



Hello Council,

I hope that the first week back to classes has gone smoothly for all of you and the altered delivery format has not been too stressful within your department. I apologize for the short length of this report- but many things have been in a bit of a holding pattern. I am still working hard with the Executive team to support and advocate for Graduate and Professional students and we look forward to all the work we will be able to do in the coming months.

MANDATORY STUDENT FEES

As many of you are likely aware, the SGPS is currently running a petition calling on the University to return the ARC fee to students who request it and for increased transparency in University spending. Although we have over 1000 signatures, the administration has openly told me that they do not see any movement beyond the 25% rebate given to all students (even those currently using the ARC). They cite it being a 'difficult administrative task' to take on and say that they do not have the processes in place to make the refund happen. They also said that we have to understand that if they change the fee then they will have to charge more (they used the transit pass as an example). The frustrating part about this is that even with the changes to the transit pass the SGPS and AMS have worked to find a way to provide passes to fewer people while subsidizing the cost. If two organizations run by students working part time can come up with a plan and protocol to ensure folks are not facing further financial burden, why can't they?

This is incredibly disheartening and endlessly frustrating; I will continue to express this distress with the admin members that I meet with- hopefully one day the message will land. In the meantime, please sign the petition if you have not already and share the media coverage when it becomes available.

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,

Justine Aman
SPGS President



Society of Graduate and Professional Students
Report of the VP Professional
October 2020

Dear Council,

I hope you're all doing well during these unprecedented times. With the oncoming of the second wave it is important to remain vigilant in maintaining safe hygiene practices and taking steps to minimize potential contact. This alarming state, I hope, will pass soon and we can resume a 'normal' normal.

My priorities for this month have been to ensure that key personnel within the SGPS, the Executive Director and the Director of Finance, are able to voice their opinions and thoughts on working for the SGPS. The advent of COVID has required the modification of work, and this was reflective in the Director of Finance's contract extension for 2020-2021. Also, I'd like to congratulate the Director of Finance on signing a new contract, and deciding to remain with us.

I am currently working on the Executive Director's contract. I have yet to begin any communication as of today, but the hope is to finalize a suitable agreement in the coming week.

I look forward to continuing to serve you. Stay safe and stay healthy, we will get through this.

Best,

John Jeyaratnam



Hello Council,

I hope you all adjusting to the new semester.

Orientation Week

As mentioned in the previous report, I ran the *Physical Distancing Physical Activity at Queen's* Orientation Week event in partnership with the Queen's ARC on September 9. While the event's engagement was more limited than we anticipated, those who attended asked meaningful questions and participated in the live exercise class. We offered three prizes: two annual passes to Little Cataraqui Creek Conservation Area and one 3-session personal training donated by the ARC.

SGPS Running and Active Club

The SGPS Running and Active Clubs are growing in membership weekly. We have created discussion surrounding the most scenic trails, routes and paths to enjoy the autumn foliage. Many participants are engaging and sharing their recommendations to others within the Kingston area.

Virtual Cooking with Grandmas

In partnership with Faith and Spiritual Life, we held our first virtual *SGPS Cooks with Grandmas* on September 30. The Grandmas, who are from the Queen's Women's Association lead us through the virtual cooking class making Gramma Helen's hearty black bean soup and garlic toast (it was delicious!) We had 10 SGPS members join us for the evening, where we learned new cooking skills and techniques, had many laughs and great conversations. Once the soup was made, we all enjoying the meal together, virtually. It was a very successful event, receiving positive feedback from that participants and the grandmas following the event from a post-event survey we circulated. We are taking what we had learned from the first session and are in the planning phases for our next cooking session that is planned for end of this month.

Axe Capoeira

In partnership with Axe Capoeira Kingston, we will be hosting a virtual Axe Capoeira workshop on October 26 at 5pm-6pm. Capoeira is an Afro-Brazilian martial art developed 400 years ago by African and Indigenous slaves in Brazil as a form of self-defense. Capoeira incorporates Brazilian song, dance and martial arts and is accessible for all physical activity levels. This one-hour workshop will take us through the history of Capoeira and begin to work on the basics of the art. The event is free with registration.

It has been a very busy start to the semester and I am excited for all the upcoming events. 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 the first few weeks of classes have gone well for everyone!

As mentioned in the previous report, the Equity and Diversity Commission's orientation event "Scavenger Hunt: Grad School in the Time of Corona" was held on September 13. While the event had more limited engagement than we anticipated, those who participated were enthusiastic and thoroughly enjoyed the event. We have reached out to all the winners to arrange the distribution of the awards.

Throughout September, I have also been busy at work, doing equity advocacy at various committees and meetings with the Queen's community and administration. I represented the SGPS at various UCARE (University Council on Anti-Racism and Equity) meetings in the last few weeks. At these meetings, attended by Principal Deane and Provost and Vice-Principal Mark Green, as well as faculty, staff, and students, we raised some questions about the school's August 12th 'Declaration of commitment to address systemic racism'. More specifically, we asked what the anticipated timeline for the implementation of the various proposals is, how the success or failure of these proposals would be measured and the procedures for strengthening the institutional policies and procedures for addressing acts of racist violence and hatred. In addition, the university Equity Caucus held its first meeting of the year, where equity representatives from various faculties came together to assess the work of the caucus thus far and strategize for the current school year. Since these meetings are ongoing, I will keep council informed of any significant changes or outcomes arising from them.

Going forward, I will continue my advocacy work within the university. An important issue currently on my radar is the topic of online proctoring of examinations and the various equity-related concerns this raises. In addition to this ongoing advocacy work, I am planning several events for the fall semester to foster the sense of community and connectedness that is such an integral part of the grad school experience. Please keep an eye out for the dates and details of the Equity and Diversity Committee's October event!

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!

All the best,

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



Dear Council,

I hope you are all doing well and staying safe amidst the spike in COVID-19 cases for those of you in affected areas. Here is an update on the activities I have been working to serve the Indigenous graduate community for this upcoming semester.

1. Indigenous Reads Talking Circle

The first session of the reading circle took place on September 24th, 2020 at 4pm with a welcome back social via Microsoft teams to discuss plans for the fall semester. We have decided to open it to new members for the first three sessions then will close the call for new member due to the sensitive nature of some of the themes that we will be discussing. This fall circle is different from previous summer circle as there is the inclusion of the Cultural Counsellor of Four Directions Indigenous Student Center as well as opening the circle to undergraduate community. We are accepting new participants until **October 29th, 2020** and the circle will run until December 3rd, 2020. The chosen novel for this 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.

2. 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.

3. EDII student department reps

I have been working with the Art History department to develop an EDII (Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Indigeneity) student rep that works with both the faculty on their DEAP Tool committee and the student council to create transparent and open line of communication amongst faculty and students to better serve the needs and issues of EDII in the department. I am working with the Equity and Diversity Commissioner to suggest guidelines for all departments within Queen's to have this position. This will be working towards the implementation of a network of EDII student reps so the SGPS can help in addressing any issues the EDII student reps have as they arise.

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

Four Directions Indigenous Student Center will be sending out a fall survey. This survey is to understand and enhance student learning experience throughout your academic career at Queen's. Keep an eye on your email to input your thoughts, ideas, and experiences as an Indigenous student at Queen's.

CALLING ALL INDIGENOUS STUDENTS!

Please keep a watch on your Queen's email as Indigenous student support at Queen's will be sending out a survey asking for your input. The Fall 2020 term is here and we're working to enhance your learning journey as much as possible. This survey is intended for us to better understand your needs so we can build events and programming according to those needs and your interests.



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



Hello everyone,

It is hard to believe that it is October already. This year seems to have moved both quickly and slowly at the same time. This is a bittersweet report for me as it is my last. I would like to, at the start of this report, just say a big thank you to the SGPS for giving me a home and a space from which to work for international students. As I prepare to leave the role it has given me an opportunity to reflect on some of what I have managed to achieve at the SGPS.

I came into this position with the role of both highlighting the financial precarity of international students while also finding ways to alleviate it. While it is disappointing that the administration has still not made any concrete moves toward reducing the fees of international graduate students (And has recently also made a decision that further hampers their ability to work), I think that what we have achieved at the SGPS in this past year in a half is a good start and I look forward to seeing how the next International Commissioner deepens this advocacy. It is an exciting time to be doing this work, especially with an SGPS executive as supportive as this current one, so thank you!

1. International Student Graduate Network

If your department has an international student representative in your student government then please send me an email (international@gps.ca) so that they can be part of this network. This network is all the international student leaders and we have created a listserv whereby I can email them directly and other bodies working on international affairs can do so too. This type of soft infrastructure and solidarity is crucial to getting a sense of what is going on across the university and to start speaking amongst ourselves so that we can work together, instead of in silos. It is through this network that we were made aware of the devastating increasing in fees for undergraduate international students, and on that front we are very excited to hear that the AMS is now creating an International Representative position too.

If your department does not yet have an international student representative, then I implore you to create a position. Many decisions that affect international students are made at the department level and it is important that your governance structures take into consideration how these decisions affect a population who now makes up over a quarter of the graduate student body.

2. The ISWG

The ISWG is active again and starting to light up their campaign about fees. They recently released an open letter calling out the university for their swift action on making some policies but their slow and movement with equalizing fees for international students. I encourage you to follow them on Facebook and to join them at one of their upcoming meetings to learn more about the work that they are doing.

Canan Sahin, the group's leader is also working on a PSAC901 funded project to collect information about the experiences of international students who have worked outside of Canada but continued to be paid by the university. Such as TA's or RA's working remotely. If you have done this or know someone who has please ask them to reach out to Canan (17cs14@queensu.ca).

Finally, the ISWG has been working with Queen's Elders and Seb DeLine to create an art auction to raise money to support international students facing financial precarity. Details for that are on their Facebook page too (@QueensISWG) or email them (iswg@sgps.ca). Congratulations on such an excellent collaboration!

3. Beyond Canada Podcast

The Beyond Canada Podcast was launched to showcase how significant international students and international scholarship are to the success of the university. In it I have had the privilege of speaking to awesome students who are changing the world both near and far. The next episode will feature El Zahraa Majed discussing the health of immigrant populations in Canada and will be available soon. The next episode will feature Madeline Myers who has done research in Antarctica.

4. International Student Check-Ins

The next international student check-in will be on the 20th of October from 4-5pm. I hope to see some folks there. It would be lovely to touch base.

Thank you once again for giving me the space to work with such incredible people and to learn and contribute toward the betterment of international graduate student lives. While there is a long road ahead in achieving some of these goals, I am extremely proud to have been part of it.

Best of luck as you all move deeper into the Fall Semester
Claudia Hirtenfelder,
PhD Candidate in Geography and Planning
The International Student Affairs Commissioner for the SGPS
international@sgps.ca