



Hello Council,

Welcome back to a new school year! It is crazy to me that I have already held this position for 4 months; 1/3 of my term is complete and I am learning as much as ever! I am so lucky to be surrounded by so many incredible student leaders and appreciate each and every one of you for the commitment you have made to your colleagues.

Please take this report as brief overview of the goings-on over the past month.

MANDATORY STUDENT FEES

Returning Members of Council will likely remember my report from May where the SGPS signed on to support PSAC901's call to suspend summer tuition in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Outside of the \$29 athletics and recreation fee refund, Professional and Graduate students saw little movement on issues of reduced service provision. As the new year begins, students remain frustrated with the lack of movement on summer tuition and have voiced significant concern about fees for services coming into the 2020-21 year. The residual frustration and stress has been palpable, even in a remote environment and I believe that the current response to students call for financial fairness will see a reduction of future alumni donations for the effected classes. There will be campaigns coming out in the coming weeks that the SGPS will be supporting and we hope to see meaningful engagement with the Administration on these issues.

COVID CRISIS/RESPONSE The SGPS maintained its COVID Emergency Bursary throughout the summer and have closed temporarily (Aug 27-Sep 14) to accommodate for the change in school year. We will continue to provide funding to students who have accrued emergency costs due to the pandemic; the impacts are going to be ongoing and we hope to keep this fund open as long as possible to assist in long-term financial needs.

ANTI-RACISM PORTAL

On August 13th our SGPS advocacy page went live; EDII reports and statements from the Principal, Vice-Principal and Provost (Academic), Rector, and Dean SGS from the past decade were collected and placed in one location. We hope that by creating a platform of institutional memory there will be a reduction of labor to individuals looking to hold the Administration accountable and that these offices will be faced with their previous empty promises when crafting new statements. We have a "Our Next Steps" section where we will be posting what the team is currently working on to continue the development of this resource; descriptive statements and dates for each submission are the task currently being worked on. There is also an option to leave a comment on our anonymous feedback form where you can leave a comment on the page. This has been an incredible collective effort of SGPS Commissioners, Academic Advisors, and the Executive team and the project is under investigation to become a national campaign through the CFS. Please take the time to visit our portal to see more on the Anti-Racism work the SGPS has committed to. <http://sgps.ca/advocacy/>

ORIENTATION WEEK

The VP Community and all SGPS Commissioners worked tirelessly this summer to ensure that orientation events and information sessions were accessible to all. The remote delivery of the 'Know your Services' seminar series is occurring from September 1st -3rd with the video files being uploaded for asynchronous consumption. Multiple virtual events and activities have also been scheduled including:

- What's in a place? Discussing Land Acknowledgement with the SGPS Indigenous Graduate Liaison
- Physical Distancing Physical Activity at Queen's -Speed Meeting & Grad Club Trivia

- Museum Mashup -Couch Disco: 2007 Called, It Wants Akon Back
- Scavenger Hunt: Grad School in the Time of Corona

Thank you all for taking the time to attend Council; it remains to be a challenging time and it is an honour to represent Queen's Graduate and Professional students. My current mantra is 'unprecedented, not impossible' and I am very excited to use this as a guide during the 2020-21 school year.

Yours in Health and Wellness,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Aman'.

Justine Aman
SPGS President



Hello everyone!

I hope you all had a lovely summer. Here are the updates from this month:

1. **International tuition reduction when taking an extra semester:** The SGS did allow for graduate stipends to be extended if students needed to take an additional semester due to COVID. Another less advertised program that the SGS also implemented, to allow international students who needed to take an extra semester to have their tuition reduced to a domestic level Fall 2020. In speaking with the SGS, they believe this program is being very underutilized. For students to have their tuition reduced, students will need to contact their program assistant. Please feel free to reach out to me if you have any challenges accessing this reduction.
2. **Updates from the alcohol working group:** Due to public safety, the campus observation room or the COR will not be opening this year; as a result, the COR student fee will not be collected. Queen's first aid is investigating the possibility of operating a similar service.
3. **Campus Operations updates:** Some students will be returning to campus this semester, and as a result, Queen's has implemented the following safety procedures
 - a. Classes and lobbies will be locked when not in use, students are not allowed to hang out in these spaces
 - b. Masks must be worn at all times during class by students. Instructors may remove their masks during the lecture permitted they remain at least 6 feet away
 - c. Classes will not be scheduled back to back in the same room to prevent the crowding of students
 - d. Instructors conducting synchronous classes must inform studentsA protocol is currently being put in place for students who wish to have their comprehensive exams or defences on campus. Research and animal care services have also been designated as essential services. Should a second wave hit, Kingston's research will most likely not be shut down, in the same manner it was in March/April.
4. **Student fees:** The SGPS is in the process of releasing a fee reduction campaign to lobby Queen's to reduce their mandatory fees or make them optional. A big push for this is making the ARC fee optional.

Stay safe!

Courtney Bannerman



Dear Council,

I hope you're all doing well during these unprecedented times. It's hard to believe that we are beginning school again. Hopefully everyone had a safe and splendid summer.

There have been a few HR related matters that have arisen over the past month. I've been preoccupied with analyzing the complex nature of the By-Law HR policy and looking at various courses of action available if circumstances should warrant them. Despite most in-person activities at Queen's having gone online, there is still a need for proper channels in which students, employees and other stakeholders to access in order to feel safe. My intention, moving forward, is to determine the effectivity of our current HR policies, and to see how they can be improved. I will focus on the following key tenants: objectivity, communication and resolution. I'm keen to determine whether there are areas of improvement so that everyone involved with the SGPS feels comfortable reporting any uneasy feelings they feel at the hands of others.

On a more 'fun-oriented' topic, I'd like to commend my fellow SGPS colleagues who have put together such a great orientation agenda. Their hard work and dedication is something to be very grateful for. As for myself, my intention is to provide some career focused informational sessions. The typical Microsoft Excel and business modules, while great and very informative, will be scrapped. I feel it may be more useful at this time for professional graduate students to develop an understanding of how to network and find opportunities during the pandemic. In 'normal' instances, for instance in law, firms host open houses and coffee chats where students get an opportunity to meet people and discuss their future with them. In the present 'virtual era' it is difficult to navigate what is effective networking and what is not. I'll be working with private sector, as well as industry professionals, to try and host events that help professional students who are searching for employment in the coming months.

I'm excited for the new semester and look forward to working with you all.

Best,

John Jeyaratnam



Hello Council,

I hope you all have had great summer and transitioning into a rather different academic year.

My report this month is similar to last months, with some minor changes and updates.

SGPS Running and Active Club

Throughout the summer, the SGPS Running Club had successfully grown to 40 members and 12 members in the Active club. As we transition into a new semester, and taking the positive feedback we received from the summer clubs, we have re-started both clubs so we can make sure all the participants are current SGPS members. The clubs will run similar to the summer, with varying challenges, along with maintaining the partnership with the Queen's ARC Virtual Running Series to continue to create a socially distant active community.

Orientation Week Event

Physical Distancing Physical Activity at Queen's Orientation Week event in partnership with the Queen's ARC is a free event held via Zoom Wednesday, Sept. 9 at 4pm ET (being recorded and posted following the event for accessibility proposes). Oral update to follow.

Virtual Cooking with Grandmas

In partnership with Faith and Spiritual Life, we will be hosting *SGPS Cooks with Grandmas*. The Grandmas, who are from the Queen's Women's Association will lead and instruct virtual cooking classes to SGPS members. Traditionally, these events run in-person cooking classes through Faith and Spiritual Life, however, this semester we will be hosting this event monthly via Zoom. The group has held numerous practice and trial sessions throughout the summer to ensure this is an event they feel comfortable with leading. The first *SGPS Cooks with Grandmas* event will be held **Wednesday, Sept. 30 at 5pm ET**. Free registration will be required and limited to 25 participants. The ingredient list and instructions will be sent to participants two weeks prior. This is a new event this year and I hope will help bring a 'family feel' to both the Grammas and SGPS members. The in-person cooking classes have been successful in the past, and I hope the virtual classes can be just as successful and fun for all participating. During this time of social distancing, I am hopeful these classes can offer a fun opportunity that is both beneficial for the Grandmas and the participants, as we cook and enjoy a meal virtually together. Registration can be found here: https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_9sNal-rKQZyrgiMta121cQ

I am excited for all the upcoming events and as always, please feel free to contact me (athletics@sgps.ca) with any suggestions, questions, or comments about these or other events.

Sincerely,

Madison Danford
Athletics and Wellness Commissioner, SGPS



Dear Council,

I hope everyone has managed to relax and recharge this summer and is already enjoying a great start to the fall semester!

With orientation moving to a virtual platform, the equity and diversity commission organized the event “Scavenger Hunt: Grad School in the Time of Corona” on September 13. While instead of exploring Queen’s scenic campus, meeting new people and getting repeatedly lost, orientation 2020 saw most of us marking the beginning of the semester from the comfort of our own homes, this scavenger hunt aimed to bring new and continuing Queen’s graduate students together virtually with a fun game. With questions asking participants to share their favorite quarantine memes, virtually discover the Queen’s campus and explore the ARC’s fall programming, this event aimed to familiarize students with the campus and the services that are available to them in a fun and accessible medium.

As mentioned in the last report, I have been working closely with Paige, the Indigenous Graduate Student Liaison and Claudia, the International Commissioner to establish a campus-wide graduate student equity network. This network, connecting graduate students across the university, will enable students from various departments to come together to share, voice and amplify the equity-related challenges they face at Queen’s university. A detailed description of the network’s aims and structure will be forthcoming. Meanwhile, we ask SGPS representatives to inform your respective departments that this work is underway as departments begin to hold general meetings and elections. In addition to working on the establishment of this network, since last council (and throughout much of the summer), I have been attending various meetings aimed at addressing ongoing equity and diversity issues on campus, particularly as they relate to graduate students. Going forward, I will continue the advocacy work I have been doing throughout the summer, highlighting equity and diversity concerns of graduate students, and working with stakeholders to address these concerns.

Looking forward, I have several events planned for the fall semester, with a Movement Series, Open Forum discussion and Movie Night on the calendar for the remainder of 2020. If you have any suggestions, questions or would like to pitch an idea for an event, please do not hesitate to get in touch at equity@sgps.ca

I hope you are taking care of yourself, your health and wellbeing as this new semester starts!

All the best,

Fikir (Fifi) Haile
Equity and Diversity Commissioner 2020-2021

Dear Council,

Hope you had a lovely summer and wonderful start to the new academic year. The orientation webinar “What’s in a Place? Discussing Land Acknowledgement with the SGPS Indigenous Graduate Liaison” was a wonderful success and I have received positive feedback and praise from those who participated. Thank you to all who helped and supported me along the way to make this event a great success. If you missed out on the event, it can be found on the SGPS orientation website. <https://sgps.ca/event/whats-in-a-place-discussing-land-acknowledgement-with-the-sgps-indigenous-graduate-liaison/>

Here is an update on a few of the things I have been working on this past month:

1. Law School Re-Naming Process

Over the month of August, I participated in consultations and the discussion around the Law School re-naming process. I encourage all students, faculty, staff, and community members to submit their thoughts and opinions on the matter before **September 18th 2020**, details of which can be found here <https://law.queensu.ca/about/consultation>

2. Indigenous Reads Talking Circle

The reading circle will continue **September 24th, 2020 at 4pm** with a welcome back social that will take place remotely via Microsoft teams to discuss plans for the fall semester. The chosen novel for this coming circle is Thomas King’s *The Inconvenient Indian: A Curious Account of Native People in North America*. Please contact indigenous@sgps.ca if you would like to join the circle.

3. Cultural Safety and Anti Oppression Training

I am working on creating a training session that will be mandatory for the SGPS staff and optional for the SGPS council members geared towards learning about the incidents and historical treatment and relationships with indigenous people at Queen’s University and in Kingston. The training session is expected to take place in **November 2020** and will take place over three days, two hours each day for 6 hours in total. A separate part of the training will include anti-oppression training which I will be working on with the Equity and Diversity Commissioner, Fifi Haile.

4. Indigenous graduate student experience survey (SELF IDENTIFIED INDIGENOUS STUDENTS ONLY)

I am continuing to work with SAGE (Supporting Aboriginal Graduate Enhancement) coordinator at Four Directions to create a survey in response to a report that was released in 2017 on SGPS services and indigenous graduate needs. The report was done by Natasha Beitman Brener and can be found here <https://sgps.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Report-on-Indigenous-Professional-and-Graduate-Students.pdf>.

[Due to recent attacks on the Four Directions Indigenous Student Center and the COVID-19 stress on the incoming students with a change to remote delivery, Kiera and I have decided to postpone the release of the survey as students become adjusted to the new reality. The survey will be released in the winter term.](#)

5. Indigenous Graduate and Professional Student Committee (SELF IDENTIFIED INDIGENOUS STUDENTS ONLY)

I hope to reach out to various departments on campus to see if there are any indigenous student representatives that sit on graduate student councils to form a committee to better represent and accommodate the needs of indigenous graduates. The formation of this committee could also help to respond to other ideas brought up in previous council reports such as the Pow-Wow working group, input on indigenizing spaces on campus, and other events/happenings on

campus. Please contact indigenous@sgps.ca if you know of any indigenous grad students in your departments who are willing to join.

Gichi Miigwech,

Paige Van Tassel

SGPS Indigenous Graduate Liaison

indigenous@sgps.ca

Welcome back to Fall Semester! There have been a number of things happening on campus and I have been working with several folks at the SGPS on matters and events pertaining to international students. Please see the most pertinent below.

1. Know Your Services Videos and Q&As

This initiative involved collecting and **compiling videos from a variety of stakeholders** centered on three themes: Funding and Work, Looking after yourself and your loved ones, and Thriving as a Student. Most of these videos are currently on the SGS' Orientation Page: <https://www.queensu.ca/sgs/current-students/orientation> and we are hoping to make them available via the SGPS page too. While these videos were intended for incoming graduate (international and domestic students), they are useful beyond just orientation. I strongly encourage you to share these videos with your respective departments as a tool that you and/or your Graduate Assistant could share with all graduates.

In connection with these videos **we hosted three related Q&A sessions** on the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd of September. These were well attended (with well over 30 attendees at each) and service providers formed a panel ready to answer questions that arose. We recorded these sessions and they are available on the SGPS website and on Youtube – Again, these are incredible resources to share and might even be the best ones to share with graduate students at this stage:

- Funding and Work Q&A: <https://sgps.ca/event/know-your-services-funding-and-work-qa/>
- Looking after Yourself and your loved ones Q&A: <https://sgps.ca/event/know-your-services-looking-afteryourself/>
- Thriving as a Student Q&A: <https://sgps.ca/event/know-your-services-thriving-as-a-student/>

We also randomly selected three attendees from each event to **win a year's subscription to Masterclass:** <https://www.masterclass.com/> and will be sharing their details via social media once they have confirmed it is okay to do so.

This was a project that took a mammoth amount of work and involved contributions from over thirty people to make possible. I would like to thank everyone who made a video for this series and I would like to make a special thank you to Colette Steer for the support of the SGS, Andria Burke for her speedy and always insightful ideas, and a (huge!) thank you to Anthony Lomax for his guidance with this project as well as his willingness to step in and help whenever I needed.

2. International Student Check-Ins

Although not terribly well attended yet, these check-ins have been going well and I have found that there are some international students who have come to the check-ins on multiple occasions. The check-ins are a wonderfully informal space where you can talk about all things 'international', whether it is about your home country and/or what it is like moving to Kingston but it is also an informal space where international students can ask each other for tips and advice and where incoming and existing international students can connect. I would encourage you to let your international students know about these as we would like them to continue through the fall. The next international student check-in is tentatively on the September 21st from 4-5, I am currently waiting for my TA schedule and will be able to confirm that once I have it.

3. Beyond Canada Podcast

I have not been able to secure an interview over the summer but I am currently in conversation with someone about interviewing them for a fall episode of the podcast.

4. International Student Graduate Network

I have still been working on expanding the International Graduate Student Network and have been sending by-weekly emails to the existing network. If you would like to join this network please send me an email (international@sgps.ca). Ideally, we would like folks on the network to also be representatives of the international students in their department and/or international graduate student leaders. We are trying to create a vibrant and open form of communication. I would like to thank Fifi and Paige for their insights in this process too. It has been great working with both on them on finding ways in which different groups could be better represented in their departmental student governments

5. Website Additions

'What to Ask' is now available on the SGPS website: <https://sgps.ca/#1596743290883-dde84e13-198b>.

Instead of being structured around a regular Q&A format the What to Ask page tries to tap into and possibly highlight questions that might be important for students to ask around a particular theme – such as 'What to ask when you get your funding letter'. This is a page that has a great deal of room to be expanded so if you have ideas for any additions, thematically or in terms of questions, feel free to send a mail.

I have also added a page that speaks directly to **Resources for International Students** both on and off campus:

<https://sgps.ca/international-resources/>

This page is also still incomplete and I am sure there are many facets I am missing. If you have ideas of resources to be added please send them my way.

Those are the most significant updates I have for you at this stage. At this juncture I would also like to let you all know that I have resigned from the SGPS and will be leaving at the end of October. It is with a heavy heart as I greatly enjoy the work and right now there is a lot to be done for international students. Unfortunately, my personal circumstances have changed and I need to exit from this role. If you are interested in the position and would like to learn more about it, send me a mail! I wish you the best of luck as you start this new, virtual semester!

Claudia Hirtenfelder,
PhD Candidate in Geography and Planning
The International Student Affairs Commissioner for the SGPS
international@sgps.ca



Dear Council,

I hope you have all been keeping well since we last met. As the Fall term begins, I look forward to seeing how each of us works together to navigate this unique opportunity that is a remote year. Last month I had three events scheduled, two of which I ran. The Couch Disco on August 8th was a great success! The Scavenger Hunt that was scheduled to take place the following weekend was cancelled due to the weather conditions. The Games Night that I co-hosted with the Queen's Esports Association (QEA) received a low turnout, however we have put out another survey and have changed our advertising messages to try and encourage more interest throughout the school year.

I had little else to report this month but will attach a list of the Orientation Events that I will be running. I will provide more thoughts at council on how the events were received by the SGPS community.

Orientation Week Events:

SGPS Virtual Speed Meet and Grad Club Trivia

Event Date: Thursday September 10th, 7:30 PM to 9:00 PM (Speed Meet), 9:00 PM to 11:00 PM (Trivia)

Location: Zoom, Facebook Live, cfrc.ca

Event Description: Do you like cheese? Want to get to know the SGPS community and make some new friends? Join us on September 12th on Zoom for our virtual Speed Meet, where you'll get to meet other new SGPS members in a Speed Meet roulette of conversation and lots of laughs. Afterwards, we will form up our battle teams and take on Grad Club Trivia from 9:00 pm to 11:00 pm on Facebook live, hosted in collaboration with cfrc 101.9 FM.

Couch Disco: 2007 Called, It Wants Akon Back

Event Date: Saturday September 12th, 8:00 PM to 10:00 PM

Location: cfrc.ca, 101.9 FM, sgps.click/discord

Event Description: Can't get down at the club? No problem! The SGPS presents its fourth monthly Couch Disco: 2007 Called, It Wants Akon Back. Grab your apple bottom jeans and boots with the fur because we are about to get down to 2 hours of bops from the mid 2000s that will take you right back to your first Much Video Dance. Tune in from 8:00 to 10:00 PM on Saturday September 12th at <https://cfrc.ca/> for two hours of quality music. We will be taking live requests during the show, so feel free to send us a message in the Couch Disco Chat on the SGPS Discord (<https://sgps.click/discord>).

If you have any questions regarding these events, or have any suggestions for future events to run, please do not hesitate to e-mail me at social@sgps.ca. I am looking forward to working closely with everyone throughout the remainder of the academic year.

Take care.

Rose Conlin