Hello everyone,

Below is my report, much of which I shared in the Executive message.

**COVID-19**
We continue to sit on the stakeholders' group and will update students throughout the process. We are also continuing to work with the administration dealing with academics, tuition, grading, evaluation, and accommodation.

As of now, I am sure most of you have seen the Provost’s response to PSAC 901’s tuition suspension campaign. I would like to congratulate PSAC 901 on their campaign and thank the individual students who took the time to sign the petition. Unfortunately, the response received was the same that the SGPS received when we brought the issue forward on March 24th. The SGPS will continue to press the issue with the administration and make the case for additional financial support for students that need it most. We also remain committed to working with all campus partners on the issue.

I would like to highlight again some of the actions that we have taken. The SGPS has also made funds available to medical students 3D printing PPE for healthcare workers and we have also opened made funds available for students to access as emergency grants for those of you most affected by COVID-19. We have shared this information on social media.

Lastly, we have increased our zoom capabilities to allow for 500 members to zoom in.

**STUDENT CHOICE INITIATIVE**
Unfortunately, we were informed that the government has been granted leave to appeal the Divisional Court's ruling regarding SCI. This does not mean that the SCI is coming back, but it does mean it may potentially in the future. We expect that given our experience dealing with SCI 1.0 the SGPS will be in a better position to deal with SCI 2.0 if the government is successful.

We do not have a timeline for when a decision will be made due to the courts' closure, but we will update the membership and ensure the incoming executive is transitioned on the steps the SGPS took in dealing with SCI 1.0.

We are really in uncharted water and the road ahead will most likely be difficult, but we remain committed to providing effective advocacy and support for students at this time.

Thank you,

Jeremy Ambraska
Hello everyone,

Currently, we are in the ‘state of emergency’ announced by the Ontario government and recently by the city of Kingston too. It is tough for everyone, but I am sure, by following the best practices recommended by health professionals and with each other’s support, we will get through this. For latest updates from Kingston regarding COVID 19, visit the city of Kingston website [https://www.cityofkingston.ca/resident/covid-19](https://www.cityofkingston.ca/resident/covid-19). In the light of COVID 19, all in person SGPS events have been cancelled until further notice. March events, including Grad Games, SGPS’ Got Talent, and a trip to Little Cat for Maple Madness were all cancelled due to COVID-19. The Equity commission’s “Intercultural film series”, a collaboration with QUIC World Link program was also called off for the term. Also, another screening & ice-cream social (joint event with law school club Outlaw) for a documentary screening "Of Love and Law" about LGBTQ+ law and activism in Japan and a speaker event with guest speaker -Hadiya Roderique, author of "Black on Bay Street" were also jointly cancelled.

The social commissioner has been a part of a virtual panel that interviewed applicants for the various commissioner roles for 2020-2021 over Zoom along with other committee members: Justine, Ryan, and Andria. The social commissioner is also chairing our awards committee that will determine who has won our four SGPS awards along with John, Justine, Courtney, Tamara, and Matthew for their help with this process, as well as Andria for her administrative work. Moving forward, we hope to plan some virtual events to help with the loneliness of social distancing. These will include a board game tournament online using Pogo Games. We may also try to set up another online movie night. Our first was not well-attended, could be due to an adjustment period while people get into a new routine.

The Scholarship Beyond Boundaries Conference was a huge success. Congratulations to Sean Marrs for the most engaging poster and to Ansha Nega Ahmed, Navjit Gaurav, and Jonathan Lommen for the most engaging panel. Each of them received a certificate and a prize valued at $100. The international commission has released three additional episodes on Beyond Canada Podcast and currently trying to figure out how to conduct interviews remotely so that the podcast can continue. As always if you know someone who might like to be featured please put them in touch with Claudia.

The International Student Working Group and the SGPS Executive did a lot of work over the semester to have conversations with the university’s administration about the financial situation of international graduate students at the university. The ISWG handed in a petition in which hundreds of students (both domestic and international) asked that international students pay the same fees as domestic students. This petition was given directly to Principal Patrick Dean.

Something else that was meant to be launched this month but which we are postponing for a short while is the announcement of two international scholarship awards. These have been delayed due to the current situation on campus.

For the equity commission, all in person equity committee meetings are cancelled as per university and provincial policy. SVPHR has some policy review that can be done remotely but nothing else is as per usual right now. The equity commissioner has planned to get involved in the health pledge as it seems like a great idea to send out with health-conscious information about safety practices now. The original idea was to have the pledge at council meetings and for councillors to share with their faculties as a photo activity. It can still be sent to the council members and they can then post on their faculty instagram/facebook album or they can send it to the SGPS for a facebook album or an instagram post as well. More details to come. Penny is also working on wrapping up her consultation report from fall.
I am yet in the process to transition Anthony, incoming VP community. 2 one on one meetings and draft transition report as already been shared. We still have 1-2 meetings planned and Anthony is kept in constant loop about all the ongoing executive matters related to community and campaigning on campus. One of our ongoing goal is for a more collaborative and structured Fall 2020 orientation, an important project for current (myself) and incoming VP Community. In the initial meeting with the SGS, it was discussed that SGPS will get a time slot within the main SGS orientation held in the first week of September which has been confirmed now. SGS will also work on creating a memo that proposes alternative dates to the departments to conduct departmental orientations which could potentially help students with overlapping orientation sessions. Regular updates will be provided to departments, other stakeholders on campus and SGPS to have better communication this year around orientation plans.

Uchitta Vashist
Vice President Community
Society of Graduate & Professional Students (SGPS)
Queen’s University Kingston,
Ontario
vp.community@sgps.ca
Members,

The following is the general summary of the bursaries and grants utilization as at Thursday, March 26th 2020

**Bursaries**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Row Labels</th>
<th>Total applicants to date (Total last year)</th>
<th>Total $ Disbursed</th>
<th>Budgeted</th>
<th>Average Bursary (Maximum allowed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dental</td>
<td>15 (19)</td>
<td>5,303.75</td>
<td>5,000.00</td>
<td>662.97 (800)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emergency</td>
<td>25 (31)</td>
<td>3,790.50</td>
<td>10,000.00</td>
<td>344.59 (450)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International</td>
<td>45** (50)</td>
<td>7,600.00</td>
<td>7,500.00*</td>
<td>200.00 (200)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports/Activity</td>
<td>19 (49)</td>
<td>1,610.08</td>
<td>5,000.00</td>
<td>123.92 (150)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grand Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>104 (149)</strong></td>
<td><strong>18,305.23</strong></td>
<td><strong>27,500.00</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Grants**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Row Labels</th>
<th>Total applicants to date (Total last year)</th>
<th>Rejected</th>
<th>Total $ Disbursed</th>
<th>Budgeted</th>
<th>Average Grant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accessibility</td>
<td>2 (1)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>847</td>
<td>5,000.00</td>
<td>847.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Departmental Student Council</td>
<td>8 (19)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1,820</td>
<td>10,000.00</td>
<td>455.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity &amp; Inclusion</td>
<td>5**** (6)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2,600</td>
<td>5,000.00</td>
<td>520.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainability</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2,500***</td>
<td>5,000.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health and wellbeing</td>
<td>4*****</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4,000.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grand Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>19 (26)</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td><strong>7,767</strong></td>
<td><strong>29,000.00</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* = I have allocated $2,500 of the Sustainability Grant into the International Student Bursary (ISB)
** = We have already maximized this again with new applicants
*** = This accounts for an allocation of half this fund to the ISB fund
**** = This number has been reduced by one since my last update because we one entity has returned the money due to event cancellation
***** = These applications have not been disbursed yet

**Replenishing the Emergency bursary**

Last year, I campaigned on a promise to increase the funds available to help students who are most in need. Operationally, I knew this would be a difficult task in light of the impending Student Choice Initiative and the anticipated scarcity of resources. Despite this, we were able to double the budget allocated to the Emergency Bursary from $5,000 to $10,000. While there was no way that anyone would have predicted the need for this money, the decision has proven handy given the health crisis facing our students and the community at large.
Just like the replenishment we’ve made to the International Student Bursary last month; we have decided to allocate all unused bursary or grant monies towards the Emergency Bursary. This has the effect of almost tripling the fund to $30,000 to service students who are in need and are facing unexpected expenses.

**Temporarily Closing Grants and Bursaries**

As of Tuesday March 24, we made the decision to temporarily close our Bursaries and Grants. This decision was made for two reasons. The first was to find an alternative means of disbursing funds to students given that many recipients have moved, our finance director working from home, and our office being closed to students. This has since been solved with the move to Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT). The second reason was to make a decision on replenishing of the Emergency Bursary. As discussed above, this has also since been solved.

As always, the Finance Committee is in good standing.

Always happy to take your questions.

Abel Hazon
VPFS
Hello Members,

I want to start by thanking all of you for trusting me to be your Vice President Graduate over this past two years. It has been an honour to work for all of you and over the past two years we have been able to achieve some incredible things related to international student tuition, graduate student mental health supports and graduate representation on campus to name a few. All of these achievements are a testament to the development of the graduate community on campus.

**COVID – 19**

We are currently dealing with an unprecedented situation with the COVID-19 crisis and I want to assure students that we are doing the best we can to deal with the crisis. I want to thank the students that have reached out to me and other executive members with concerns that they have had related to the ongoing situation on campus. This has allowed the SGPS executive to be better advocates to the university’s senior leadership team.

For students whose research has been affected by the suspensions in human ethics clearance for both GREB and HSRED I have been told by the Dean that the university will review all cases to ensure that time to completion issues are mitigated by the crisis or that no penalty be placed on a student should this impact the amount of time needed for completion.

For course-based students the University has informed me that departments have been given the opportunity to allow students to have pass/fail options included onto their transcripts once final grades have been distributed. Students who are interested in this option should contact their department heads to see if they will transition to this feature. We are continuing to advocate that this should be a university-wide practice to ensure that no student is disadvantaged by the new mode of academic delivery.

**Peer Support**

The Graduate Peer Support Centre will be re-opening during this time to ensure that students who feel isolated have someone to speak too. We are working on establishing a digital platform for the GPSC to operate from and are determining the hours of operation for the service and will let the membership know this week what our timeline to re-opening looks like.

The Peer Academic Advisor Program is continuing to operate as usual providing digital access to students who need support. For students who are facing academic or university related issues and are need of some support please do not hesitate to contact our advisor team at advisors@sgps.ca I want to thank the advisors Pete, Hannah and Logan for their hard work this past term. They have been incredible advocates for students on campus and will continue to do so. I also want to congratulate our new advisors who will begin training as soon as possible to fill out our staff compliment.
**Graduate Representation on Campus**

Our motion at Senate was successful and referred to SNGC to increase the number of graduate student senators on campus. This will allow for more graduate student voices to be heard at one of the university's highest bodies. Thank you to Courtney for bringing the motion to the Senate floor on behalf of the SGPS and we wish her and the new executive luck in bringing this motion home.

If students have any other concerns, please do not hesitate to bring them to my attention.

Cheers
Leo
Hello SGPS Members,

I hope you are all doing well during this period of uncertainty. A few updates from me:

**General COVID-19 Update**

The SGPS Main Office is closed until further notice. However, the SGPS Executive and staff are still working and can be reached by email. For health and dental plan assistance, please contact healthdental@sgps.ca. Please direct all other general inquiries to director@sgps.ca. Thank you for understanding.

**Advocacy regarding COVID-19**

Over the past few weeks, a number of major developments have occurred at the university, including in-person classes being cancelled, online classes being instituted, a move to a distance exam format, and changes in the exam grading policy for some classes. I have been in close contact with members of the university administration to ensure that student voices are heard and taken into account when major decisions such as these are being made. In particular, I have emphasized the concerns that students have about maintaining the status quo grading policy, and not moving to pass/fail.

**Hiring Commissioners**

The incoming President, incoming VP Community, and myself are sitting on the panel that is hiring commissioners. We are hiring the Equity & Diversity, International, Social, and Athletics Commissioners. We have received many great applications and the interviews have been going very well so far. Thank you for advertising these positions within your departments.

**Transitioning**

I am continuing to meet remotely with my successor, John, to ensure that he is ready to take over the role May 1. On April 2, I will be sending him another extensive written transition document that elaborates on responsibilities within the portfolio of the VP Professional.

Ryan Adlem
Vice President Professional
Dear Council,

I hope you are all doing well given the current situation. Below are a few of the projects that I will begin working on with various organizations on campus including Four Directions, AMS, QNSA, and Office of Indigenous Initiatives.

1. **Indigenizing spaces on Campus**

   AMS and Office of Indigenous Initiatives have begun discussions on creating two student murals in the ARC which will represent indigenous socio-cultural student life at Queen’s University. There is the hope of having one mural entirely done by a student and the other mural a collaboration with a well-established artist who would be willing to use this mural as a mentorship opportunity for emerging indigenous student artists.

   If you have any ideas on how we can indigenize spaces on campus, that is more than art on the wall, please to get in contact with me and I would be happy to hear.

2. **Pow Wow Working Group**

   This project is currently on pause due to the current uncertainty of the COVID-19 situation. I have been in contact with other indigenous student groups and organizations through email and Zoom to develop an action plan for how we can continue to work on this project virtually.

3. **Indigenous Reads Talking Circle**

   This project is like the Queen’s Reads program, however, geared towards graduate students and the primary focus would be Indigenous authors and scholarship in Canada and US. The idea of this project is to develop community building within the graduate student life at Queen’s University. It would be open to both indigenous and non-indigenous allies across all departments that are passionate and interested in decolonizing methodologies and indigenizing the academy. Readings for this group could include chapters from books such as Robin Wall Kimmer’s *Braiding Sweetgrass*, journal articles, reports, etc. Currently the project would start with an online platform (i.e. starting a Facebook group), then begin bi-weekly meetings to discuss themes, ideas presented in the readings. Readings would be chosen based on their online availability, so students need not worry about buying books.

   If you are interested in helping build this project such as suggested readings for discussion, please feel free to contact me.
Other items to think about while moving forward into a new term:

- **Land Acknowledgement/Welcome to Territory**

  I am wondering if it would be beneficial to hold an information session or workshop on the importance and idea around a land acknowledgement/welcome to territory? It began as a response to the TRC’s Calls to Action and now has become so sterile in some cases that it no longer holds meaning or value (i.e. the voice recording at the Isabel Bader Center for Performing Arts).

- **Cultural Safety Training**

  I would like to include cultural safety training as mandatory training for SGPS staff and optional for SGPS council and members. Cultural safety training consists of three modules that include the KAIROS blanket exercise which is a kinesthetic learning experience going through 500 years of indigenous history and experiences in Canada in the span of 3 hours. The two other modules are lecture based, focusing on relationship building and terminology relating to and involving indigenous peoples in Canada. Total training is 6 hours.

  This training of course would be postponed until further notice due to the COVID-19 restrictions.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding the land acknowledgement or cultural safety training, please feel free to contact me.

**Paige Van Tassel**  
SGPS Indigenous Graduate Liaison  
indigenous@sgps.ca
Hello everyone!

I hope you have all been staying healthy. There have been a couple big events happening at senate this semester. One of the biggest motions happened in January 2020 senate, in which it was decided that the 2021-2022 Fall term break take place on the Thursday and Friday preceding the Thanksgiving weekend. It was our hope that with a longer continuous fall break graduate students would be able to take advantage of it and spend time relaxing or with family. There will be a survey being sent around to all students in the spring of 2020 collecting options about the spring break, I would encourage you all to fill it out!

In February Senate Principal Deane reported that Representatives of U15 universities were recently in Ottawa for a meeting, at which discussion focused on potential investments in the sector from the federal government. It has been made clear that no significant broad-based investments in research should be expected. It is likely that the government will take steps to fund research that is coordinated to address national problems related to priority areas such as climate change and green technology, smart cities, and northern communities.

March Senate was held remotely, but during such our motion to the Senate Governance and Nomination Committee to have them look at increasing the number of graduate student senators by two was passed. The motion was worded as: That the Senate Governance and Nominating Committee examine the composition of the Senate as it concerns the number of elected graduate student senators in consideration of the proportionate number of graduate students studying at the University and, specifically, to examine the desirability and feasibility of adding up to two additional graduate student senators to the Senate. During this meeting there was also much discussion about COVID-19 and the steps Queen’s will need to take in the coming months. The Senate Agenda and Summer Action Committee which runs during the summer months and makes decisions on behalf of senate, was given greater oversight to ensure classes will run as smoothly as possible next year.

The last senate meeting will be running April 14th. I am also looking forward in continuing to serve the SGPS as VP Graduate in May!

Cheers

Courtney Bannerman
Hello everyone,

This has been a surreal and uncomfortable month and I hope that you are all managing. I am going to structure this report slightly differently to how I usually structure things. I will give a brief overview of everything that has been achieved this semester and then I am going to outline some important information for international students regarding Covid-19. This information has been gathered from University sources here in one place so that it acts as an additional resource for international students and/or for GSCs to give to their international students.

1. Winter 2020

All things considered it has been a successful and interesting semester.

The Scholarship Beyond Boundaries Conference was a huge success and I would like to say a congratulations Sean Marrs for the most engaging poster and to Ansha Nega Ahmed, Navjit Gaurav, and Jonathan Lommen for the most engaging panel. Each of them received a certificate and a prize valued at $100. I hope that the SGPS will consider making this a regular flagship event. I am currently working through the recordings from the conference and that audio should be available soon.

The international commission has released three additional episodes on Beyond Canada Podcast and I am currently trying to figure out how to conduct interviews remotely so that the podcast can continue. As always if you know someone who might like to be featured please put them in touch with me as I am creating a list.

The International Student Working Group and the SGPS Executive did a lot of work over the semester to have conversations with the university’s administration about the financial situation of international graduate students at the university. The ISWG handed in a petition in which hundreds of students (both domestic and international) asked that international students pay the same fees as domestic students. This petition was given directly to Principal Patrick Dean. These conversations seemed to be making some head way but as of yet no official statements have been made.

Graduate students in general, and international graduates in particular, are feeling the pressure of a loss of work and the looming prospect of having to pay summer tuition fees. In light of that the PSAC.901 has started a petition asking the university to consider waiving fees for the summer semester. You can access that here.

I will be using the rest of this semester and my self-isolation to try and work on some admin that will help with future operations of this commission. I will also be reaching out to GSCs to continue discussions about the International Student Graduate Network.

Something else that was meant to be launched this month but which we are postponing for a short while is the announcement of two international scholarship awards. These have been delayed due to the current situation on campus, but I am hoping that these are something we can look into again in the next financial year.
2. International Students and Covid-19

There has been a fair bit of information coming in thick and fast and a lot of it pertains to international students. Due to the fast changing nature of everything I am going to just list resources here with active links so that you are able to there directly and get as up to date information as possible:

- The most up to date information regarding the university and the virus can be accessed here.
- Information for the School of Graduate Students for Graduate Students in particular can be accessed here. There is important information on this page that deals with issues for International Students in particular.
- Information for Queen’s students who are currently abroad can be accessed here. There is an opportunity to apply for some financial support if you are returning from what was Queen’s related activities.

QUIC is doing its best to move operations online and they remain committed to helping and serving international students. They have several upcoming Zoom workshops, including: UHIP Health Insurance (25 March, 10-11), Visas, Permits and Immigration (26 March, 10-11).

If there is any other information you think I should make available to international students please let me know and I will ensure it is shared on the Facebook Page.

Keep Safe, Healthy, and Happy!

Kindest regards,
Claudia Hirtenfelder
international@sgps.ca
Dear Council,

Like many of the other reports that I’m sure will be written here, I will start by saying that I hope you are all staying well during this period of self-isolation. COVID-19 has created a much different working environment for us at SGPS. March events, including Grad Games, SGPS’ Got Talent, and a trip to Little Cat for Maple Madness were all cancelled. Today (Wednesday, March 25) I was part of a virtual panel that interviewed applicants for the various commissioner roles for 2020-2021 over Zoom. I’m thankful to Justine, Ryan, and Andria for being on the panel with me. We had a great group of candidates and I’m grateful to all of them for taking the time to submit applications. Tomorrow (Thursday, March 26) I will chair our awards committee that will determine who has won our four awards. I would like to thank John, Justine, Courtney, Tamara, and Matthew for their help with this process, as well as Andria for her administrative work.

Moving forward, we hope to plan some virtual events to help with the loneliness of social distancing. These will include a board game tournament online using Pogo Games. I may also try to set up another online movie night. Our first was not well-attended, but I feel that this might be due to an adjustment period while people get into a new routine.

During the Scholarship Beyond Boundaries Conference, I also met a few contacts who may hopefully turn into community partners for us for our orientation. The Kingston Association of Museums, who worked with us last year, is looking to create further collaborations. Further Tone Deaf Kingston, who partnered with us for Leapday Night 2020 and bring some interesting sound artists to the city, have also expressed interest. I’ll be meeting with them in the coming weeks to see what these partnerships might bring. I have also been contacted by members of PSAC regarding the possibility of increasing our working relationship next year. I think this could create exciting and interesting opportunities for the SGPS since both organizations put on events throughout the year. I believe that combining some of our resources could greatly benefit our students, especially considering the large overlap in our membership.

If anyone requires assistance during this period, or if anyone has ideas for events that I can support in any way, I would be happy to hear from you. You can always reach me at social@sgps.ca.

Thanks everyone and stay safe!

Anthony