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Below is my last report as the President of the Society of Graduate and Professional Students at Queen's. I will provide more recent update on anything verbally at Council.

## **THANK YOU**

I want to begin by saying that I was extremely honoured to serve everyone as the SGPS President. I think the year was certainly more challenging than I ever could have predicted, but as a result, it has been extremely rewarding.

I ran for the SGPS because I wanted to spend my last year at Queen's giving back to a community that has given me so much over these past eight years and I hope that my small contribution made a difference. I would like to thank all of my co-executives as well as the entire SGPS team. The work we did this year would not have been possible without the hard work and support of the entire SGPS team.

## **COVID-19**

Throughout the entire COVID-19 crisis we have been working long hours to ensure that supports are in place for Graduate and Professional students. This includes working towards the waiver of graduate and professional student summer tuition.

We are also working to address issues with summer placements for professional programs that have been cancelled as a result of COVID-19.

Overall, I can say that we have done a relatively good job in securing funding and ensuring that jobs were not lost for students when compared with other Universities. We have also seen progress on financial supports for graduate students, particularly international students coming directly from the University. While we are happy to see student receiving support, we continue to push the administration and the provincial government for more.

To explore the government avenue, we have also been in contact with our partners at the CFS and other Ontario Universities to lobby government federally and provincially for more supports for students.

Although the road ahead will continue to be challenging, I have the utmost confidence in the incoming Executive to succeed and I know we have done our best to ensure that the SGPS is in the best position to whether the storm and continue advocate and support graduate and professional students.

It was a pleasure to serve you,

Jeremy Ambraska  
2019-2020 SGPS President



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>. As I mentioned previously, 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.

This year, Anthony organised a number of great social events throughout the year which includes museum tours, leapday dance night, collaboration with Isabel bader center and many more. Anthony was also actively involved with myself in organising last year's fall orientation which was a huge success. Events included trip to rock dunder, boat cruise, speed meeting and many more. I hope that as things get better, these highly popular events come back to life. 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. Congratulations to the four new commissioners and I am very excited for all four of them as well as Anthony, who is already picking up amazingly as the incoming VPC. Also, a big congratulations to this year's SGPS award winners and thank you to everyone who took the time to apply for the awards and the commissioner positions.

Moving forward, we hope to plan some virtual events to help with the loneliness of social distancing. It is likely to continue in summer too as the pandemic continues and we are working on creative ways to organise events and activities remotely. These could include board game tournaments online using Pogo Games, virtual chat rooms and use of apps like house-party to keep students engaged and connected. 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 conference lead by Claudia this year was a great success and with Claudia being the returning international commissioner, SGPS intends to bring back the conference next year as well. Hopeful by winter 2021, life would get back to normal. 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 commission is also hoping to release the launch of 2 new awards dedicated to international students and their scholarships, Claudia will chair the selection committee and applications are due I believe on April 20<sup>th</sup>.

Also, this year, another important thing that happened was work with 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.

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. This year we resurrected the equity committee that did equity consultations in the fall. Penny, is working on the consultation report which will be passed on to the incoming equity commissioner. The equity commission also organised a number of equity workshops like positive space and worked with QUIC on the "international film festival" featuring movies from various equity seeking groups.

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. This year we are also discussing of developing a separate website in the main SGPS website to compile valuable information about services and support on campus for new graduate students. This website will also serve as a means to navigate the different orientation programming that happens in September around campus.

I am yet in the process to transition Anthony, incoming VP community. 3 one on one meetings and a thorough transition report has already been shared. Anthony is kept in constant loop about all the ongoing executive matters related to community and campaigning on campus. I have great confidence in Anthony's ability serve as the new VP Community. Finally, I would like to say a big thanks to the commissioners, who I have closely worked with this year and also my co-exec team members in their efforts to better graduate and professional student's experience. Andria and Sandy have always been a great support and I would like to thank them for all the work they do to keep the SGPS foundation strong. Not to forget, Laura and Nick, and all others who have worked or volunteered for SGPS. It was a great learning experience for me as I have been a part of SGPS in 3 different positions (Deputy international commissioner, Supervisor and VP community) since Sept 2018.

Thank you to our members who put their trust in us to lead and give us the opportunity to serve.

Heartfelt goodbye,  
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 April 7<sup>th</sup>, 2020:

**Closing Bursaries and Grants**

Row Labels	Total applicants to date (Total last year)	Total \$ Disbursed	Budgeted
All Bursaries (pre-covid)	104 (149)	18,305.23	27,500.00
All Grants (pre-covid)	19 (26)	7,767	29,000.00
	<b>Remaining:</b>	<b>\$30,427.77</b>	

**Covid Emergency Fund**

Row Labels	Total applicants since opening	Total \$ Disbursed and Will Be Disbursed by end of day April 8 <sup>th</sup> , 2020	Budgeted
Emergency Bursary	36	11,051.5	\$30,427.7
	<b>Remaining:</b>	<b>\$19,376.27</b>	

**Emergency Bursary Update**

As anticipated, there has been heavy usage of the emergency bursary with applicants from virtually every background being affected by the ongoing health crisis. Of the emergency bursaries:

- 30% were travel and unexpected expenses associated with such
- 42% were related to present job loss or cancellation of future employment opportunity

The Bursary was closed for 48 hours on Monday April 6 and scheduled to open for Wednesday April 8<sup>th</sup>. The reason for this decision was to process 17 applications received over the weekend and individually catching up with the previous 19 applicants to provide their direct-deposit information. At the same time, we did not want to allow more applications than the bursary can provide because we do not want to give potential applicants a false expectation that the bursary is still available. Thankfully, we are at 1/3 utilization with no applicant being rejected to date.

**Lastly, thank you for the opportunity to serve two productive terms as the SGPS's VPFS (and one lesser known year as the Master of Public Administration Councilor!). It has been a humbling experience filled with student empowerment and advocacy.**

*Cha Gheil,*  
Abel Hazon  
VPFS ('19, '20)



Hello Members,

I want to start by thanking all of you for trusting me to be your Vice President Graduate. This report is bittersweet as I move on from the SGPS but welcome Courtney as she assumes the role next month. 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, student-supervisor relationships, 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.

I wanted to provide a few updates related to COVID-19. I met with the Dean of Graduate Studies recently and conveyed some concerns related to graduate student supports. Namely providing additional emergency relief to students who have dependents and particularly those whose dependents are in school who have their ability to work affected. Additionally, we spoke about the university's communication with the province and what steps would be necessary to make a graduate tuition waiver possible for this summer.

I attended the CFS Graduate caucus on Tuesday the 7<sup>th</sup>, where myself and Jeremy spoke about rallying graduate schools across the province together to have a collective call for student supports. We are looking to work with the CFS, OUSA and other campus groups to create a multi-tiered approach to advocating for students. We are hoping to develop a campaign that will be able to address our primary concern about tuition, but also address issues related to lost income, international students and students with families.

In the final official act to council in my role of VPG, I received the headcount from the school of graduate studies related to our council. On the next page the chart outlines what our 2020-2021 council composition will be.

To end my final report, I'd like to take this time to thank Andria Burke our Executive Director and Sandy Beaton our Director of Finance, the work they do allows the SGPS to run each week. Abel, Isabelle, Jeremy, Lauren, Ryan, Tyler, Uchitta, thank you for being great co-executives and putting up with some of my 'crazier ideas' we were able to achieve a lot! Thank you to all of the commissioners who put in countless hours of work to bettering the society and building community. Finally, I want to thank Laura and Nick for running council this year and thank each and every councilor that has come out and been engaged. It is your work is what makes this organization great.

I will never forget these two years,

Cheers!

Leo Erlikhman

<u>Department</u>	<u>Number of Council Seats 2020-2021</u>	<u>Department</u>	<u>Number of Council Seats 2020-2021</u>
Electrical & Computer Engineering	2	English	1
Physical Therapy	2	Urban & Regional Planning	1
Occupational Therapy	2	Geological Sciences & Geological Engineering	1
Mechanical & Materials Engineering	2	Mathematics & Statistics	1
Education	2	Sociology	1
Cultural Studies	2	Aging & Health	1
Civil Engineering	2	Environmental Studies	1
History	1	Philosophy	1
Public Health Sciences	1	Art History	1
Chemistry	1	Rehabilitation Science	1
Biology	1	Industrial Relations	1
Biomedical & Molecular Science	1	Law	1
Computing	1	Mining Engineering	1
Psychology	1	Pathology & Molecular Medicine	1
Public Administration	1	Art Conservation	1
Neuroscience	1	Global Development Studies	1
Management	1	Classics	1
Physics, Engineering Physics & Astronomy	1	Gender Studies	1
Nursing	1	Arts Leadership/Arts Management	1
Geography	1	Biomedical Informatics	1
Chemical Engineering	1	Health Quality	1
Economics	1	Medical Sciences	1
Kinesiology & Health Studies	1	Religious Studies	1
Political Studies	1	Translational Medicine*	1
<b>Departments no longer eligible for SGPS Council</b>		<b>French</b>	
<b>*The Department of Translational Medicine is a new Department and will have to be approved to join SGPS Council in the 2020-2021 school year</b>			



Hello Council,

I hope you are all doing well during this busy time. I'd like to thank everyone for a great year. Thanks to Jeremy in particular for leading the organization. I am confident the SGPS is in great hands moving forward.

### **General COVID-19 Update**

The SGPS has been very active over the past few weeks in dealing with this situation. We have put together a COVID-19 Information Hub on our website which provides up-to-date, detailed, and relevant information for students. We have been working to provide accurate information on our social media channels; we have been working with upper-level administration to ensure the voices of graduate and professional students are heard; we have relayed concerns relating to grading to various faculties; we have made funds available to students directly fighting COVID-19, by providing a group of medical students a grant to help them 3D print PPE for healthcare workers; we are making funds available for students to access as emergency grants for those of you most affected by COVID-19; we have hosted virtual events via Zoom; and we have opened various services in a virtual format.

Finally, as you all know, we have endorsed PSAC 901's call to suspend summer tuition in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Thank you all for engaging in a spirited debate on this topic at the Winter General Meeting.

For a list of some more actions we have taken related to COVID-19, please visit: <https://sgps.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/COVIDLetterMarch262020-.pdf>.

### **Policy for Grants to COVID-19 related organizations**

The SGPS has received a number of requests for donations and grants to assist various admirable organizations during these challenging times. I am working to develop a cohesive policy with respect to how money should be allocated.

### **Communication with Professional Students regarding COVID-19**

We have reached out to the various student organizations in the professional faculties to update them on our endorsement of PSAC 901's call to suspend summer tuition and expressed our interest in working collaboratively with them to address this challenge.

### **Conclusion**

This year we have all faced a number of challenges, most notably the Student Choice Initiative and the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite these tribulations the SGPS has remained committed to advocating for graduate and professional students, fostering a sense of community, and working with stakeholders on campus. Thanks for your engagement and advocacy.

Ryan Adlem  
Vice President Professional



Hello everyone,

It is a surreal time with a lot going on and I hope that you are managing! Here is a brief update of my going-ons:

### 1. 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 from the **SGPS** can be accessed [here](#) and it includes links to many of the resources I am listing.
- **QUIC** has an FAQ page for international students [here](#). They answer important questions for international students pertaining to travel, visas, residence, and health insurance.
- 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.

If you are an international student who is unable to find information you need please contact me ([international@sgps.ca](mailto:international@sgps.ca)) and I will do my best to put you in touch with folks that can help.

### 2. International Scholarship Awards

I am extremely proud to announce the launch of International Scholarship Awards. These are two competitive awards aimed at access academic excellence and trying to even the gap in how many opportunities international students have available to them. This is a small, but significant step, in that direction. One award is exclusively for international students and the other is aimed at any graduate or professional students doing international scholarship. Details of the awards can be found on the SGPS website: <https://sgps.ca/sgpsisacawards/>. Deadline for applications is the 20<sup>th</sup> of April.

I am currently looking for people who would like to be on the adjudication committee for the award and have some availability the week of the 20<sup>th</sup> of April to review them. If you would like to be involved please email me ([international@sgps.ca](mailto:international@sgps.ca))

### 3. International Student Graduate Network

I have reached out to the 10 people currently in this network to ask for updates and to find out if they think it is worthwhile. So far, I have been told that this has helped to foster community amongst international students within departments and that people are finding communicating much better. I will be sharing the details of these folks with people at QUIC and SGS in case they need access to international graduates. Everyone is a bit overwhelmed with Covid19 at the moment but I am hoping to encourage other GSCs to use the summer to continue creating positions for International Representatives in their respective departments.

#### **4. Beyond Canada Podcast**

Episode 8 will be the recording of the Turkey Seminar. I have been slightly delayed in getting this out but it will be released either by the end of this week or early next week. I need some folks to interview for upcoming episodes so if you or anyone you know is doing international research and/or collaborations and would like to be interviewed for the podcast, please feel free to get in touch ([international@sgps.ca](mailto:international@sgps.ca)).

#### **5. Beyond Boundaries Conference**

The recordings from the conference are now live so those of you who were not able to attend can listen to some of the panels here: <https://podcast.cfr.ca/sgps-scholarship-beyond-boundaries/>

#### **6. Support Advocacy**

Prior to Covid19, there were rumblings that there might be tuition changes for international students. I am not too sure of the status of this currently. I am hoping the Executive has an update pertaining to this.

I am thrilled that the SGPS voted to support the PSAC Petition and listen to what graduate students were asking. I am thankful to the Exec for the work they are doing behind the scenes regarding this. I am also thankful to the work of graduate students in their respective departments to get departmental support and to the work of PSAC graduates who are driving the campaign. It appears that this campaign is gaining provincial traction which, based on the SGS Townhall, the Administrators think is the best way to get some tuition reprieve.

I have been attending Townhalls and trying to stay abreast of people's concerns. Concerns facing international graduates appear to be: Financial restraints, issues with travelling, and concerns around completion. The SGS, SGPS, and FAS all have Q&As on their website answering some of these.

I remain available for any conversations regarding international students and their advocacy.

Finally, I am pleased to report that I have been hired as the International commissioner for a second year and I look forward to continuing in this role. If you have any ideas of things you would like my commission to focus on please reach out.

Kindest regards,  
Claudia Hirtenfelder  
[international@sgps.ca](mailto:international@sgps.ca)