as well as the executive. In order to do that, I organize biweekly meetings with all the commissioners for general event updates as well as potential events and collaborations. Other than that, in person meeting with each commissioner every month, has been very productive where we discuss in detail about how a particular event will be executed, bookings, time, dates and budgets. Once all the basic information for the events is finalized, I compile all the event information from the four commissioners and pass it along to Andria for graphics and marketing. Finally, I keep in continuous touch with Jeremy (President) and Andria (Director) to give periodic updates and discuss any potential issues.

Past Events: Starting from the very first month of the new SGPS team (2019-20), we have been able to successfully conduct a number of events for SGPS member staying in Kingston for the summer. The idea for summer events was keeping in mind SGPS member with spouses and kids as well. The other important aspect kept in mind while organizing these events was this year’s budget constraint due to ‘Student choice initiative’. Conscious efforts were made to be inclusive (family friendly) as well as keeping the events budget neutral and push more towards collaborative events within and outside the SGPS. The summer started off with some easy social events such as the ‘SGPS Board Game night at Nexus’ by the International commissioner and ‘SGPS Observatory tour’ by the Social Commissioner. The Athletic and wellness commissioner also organized a ‘Running group’ event which continued every Sunday for the month of July. However, another Athletic event (Beginner’s Kayaking) had to be cancelled due to low ticket sale which could be an effect of less number of people during summer. Finally, the biggest event in terms of budget for Summer’19 was the ‘SGPS Midsummer picnic’ at the City park in which Social, International and Equity commissions collaborated with the Ban-Righ center for an outside social designed for students and families alike. Out of these events, the observatory tour as well as the Midsummer picnic have a high potential to be conducted again in future and showed highest engagement.

Other work: Other than the regular activities planned by myself and the commissioner, some side activities have also been carried out during the summer and some other have been planned for upcoming terms. These include Summer Intramurals by the Athletics commissioners, Charlie, with the involvement of Leo, VP Graduate at SGPS. The Equity commissioner, Penny has also been involved in external committee work with the Equity Office at Queen’s, BEAG and SEEC. Penny is also planning to develop an SGPS equity committee which will discuss equity issues faced by graduate students and encourage diversity and inclusivity on campus. The international commissioner, Claudia on the other hand, has been invited (along with myself) by QUIC for QUIC’s Graduate orientation to inform new graduate international students about SGPS and its services. She also runs the SGPS International student affairs page on Facebook to give important information to International students and understand diverse student voices on campus. Moreover, Claudia has been conducting a series of podcasts interviews on the theme ‘Beyond Canada’ (to be released in Fall term) to highlight international scholarships and research done by Queen’s graduate students internationally. Anthony, the social commissioner, has come up with an innovative new plan in collaboration with the Isabel Bader Center of Performing Arts in which some of the events will be selected from Isabel’s year plan for which the SGPS will buy group tickets which will be then available for SGPS member
for lower prices. Charlie, the Athletics and wellness commissioner, has also started to work on the very popular ‘Sports hours’ to continue the SGPS sports hour legacy and encourage more and more students to participate in fitness and healthy activities.

**Orientation week:** Myself, Andria and the social commissioner, Anthony has been heavily involved to organize the orientation week events over the summer as well. This year a major attention has been diverted to orientation week as the student choice initiative opt-out scheme will be in effect from this year. Orientation week is the very first SGPS impression on ‘potential’ SGPS members. In order to inform graduate and professional students of SGPS services, activities and benefits, Myself, along with social commissioner and Andria have come up with an Orientation week full of informative as well as networking events for incoming students to make immediate connection. The event list includes: Queen’s Campus amazing race, Night at the museums, 1000 Island Boat cruise, Speed meeting and Trivia at Alibi, Hike to Rock Dunder, Wolfe Island Corn maze and an International Mixer at Queens University International Centre (QUIC). This will help incoming students in getting familiar with campus, Kingston as well as their peer in the most exciting and amusing way. Special efforts have been made to advertise the orientation week activities by reaching out to maximum number of SGPS members, not just by SGPS social media, but also through other services’ social media on campus such as CFRC, where Public announcements on radio have been set up for the month of August as well as an interview podcast on airwave will go live one week before orientation, conducted by Myself and the commissioners.

**Future plan:** Although a temporary plan for future events have already been set in the year plan but the key focus at the moment is for a number of September events. These events are separate from the orientation events. Equity commissioner, Penny Zhang, will be organizing 2 equity workshops: Equity, diversity and inclusivity training and bystander intervention training on Sept 12 and 17 respectively. Moreover, equity commissioner has been interested in the sustainability week and is planning to conduct an environmental justice event on Sept 30th. The social commissioner has planned another tour to ‘The Lennox & Addington Dark Sky Viewing Area’ in the month of September as social tours have been successful in the past and students seem to show increasing interest in exploring new places in Kingston. The international commissioner has organized an amazing free ‘Know your services’ workshops for September and October (3 workshops on different themes). These are designed for international graduate students, however all SGPS member can take benefit from these as it brings different valuable services available for students on campus under one roof. Finally, free yoga sessions have been planned by the Athletic and Wellness commissioner to start off the new term with fresh energy and enthusiasm.

The fall term has been intensively and carefully planned, especially the month of September and October, in order to make students aware of SGPS services and its benefits. This is the underlining aim for all the activities planned with the hope to get least number of opt outs and maximum benefit to Graduate and professional students as well as SGPS as an organization.

Uchitta Vashist  
Supervisor  
Society of Graduate and Professional Students  
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