I would first like to begin by apologizing to the council for my inability to attend tonight’s meeting and thank everyone for their attendance and continued participation in the SGPS over the summer months. I will use this report to outline both the challenges and the focus for the SGPS in 2019-2020.

**Student Choice Initiative**  
I am sure that many on the council are aware of the provincial government’s Student Choice Initiative that will fundamentally change the way the SGPS operates. For the first time, the SGPS fee and membership will be optional. This will have profound effects on our budget as well as our membership and how we deliver services. While it will take until after the opt-out period in the fall before we know the full extent of the fee structure change on the budget and operations of the SGPS, this executive will be committed to ensuring that responsible measures are taken to protect the society’s ability to provide value and services to its members.

It will be imperative that everyone involved with the SGPS from the executive to all members of council become champions of the SGPS in an effort to dissuade students from opting out of the SGPS fee and renew our commitment to providing value to our members.

**Policy and By-Law**  
Reviewing the Policy and By-Law of the SGPS it is clear that the document is confusingly written and contains sections that are either impossible to enforce or contain no actions items for the executive or council. I look forward to working with the council to review Policy and By-Law and produce a document that holds the executive accountable and clearly identifies the objectives of the SGPS.

**The Executive & Council**  
A key goal of this executive will be to increase engagement with the council. It is important that the SGPS functions in a collaborative and cooperative fashion. SGPS council meetings should be marked with a variety of voices that work together to advance the goals of the SGPS. I look forward to working with many of you through committees as well as meeting throughout the school year.

This year presents a number of unique challenges that will force the SGPS to refocus its mission on providing advocacy and value to its members. This is not just the responsibility of the executive, but of all SGPS council members. I believe that together we can work to meet these challenges and emerge a stronger society than before. I look forward to meeting and working with many of you!

Jeremy
Hello Council,

I’d like to start my report by welcoming all of our new members who have started their programs this month and wish them success in their programs. This month marks the start of my second term as the SGPS’s Vice President Graduate and I would again like to thank the membership for allowing me to serve you all again this year. With the student choice initiative coming this fall the executive have been working hard to ensure that members will still be able to access services moving forward.

**Graduate Peer Support Centre**

Our two Coordinators Olivia Giovannetti and Arthi Meyyappan have been hired to begin the summer long process of launching our Graduate Peer Support Centre. We have had a successful first meeting with Student Wellness Services and our coordinators will be working throughout the summer to get the program up and running in for our Fall Pilot Program. The Centre will be open to all graduate students regardless of membership as the society continues to work to ensure that the graduate community at Queen’s can continue to grow and flourish.

**Graduate Student Success Working Group**

The Graduate Student Success Working Group will have its final meetings this month to put forward a draft document filled with recommendations to improve our community. Our conversations and meetings have covered a variety of topics including but not limited to: Funding, Supervision and Supervisory policies, Housing, Communications, Wellness and more. This working groups recommendation will bring more positive changes to graduate life at Queen’s University and I would like to thank Dr. Quadir for his leadership and commitment since his tenure began to promote graduate wellness.

**GSEC**

GSEC will be discussing the new supervisory discussion document at our upcoming meeting. Once this document is approved at this level we can begin working on a roll out to students and faculty to ensure that students have a tool to guide conversations between students and supervisors. This has taken over a year to get this project through to the finish line and we feel that with some work at the department and faculty level these documents can be tailored to each department and in turn students needs. Empowering students to have the tough conversations early with their supervisors and with the hope of removing some of the communication issues that can come forward in these vital relationships.

I look forward to working with you all this year.

Leo
Hello Council,

I would like to thank Lauren Peacock and all of last year’s executive team for a very thorough transition. Tyler Morrison did a great job leading the transition retreat and answering many of the questions I had.

I am excited to be joining the team this year and I look forward to working with everyone to improve the experience of graduate and professional students at Queen’s.

Over the past several months, I have been transitioning into the role by participating in various meetings, attending workshops, and developing a plan for the areas I would like to focus on in this role.

One particularly valuable experience I had was taking part in the Staff Hiring workshop as part of employment equity training organized by the Queen’s Equity Office. This workshop is something I will be advocating for all future members of the SGPS executive to attend.

I will now outline some of the projects I am working on this year.

The role of Vice President Professional has historically been in charge of planning and coordinating Careers Week with the School of Graduate Studies in October. Due to the fact that the School of Graduate Studies traditionally has a lot of events happening that week, it is sufficient for the SGPS to supplement October Careers Week with two more events. I would like to focus on increasing the turnout of these events rather than increasing the number of events. This can be done by scheduling and advertising the events well in advance (several weeks prior) so that students can carve out time to attend. I believe organizing Excel Workshops and LinkedIn Professional Headshots would be of great value to graduate and professional students.

If there is a large turnout at Careers Week in October, hosting another Careers Week during the Winter term may be beneficial as well. This should be considered after Careers Week in October and taking into account potential attendance and budget.

I would like to establish regular communication between the SGPS and representatives from the Law Students’ Society, Concurrent Education Students’ Association, and the Aesculapian Society. I have been in contact with the Law Students’ Society about this and will be reaching out to the Concurrent Education Students’ Association and the Aesculapian Society. A forum for communication such as Slack should be established. As VP Professional, I plan on attending the meetings of these organizations so that the SGPS can work with them toward common goals. For example, more communication with these organizations will likely lead to higher attendance at SGPS events, such as Careers Week.

The Peer Tutoring program at Queen’s Law has lost its funding. Traditionally, upper year students were paid by the university to act as peer tutors to first year law students. It is now going to be transitioning into an entirely volunteer-based program. This will likely affect the number of available tutors and lead to a reduction in the amount of time tutors are willing to spend with their tutees. Outgoing SGPS President Tyler Morrison has noted that there is an alternative to simply accepting that the peer tutoring program will be entirely volunteer-based. Indeed, the other option is to create a fee that would be on the Law Students’ Society fee slate through the SGPS. The Student Choice Initiative allows tutoring services to have a mandatory fee for funding. A referendum on imposing this fee carried out by the Law Students’ Society would be required. If the fee were to be approved, it would not be effective until the next academic year. I plan on working with the Law Students’ Society to gauge interest in this proposal and to eventually help carry out a referendum on the matter through the Law Students’ Society.
I am happy to take any questions, suggestions, or comments you may have. I can be reached at vp.professional@sgps.ca. I look forward to working with you all this year.

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 first report is that, as of now, we do not have an intention to strike the 2019-2020 Finance Committee because our grants and bursaries applications will not be accepted until the Fall semester has begun. The rationale for this, and what I think is the most prudent course of action, is to wait until we have a better idea of what our finale fee slate will look like and what our enrolment numbers (opt-ins vs opt-outs) will look like.

I am aware that some departmental student societies have their orientation events in the summer and have in the past relied on funding from the SGPS. We will work with those groups when the time comes to help them ensure that their events still take place.

For now, I wish you all the best summer.

Best regards,

Abel Hazon
VPFS
No Report—Position Vacant
Dear SGPS Council,

To begin with, I am highly obliged to be in the supervisor position for the Summer 2019 term and I look forward to working with you all to implement the vision and goals of the graduate and professional student. As last week marked the official start of my position, I, along with the commissioners have only been able to complete the paperwork for the contracts and attend an introductory meeting with Jeremy Ambraska (President). The meeting’s agenda was to formally meet the new team, discuss the expectation of the roles, talk about the changes that have occurred this year and how that would affect the year plan.

I’d like to take this opportunity to introduce myself and mention a few tasks planned for the coming weeks. I am currently pursuing my Master's in Applied Sciences in the Mining Department. I have been connected with the SGPS as the “Deputy International Commissioner” in 2018-19 school year. Originally, I come from the North of India and have been a part of Queen’s since Fall’17. Other than the SGPS, I am also involved with QUIC-Queen’s University International Center as Student staff as well as in a number of student lead clubs on campus for the past 2 years.

My ultimate aim during my time in this position is to set up a plan for the coming year, along with the commissioners, and further initiate the engagement and activities, as planned, from the next month in order for the commissioners to smoothly continue throughout the whole year. I intend to create enough content before the orientation period. Moreover, I will also be working on some new ideas with the commissioners based on previous year experiences in consultation with the executive committee and Andria Burke (Director)

Currently, Andria will be leading a SGPS specific training session with me and the incoming commissioners majorly about producing the year plan. I also have a transition meeting planned with Isabel Luce (outgoing VP community) to learn a few management strategies as well as what worked and did not work well last year. I will also be in conversion with the commissioners and Andria about the orientation planning and intramurals starting this week.

That’s it from me for now! I’ll be working more with the commissioners this summer to bring you some really great events and addressing some of the more pressing concerns facing graduate students. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to email me at supervisor@sgps.ca

Sincerely,

Uchitta Vashist
Supervisor
supervisor@sgps.ca
Dear Council,

My name is Charlie Clarry and I am the new Athletics and Wellness Commissioner. I am a Physiotherapy student in my first of 2 years and am very excited to be joining the SGPS team this year. With my experience, in combination with your ideas and help, I look forward to leading initiatives and organizing events to better the SGPS community.

Thus far, I have been working towards getting the SGPS summer intramural softball, ultimate, and soccer teams set up and organized to start this week. I plan to speak with the previous commissioner, Larkin, and any of you who can put forth advice or ideas for the year. I have a broad spectrum of experience in both athletics and wellness and am very open to any and all suggestions for events/initiatives.

I am currently in the process of developing a plan for the year and look forward to hearing your input as well as working closely with all of you to execute the plan and support you in your respective positions.

I again welcome suggestions or comments regarding my role and can be reached at athletics@sgps.ca.

Charlie Clarry

Athletics and Wellness Commissioner

Society of Graduate and Professional Students
Dear Council,

I am pleased to announce that I will be the incoming Equity and Diversity Commissioner for the 2019-2020 school year. I am a third-year law student and I look forward to being more involved in the SGPS this year. I am currently reviewing the commissioner manual and transitioning into the role. I am also working on the year plan and budget for the year and hope to build upon the initiatives of the past Equity and Diversity Commissioners as well as plan new events with a focus towards equity and diversity engagement and awareness.

Unfortunately, I am unable to attend this month’s council meeting in person but I look forward to meeting everyone and working together on the various committees. I am excited to collaborate with the other Commissioners for events throughout the year. I will be having my transition meeting with Catrina soon and hope to gain some great insights on what made past events successful that can help inform my plans for the year, especially as we’ll be working with a potentially limited budget.

I am always open to any comments, questions, or suggestions and welcome any ideas for collaborative events. Please feel free to contact me at equity@sgps.ca.

Best regards,

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

I was recently hired as the new International Student Affairs Commissioner for the SGPS. I look forward to working in the role over the course of the next year and I hope to continue the good work that was carried out by the former Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner, Atul Jaiswal and Utchitta Vashist.

I am from South Africa have travelled extensively and been a university student on three different continents. Now I am enrolled as a PhD student in the Geography department and will be at Queens until 2022. I am also a member of the International Student Working Group (ISWG) at Queen’s University.

Through my role as International Student Affairs Commissioner, I hope to better understand the social and financial lives of international students as well as generate opportunities through which international students and international research can be appreciated. I would also like to continue to advocate for the inclusion of International Student Representatives within Departmental Graduate Student Councils as well as find interesting avenues of collaboration between the SGPS, the ISWG and QUIC.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to help build on and expand the work of the SGPS as the International Student Affairs Commissioner. I am excited for what is in store.

Kindest regards,
Claudia Hirtenfelder
Dear Council,

I am very excited to start planning events as Social Commissioner for the 2019-2020 year and would like to thank Jeremy and Andria for the opportunity. I would also like to thank Beatrice, who reached out and has offered to meet me and discuss her experience as Social Commissioner last year. We have made a plan to do this in the near future. My current focus is on creating a year plan for social events and organizing orientation week. I'm looking forward to working with and for SGPS members to plan fun events that will serve the needs of a diverse community.

I’d like to share a few aims that I have for this year. Budget uncertainties make it necessary for me to plan a few different scenarios: one in which I scale back the number of events we host, and another based on what we have been able to afford to offer in the past. In doing so, I hope to be able to react quickly and effectively to whatever may come out of the more explicit “opt out” process this September. I hope that we can use budget uncertainty as a way to work effectively with, instead of competing against, graduate departments that put on their own orientations. Further, I aim to have clear lines of communication with the other SGPS Commissioners so that we can maximize our impact for our members. I also plan to glean as much information as I can from feedback given about past SGPS events so that I can better understand what members are looking for.

On that note, if anyone has any feedback about past events or suggestions for future ones, I would very much like to hear them. Feel free to email me at social@sgps.ca.

Looking forward to working with you all,

Anthony Lomax