



Good Afternoon Colleagues,

I hope that this report finds you well and enjoying the beginning a winter season full of the warmth of family, friends, and colleagues. As we are all settling into the acceptance that 'normal' is a lack of normalcy, predictability, and consistency I want to take the time to report how the SGPS has handled this change over the past 6 months. While this report highlights both positive and negative take-aways, all speak to the strength and resilience of Graduate and Professional students. I look forward to helping the SGPS in our goal to continue to support our students through the good and the bad and look forward to future opportunities to engage over the next 6 months.

Firstly, thank you all for your continued dedication to your departments and to the SGPS as a whole! It has been a pleasure to work with you all though the first half of my tenure and your dedication is what makes the SGPS so amazing!

BUS SUBSIDY

During the early days of the pandemic the AMS had made the decision with the City of Kingston to terminate the 'Bus-it' contract which provided students with a bus pass. This contract required all eligible students to pay a \$90 mandatory fee which in turn gave these students access to Kingston Transit. This incredibly low fee was possible in part because of the large numbers of students who pay into mandatory fee slates. With the majority of students being off-campus or learning virtually it was appropriately decided that charging this fee to all students was not fair or equitable.

This did however, mean that students that would still be in Kingston or attending classes on campus would have to buy alternative bus passes which totaled \$119/per semester. This meant an increase of \$267/year for students to be able to access reliable transportation. Myself and the SGPS vowed that these students would not suffer financially and we are proud to have been able to deliver on that promise. Due to a rebate from the City of Kingston we have been able to create a collaborative subsidy program for students that covers up to \$90/per semester for transit passes. This means that a student who buys three passes over the year will only be paying the original price of the Bus-it contract, \$90.

At this time we have around 400 applications with over 300 being SGPS students leading to a fall semester disbursement of over 36,000\$. It took a lot of work on the part of both student societies but is an incredible example of how out of the box thinking and commitment to the financial success of our students can lead to agreeable outcomes. We are committed to students being only charged for services and fees that they are able to access and it was a wonderful to see that changes can be made to previous policy and programming to ensure that everyone can thrive.

SOCIAL EVENTS/SUPPORT

Over the past weeks we have had incredible engagement with SGPS Members to determine what social programming actually works during this time and what students really need/want to participate in. Students are experiencing a number of stressors on top of the regular academic programming and it is our goal to provide fun and social engagement in a way that will benefit the health of our students. Students are struggling and it is important that we prioritize social, emotional, mental, physical, and spiritual health with academic expectations. Over the past months we have hosted a number of really well attended events, many of which are listed below:

- Cooking with Grandmas
 - o Collaboration with Student Affairs Faith and Spiritual Life where folks learn from the pros to cook a delicious home cooked meal

- SGPS Gets Real
 - o An open-ended venting/talking session with members of the Graduate Peer Support Centre (GPSC) and Peer Academic Advisors (PAA) present to allow students real-time advice and a compassionate ear
- EmpowerME
 - o 24/7/365 access to support services within North America and 20 additional countries
 - o Free support from qualified individuals on a number of topics from financial insecurity to anxiety or depression
- President Office Hours
 - o Weekly open hours with myself to engage with students and reply to any questions or concerns and provide appropriate resources
- Graduate Peer Support Centre Hours
- International Student Check-ins
- Active Club
 - o Walk, run, bike club to allow students to keep active with their peers
- #SGPSatHome
 - o Campaign to show the realities of working and living at home paired with a contest for students who share their home-work stations
- Queen's ESPORTS x SGPS Games night o Monthly games night for QEA and SGPS communities
- Monthly Townhall meetings

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

Although engaging with SGPS Members is vitally important to any and all student leaders, the COVID-19 pandemic has made it even more so. I am very happy to have been able to implement several avenues of virtual student engagement that I truly hope will continue into the future. Weekly office hours, monthly townhall meetings, and a 24/7 anonymous feedback form have created safe and consistent environments for students to engage with myself and the Executive team. While these opportunities are great, I am most proud of the bi-weekly newsletter which has successfully been circulated since my first week in office. No matter the week or the size of the newsletter I always receive emails from students who have questions, concerns, or are appreciative to have been informed of upcoming events or news.

Transparency within an organization like the SGPS can often be overlooked and my goal with this newsletter was to make sure our Membership is aware of the current goings-on. It will be my recommend that this incoming President take up this newsletter as a communication tool and would like to expand it so Departmental Representatives can also share information. We receive a few requests to promote events and such but it would be amazing if Representatives could use this as a way to advertise outside of their departments, encouraging extradepartmental collaboration! Although we are all unique and important as individual departments, we are one SGPS and I can see so much good coming from our shared engagement.

I really do hope that you are all well and the stressors have been kept to a minimum lately. Please if you have any questions or need anything at all, feel free to contact me any time.

Yours in Health and Wellness,



Justine Aman
SPGS President



Dear Council and SGPS Members,

We are halfway into our position as executives of the SGPS. The past 6 months have not been easy. In addition to onboarding and transitioning into our role, so we could continue to provide services to our members, we (all) have been faced with the adverse task of doing so though this pandemic. COVID-19 has required me to adapt my role to the needs of our staff and members. Please find a summary of my activities below.

Hiring

We have had to hire several positions for the SGPS. These positions included new positions created to address the needs of unrepresented student groups, empty positions and vacated positions.

As HR for the SGPS I sat in and decided on who should be hired as commissioner also. Along with Anthony, our VP Community, I was instrumental in ensuring that the commissioners hired were able to 'hit the ground running' so to speak. Which is why we decided to recruit the successful candidates based on their past relationship with the SGPS, from among the other very qualified candidates.

External Contracts

The Grad Club is an institution within Queen's that provides services to our members. As a result, the SGPS sponsors the Grad Club and furnishes them with funding. The funding is directed toward the Grad Club's trivia nights. I was responsible for drafting a new contract, which outlined the changes we intend to institute with respect to the funding during COVID-19, since trivia is unlikely to be in person. A new contract was submitted to the Grad Club. At this point several terms are to be clarified with them, which will occur during their board meeting.

Permanent Staff Contracts

We have two permanent staff members at the SGPS, Sandy Beaton, who is our Director of Finance and Andria Burke who is our Executive Director.

Sandy's contract came for renewal in late Fall. I was able to extend his contract for another year with terms that allowed for flexibility during crises, such as the one we are currently facing.

Andria's contract came for renewal shortly after Sandy's. Her contract was for 2 years, which I was able to extend for another 2 years. This contract was more involved and took a little longer to finalize.

Creation of New Position

In discussion with fellow Executives we have decided that the SGPS is in dire need of a separate HR personnel. While the role of HR, and its functions, can be adequately performed by someone in my position, it cannot be done in an efficient manner that benefits the organization as a whole. A key deficiency we identified in how the current HR duties are

mandated is the diffuse nature and lack of coordination for how they are to be carried out. Some HR duties fall on me, as VP professional. These duties are enumerated in the SGPS Bylaws but are not adequately expressed. They divide this role between the President of the SGPS and myself. Other duties however, are enumerated in Andria's employment contract. Therefore it is difficult to carry out any acts as HR, as coordination becomes very difficult. The idea behind having a singular party acting as HR, and not anything else, would help coordinate that role and allow for faster access to services. Therefore I have advocated for a separate HR person, to whom my fellow Executives agreed.

Moreover, there is significant oversight with respect to the necessity of institutional memory of the SGPS. Having spoken with our permanent staff during their employment negotiations, I was brought to the attention of inconsistent behavior by prior executive and employees which I would not have known otherwise. With the constant turnover of student representatives who act as leaders in the SGPS, it is difficult to pass on important information. Therefore, an HR person, or even just having that role, would systemically procure all institutional memory and hold it in an easily accessible location. This would greatly enhance the SGPS' ability to render services and draw insight from past decisions.

Change in Services

I have had students request some of the services that we offered in the past. These services include the professional photos we would provide. Unfortunately due to COVID some of these services, such as the professional photos, which required students to attend campus physically, will no longer be available. I've been searching for alternative ways to render these services to no avail, but will continue to conduct this search in the coming months.

Although physical distancing proves offering services difficult it also provides opportunities for increased participation. Observing the success of student groups who have provided seminars over digital platforms, I have initiated my plan to bring a new seminar on business development to professional students. As professionals, students will be required to in most cases bring in new business at some point in their career. Being socially distanced may prove to be a difficulty in accomplishing this. To help guide these students I've planned a seminar on digital business development. I've currently spoken with personnel in the legal field who are enthusiastic about offering their insight to students, but to avoid being limiting I'm currently in the process of reaching out to medical professionals and other professionals. I'm hoping this seminar will have a transformative effect on our constituents.

Final Thoughts

I apologize for the brevity of this report, with everything having gone digital it is difficult to maintain all records in one place. Despite this, I strongly believe the SGPS is in a much stronger position than we were in 6 months ago. I have confidence in my fellow executives that they will continue to work tirelessly on behalf of our members. If you have any further questions please do not hesitate to contact me at my email below.

Respectfully Submitted,

John Jeyaratnam

Vice President (Professional)

Society of Graduate and Professional Students (SGPS)

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Dear Council and SGPS Members,

We are now over six months into our term as the SGPS Executive. This year has been very busy due to numerous issues faced by our members, but of these issues, COVID-19 has had the most impact on my portfolio. Below is a summary of progress of the various aspects of my portfolio.

Audit

KPMG started performing audits for the SGPS in 2015. Our last audit occurred in July 2020 for the 2019-2020 year, which turned up no red flags. Lori Huber is providing a more in-depth review of the audit at this meeting on behalf of KPMG.

2020-2021 Budget

Budgeting was challenging this year, as it requires some prediction of future numbers. Previous years were difficult to rely on due to unique challenges such as, SCI, and a change in the health and dental plan. This year also faced unique challenges such as, COVID-19 impacting enrollment, and the possibility of the SCI issue arising again. Discussions around budget were initiated in May and continued largely throughout the summer. There was a focus on reducing fees in order to lessen the financial impact on members, and to maintain a goal of minimizing surplus.

The SGPS is bound by policy to not run into a deficit. Through our discussions, the SGPS managed to reduce several of the SGPS fees, and the Health and Dental fee. Reductions were made with caution due to many of uncertainties, so we made a contingency plan to offer rebates in the Winter Semester if need be. It has also been a goal of mine to create more transparency in the budgeting process by allocating funds more specifically.

An in-depth look at the budget will be presented separately during this meeting.

Health and Dental Plan

The current SGPS Health and Dental plan was selected a few years back and agreements were signed with Studentcare (health plan consultant) and with Sunlife (insurer). This plan has served our members well as it offers many great benefits, though there is the option to opt-out in the beginning of the year. This year discussions focused on whether we could reduce the Health and Dental fee, and if so, by how much. Considerations included, prediction of student enrollment numbers, volatility of student claims, upcoming changes in our agreements, and maintenance of an appropriate reserve fund.

Ultimately, it was decided to set the SGPS Health and Dental fee at \$610.00. We also decided on a reserve fund percentage of 25-30%. The purpose of the reserve fund is to protect against short-term volatility in claims activity, benefit changes, and other factors that can lead to unpredictability in premiums.

The SGPS has recently been informed that we will be receiving a COVID-19 credit from our insurer, and we will be looking to pass these savings onto students through a rebate next semester.

Finance and Services Committee

There are four SGPS members that serve alongside me on the Finance and Services Committee. Our last meeting was in September, and the plan is to meet early in the Winter Semester. The Committee corresponds via email on a weekly basis, and they have been working very hard in reviewing bursary applications.

Bursaries

Type	Total Applicants (Oct YTD)*	Successful Applicants (Oct YTD)	Total Disbursed (Oct YTD)	Total Budgeted
Dental Bursary	15	6	\$5,215,80	\$7,500
Emergency Bursary**	35	23	\$3,138.80	\$11,500
International Student Bursary	39	15	\$3,000	\$7,600
Activity Bursary	0	0	\$0	\$5,000
TOTAL	89	44	\$11,354.60	\$26,600

**Many of the applicants not successful are missing appropriate documentation*

***Bursaries due to the impact of COVID-19 were captured under this bursary*

Over the summer only the emergency bursary was open to students. The remaining bursaries were opened in September. The bursary application guide was also updated in November and is available on the SGPS website: <https://sgps.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/SGPS-Bursary-Application-Guide-FINAL-NOV2020.pdf>. One major issue was the timeline of when applications and documents are needed. It has been decided that all applications and required documents (proof of expense and proof of need) will need to be submitted within the SGPS fiscal year, which runs from May 1, 2020 to April 30, 2021.

The Executive is also currently looking at ways of expanding our bursary program. Consideration is being given to having additional bursaries administered through the Queen's University Awards office.

One final point is that bursary applications will be closed from December 1, 2020 till January 4, 2021. We realize some students are waiting to apply as they have not yet heard back regarding their Queen's General Bursary (used as proof of need). While these decisions are usually rendered in December, they are not usually rendered until the later part of December when the office will be closed nonetheless.

Grants

Although the hope was to open up grants, they have not yet been opened and will likely remain closed until the end of the year. The reason for this is twofold. First, many of the student groups that would utilize these grants are not holding as many events. Second, it was a requirement of our grants that events be sanctioned through the SGPS; however, the sanctioning process is difficult due to COVID and restrictions from our insurer.

Money that was budgeted for grants will likely be placed into bursaries.

Fees, Reductions, and Rebates

As part of looking to reduced SGPS specific fees, the SGPS encouraged groups it collects fees on behalf of to reduce their fees as well. These discussions largely occurred over the summer with the result that many groups did reduce their fees.

The SGPS heard from a few groups that were looking to give back further to students, and more discussions occurred within the last month about how to best go about this. A rebate of this kind has not been done before, and is administratively challenging. Ultimately, we decided that the SGPS needed to know about possible rebates before passing on funds on to the appropriate groups. I sent out an email on November 20th giving groups an opportunity to provide rebates to students. Funds will be distributed to groups by the end of the month. Rebates will occur in the Winter Semester.

External and Internal Meetings

While my role is mainly inwards facing, I have attended several meetings for various Queen's Committees. Most notably, the Senate Committee for Scholarships and Student Aid, and the Campus Master Planning and Advisory Committee. There is nothing notable to report for these external committees.

I continue to meet with the SGPS Executive on a regular weekly basis to discuss such matters as Black Lives Matter, the Bus-It Fee, and the Athletics and Recreation fee to name a few.

Restructuring

Early in the summer the SGPS made the difficult decision to let the front desk staff go, in the anticipation that we would be remote for an extended period of time. We attempted to keep these staff on; however, the nature of the role was not one that we could transition to a remote position. Part of this saved expense will likely go towards hiring other staff, namely for an HR position.

I apologize for the rather lengthy report. Overall, I feel the Executive has made a great progress in serving SGPS members this year, especially given its unique challenges. We will continue to stay dedicated to putting our members first. If you have any questions, concerns, feedback, or suggestions on how we can improve please do not hesitate to contact me, or one of the other Executive.

Respectfully Submitted,



Tamara Mitterer

Vice President (Finance and Services)

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Hello everyone!

This semester has been a very busy one, with a lot of change happening. I have summarized what I have been up to since taking my role 6 months ago below, but I am happy to take any questions!

Services: Both the Graduate Peer support Center and the Peer Academic Advisors have transferred their services online and continue to offer support to our students. The GPSC recently hired 6 new volunteers this past week! The GPSC has also decided to provide restricted hours during the winter break as the holidays can be stressful for some. We also welcomed 2 new peer academic advisors to the team in May. Please reach out to either of these services if you are in need!

Fees and Tuition: Unfortunately, the tuition waiver was unsuccessful this summer. As a result, we shifted gears to look at what fees students were paying and if the amount was still justified under COVID. The 2019/2020 ARC fee was reduced by \$29, and the 2020/2021 fee was reduced by 25%; this was unfortunately, the lowest Queen's would reduce the fee to. We have been pushing Queen's to be more transparent in their fee spending. If student fees are to be charged, we believe that students should know what their money is being spent on, especially when students are facing a lot of financial uncertainty.

Students who were on track to graduate in August 2020 and were forced to add an extra semester due to COVID were granted an extra semester of funding. If they are an international student, they were also granted domestic tuition. Of course, some students were on track to finish in January/2021 and may also need an extra semester of funding. I have reached to the SGS about options available to these students. They have told me that these students can get extended funding. Similar to the fall semester, their graduate program assistant will complete the process and paperwork. If you are one of these students (or know someone who is) please reach out to your graduate program assistant.

Finally, the SGS recently implemented a staged refund system (find all the specifics here under "Completion / Withdrawal Schedule for Graduate Programs": <http://www.queensu.ca/registrar/financials/refunds>). Basically, if a student finishes their degree part way through a semester, they will be eligible for a partial refund on their tuition and mandatory fees.

Research shutdowns and COVID: Many graduate students were greatly affected by the research shutdowns in March and April. Although research operations are slowly coming back, I'm sure there is a lot of stress surrounding a second shutdown if there is another wave. Luckily a more in-depth plan has been put in place by Queen's that will hopefully prevent a hard shutdown. The idea behind this operational procedure is that should a second wave happen, research would be shut down in a slower, more precise manner with preventative practices wherever

The Library and COVID: If COVID has shown us one thing, it's how important the library is to ALL students. I am meeting with the head librarian to hopefully set up some graduate specific library space for students to take advantage of. I hope to have some exciting news in my next report.

International tuition reduction: The push for an international tuition reduction is moving along well! I hope to have more exciting news about this soon!

Elections: Although this might seem a little early to start talking about 2021/2022, I just wanted to let everyone know that executive elections will be coming up in January! Please reach out if you have any questions about my role!

I hope you all are staying safe and enjoying the chilly weather!

Courtney Bannerman



Hello Council and members,

It's crazy that almost 7 months of our term is now complete. So much has happened and I'm really proud of the work we've been able to do so far this year. I'm going to highlight just a few important points here.

Conference

Our second annual Scholarship Beyond Boundaries Conference is happening virtually this year from March 20-21, 2021 (love that date symmetry). I'm pleased to say that we now have \$2850 in pledged sponsorship money! This shows fantastic support from across the entire University, including Faculties (Engineering, Education), Schools (Graduate Studies, Policy Studies), Labs (Sonic Arts, ICELab, Sonic Arts of Place), Community Organizations (Kingston Historical Society, Kingston Association of Museums), and more. This conference is unique in that you don't apply based on a general theme or a disciplinary interest. Instead, you apply for one of our 13 specific panel themes. Each theme is designed to accept presenters from a variety of disciplinary backgrounds, and we encourage you to be in touch with your fellow panelists ahead of time to create engaging multidisciplinary conversations around topics. Please promote this conference to people in your programs, schools, departments, faculties, and broader networks! More information, including the Call for Presenters, can be found at <https://sgps.ca/sbbc/>. Our Call for Presenters is available [here](#).

I'm excited to say that I was able to approve a Conference Coordinator position earlier this month, and that Nick Grubic will be starting in this position as of today (Monday, November 23, 2020). My plan is to meet with Nick this week to get him caught up on what has happened so far. Together we will be putting together a volunteer team. Please let students in your networks know that we will be putting out that call for volunteers in the near future. We are hoping to provide volunteers with honoraria this year as well.

Commissioners

The new commissioners, Kel (Social) and Rohit (International) are off and running! Kel has a few really fun events coming up that you will hear about in their report, and Rohit also has some exciting plans that he will be outlining as well. Very happy to have both on board!

Paige will be running Cultural Safety Training in the next little while, and we are planning to open this up to council members as well as SGPS employees/executives. I'm so thankful to Paige and Fifi for working to organize this training, and I'm hoping that as many people as possible will participate.

The siloed nature of the university means that, even prior to social distancing, there was social distancing happening throughout the institution. One way that our commissioners are working hard to combat this is by creating departmental positions for International and Equity reps. I'm sure this will be discussed more in Fifi's report, but I wanted to put this on your radar and stress how important it is. It's so important that we have you guys to communicate within your departments. Many students don't

know what the SGPS is, and we need you to let them know about our events, advocacy, etc. Students are feeling lonely and promoting our opportunities to them is vital – we can't do it without you!

Thanks for your continued support and participation. If you ever have questions or suggestions about ways in which you would like to create community at Queen's, I'm happy to hear from you.

Anthony Lomax
VP Community



Hello everyone!

The summer was a quiet one for me as senate doesn't run during the summer months. I have attached a summary of the fall senate meetings:

- There was some concern from Queen's before the summer about how COVID would affect student enrollment, ultimately a large drop in student numbers were not seen. Many programs were happy to report they had reached their enrollment targets.
- Principal Deane expressed disappointment about Queen's dropping global ranking. He expressed a desire to change the overall culture on campus as well as increase international student enrollment. He has released a document titled "The Conversation" which detail his thought in great depth.
- Currently the university has not released any indication if summer/fall 2021 classes will be online. Dr. Greene has said that decision will be made closer to the date.
- The October 2020 Senate meeting was an uneventful one. Two Senate academic procedure communities will be combined to increase efficiently and speed of academic changes

I'm sorry for this brief report! I'm sure the next upcoming senate meetings will be more exciting!

Cheers

Courtney Bannerman



Hello Council and members,

This report highlights some of the events I have been working on in the past few months:

SGPS Running and Active Clubs

Starting back in the spring, we have been building an active community using the app, Strava to connect runners and different types of movers by offering a virtual community. We have had numerous challenges throughout the summer, offering prizes for those who participated. We created a partnership with the ARC and collaborated with their summer and fall Virtual Running Series, with weekly challenges, Zoom meetings to collaborate and speak with other runners, where we receive tips, tricks, techniques, motivation and advice. We created 5km, 10km, 15km and ½ marathon training plans for members to follow. The on-going virtual community shares suggestions on the best routes within the city they reside, such as most scenic routes, less busy routes, best physical distancing and alike. As we move into the colder months, we have created conversations around budget friendly warm gear, and safety as it gets darker much earlier. The SGPS Running and Active Clubs continue to grow and I look forward to continue this community into the winter months.

SGPS Cooks with Grammas

Since April, I have been working with members from Faith and Spiritual Life and the Grammas from the Queen's Women's Association in turning their pre-existing in-person 'Cooking with Grammas' to on-line 'Virtual Cooking with Grammas'. We held numerous practice sessions throughout the summer, where the grammas practiced using the technology and virtual instruction. We kicked off our first session in September, where we had 6 SGPS members register. Our first session went extremely well, with the grammas conquering virtual teaching!

Following our first event, we circulated a survey asking the participants for feedback on the event. We asked what they might be interested in cooking and learning to help us frame the forthcoming sessions. The survey provided a lot of insight for us and the grammas to move forward and help shape the recipes the grammas would choose. We learned the participants want to learn different cooking techniques, cook with more vegetables on a budget and to learn a wide variety of recipes. What became evident is that many members are feeling lonely and distant from their friends and family at this time, so learning and connecting with the grammas and other students, while enjoying the meal together allows a *family feel* many of us are missing. SGPS Cooks with Grammas is an event that builds intergenerational connections. The grammas have expressed their thankfulness for the events, as they look forward to it each month. A time when we are all separated from our friends and family, enjoying a meal with someone, even once a month through Zoom has a positive impact on many of our mental health. By teaching the grammas the technology, they are beginning to feel more confident and competent and are able to connect more with their friends and family outside our monthly events, which is helping them feel less isolated and alone. For the students, we are seeing friends joining, who live in different cities or houses, but get to participate in a social event together. We are seeing house-mates join and cook together. It is bringing together various fields of studies and building connections among us.

The October session had 9 participants join and our November session had 13. Faith and Spiritual Life are offering grocery subsidies to anyone, regardless of need, where we simply send a grocery store gift card in the mail, no questions asked. As we move into December, we will be hosting our final session for this year on December 16 at 5pm, with registration opening soon. If you haven't yet, check out our article that was published in the Queen's Gazette [here](#).

Upcoming Events

Unfortunately, we had to cancel the Axe Capoeira workshop that was scheduled for October 26. In effort of finding the most suitable time and event delivery, with Zoom fatigue hitting many of us, the SGPS has put out a survey asking our members to share their input as to when would be the best time to host events, how they would like to participate (in-person following physical distancing protocols or via Zoom) and what kind of events they would be interested in participating in. Upon data collection, we will re-schedule the Capoeira workshop considering the feedback received to best accommodate our members. Additionally, I will be working with the ARC in promoting their in-person and virtual fitness classes, creating a schedule that reflects the feedback from our survey to better suit and reflect our SGPS members. For those interested, there are many fitness classes being offered and can be found [here](#). I will be working with my colleagues into the new year creating even more events and continue to create a strong SGPS community!

It has been a very busy fall semester and I look forward to the upcoming months. 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



Dear Council,

I hope everyone is doing well and in good spirits!

In this report, I will highlight some of the most significant committee work and projects I have been working on in the last six months.

Committees

A big part of my work as the Equity and Diversity Commissioner has been attending meetings and having conversations with various campus groups, organizations, and committees. As part of my work with the University Council on Anti-Racism and Equity (UCARE), I sit on two sub-Councils: Inclusive Community Sub-Council and Student Recruitment, Support and Success Sub-Council. Principal Deane and Provost and Vice-Principal Mark Green have attended several UCARE meetings where they were asked about the school's August 'Declaration of commitment to address systemic racism'. At these meetings, I 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. Additionally, in my work on the Senate Educational Equity Committee (SEEC), I have been raising issues related to equity and diversity. One of the SEEC's projects has been drafting a response to the Principal's "The Conversation" report, identifying several aspects of the report that needed further work. These aspects include the report's understanding of community at Queen's, international students and internationalization and how the school seeks to support ongoing graduate research. Moreover, I have been representing graduate students in the Built Environment Advisory Group (BEAG) as well as the Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Task Force (SVPRTF), which has been working on Sexual Violence Policy amendments. In these committees and other meetings, I have highlighted issues and concerns specific to graduate students and emphasized the need for graduate student representation across campus.

Soft Infrastructure Working Group

As some of you are hopefully aware of by now, a major project that myself, Paige (Indigenous Graduate Liaison) and Claudia (former International Commissioner) have been working on for several months came to fruition with the creation of a soft infrastructure network that connects graduate student associations across the university. We conveyed this message to all SGPS representatives during the November Council meeting and would like to encourage all graduate student associations/councils to create two additional positions: An Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Indigeneity (EDII) representative and an International Graduate Student Representative. While the individuals elected/appointed to each of these roles will serve their respective departments, they will also have a seat on the respective SGPS committees that are being created to meet the needs of these graduate student populations: The Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Indigeneity (EDII) Committee and the International Graduate Student Network. Detailed descriptions for each of these positions have been distributed. The highly decentralized structure of Queen's university makes campus-wide mobilization extremely difficult. This soft infrastructure network is one of the ways we can overcome this challenge, build solidarity across campus, and ensure that the voices and needs of all students are heard.

If you have any suggestions, questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to get in touch at equity@sgps.ca

All the very best,

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



Dear Council and Members,

Here is an update on a few of the activities and meeting I have been working on these past few months:

1. Indigenous Reads Talking Circle

Our Fall circle has been meeting bi-weekly to discuss Thomas King's *The Inconvenient Indian: A Curious Account of Native People in North America*. There have been some heavy yet enlightening discussions on indigenous sovereignty, treaty rights, assimilation, police brutality, stereotypes in media representation, systematic and endemic racism, and much more as students from all departments and backgrounds are welcome in this space, bringing in their knowledges and experiences on these issues into the discussion. These heavy discussions are facilitated by the Four Directions Cultural Counselor, Lisa Doxtator, who aids in creating a safe and welcoming space for these conversations to occur between indigenous and non-indigenous students. We have stopped accepting new members for the rest of the fall term due to the lateness of the term and how far we have read into the book. We are starting up again with a social in the winter on **January 14th, 2021 from 4-6pm**. If you would like to join the conversation, please email me at indigenous@sgps.ca

2. Indigenous Writing Group (SELF IDENTIFIED INDIGENOUS STUDENTS ONLY)

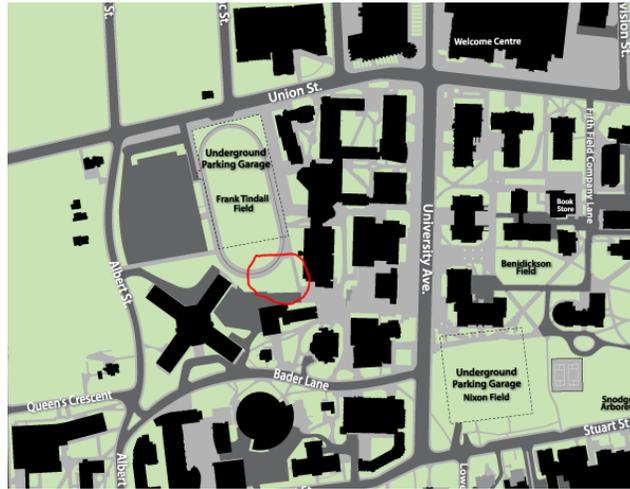
In working with the SAGE/Indigenous Student Advisor at Four Directions, we are developing a student led writing group that will start in **January 2021** and run for twice a month with one of those meetings each month being attended by a professional to answer questions and provide guidance on the writing process with an indigenous mindset and methodology. If you know of any self-identified indigenous peers in your departments who would be willing to participate in this activity please give them my contact information, indigenous@sgps.ca

3. Soft infrastructure working group

I have been working with the SGPS Equity and Diversity Commissioner and International Commissioner on the creation of the soft infrastructure group. Details of which can be found in the SGPS Equity and Diversity Commissioner report.

4. New Indigenous outdoor space on Queen's Campus

The Faculty of Arts and Sciences have been working with the Indigenous company, Smoke architecture, to create an outdoor space that will be connected to the welcoming room, E202, of Mackintosh Correy Hall. It will be located just behind Watson hall, south of Tindall Field and west of Mac Correy Hall. It will be a space intended for ceremonies, land-based learning activities, and a space for community engagement. Below is a map of where it will be situated on Queen's and the project is in its consultation phase of development with the Office of Indigenous Initiatives, indigenous student representatives, like myself, and external community members.



If you have indigenous students in your department, please let them know about these opportunities for engagement with the SGPS and a chance to meet like-minded individuals outside their respective departments. Or if you have ideas that you would like to pitch to me as it pertains to indigenous issues and engagement on Queen's I would be happy to listen.

Gichi Miigwech,

Paige Van Tassel

SGPS Indigenous Graduate Liaison

indigenous@sgps.ca



Dear Council and Members!

To begin with, I am highly obliged to be new International Student Affairs Commissioner for the SGPS. I look forward to working with you all to represent and advocate International graduate students and I hope to continue the good work that was carried out by the former Commissioner Claudia Hirtenfelder. As I started this position earlier this month, I have been able to complete the meetings with Claudia and Anthony (VP Community) for transitioning into the role.

I would like to take this opportunity to introduce myself and mention my upcoming event planned for this month. I am currently pursuing my PhD from the Department of Civil Engineering. I come from India and have been a part of Queen's since winter'19. Other than the SGPS council member from past 1 year, I have also been involved with QUIC-Queen's University International Center as Student staff, Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC901) as steward and International Student Working Group (ISWG).

Through my role as International Student Affairs Commissioner, I would be working toward highlighting the financial precarity of most international graduate students as well as highlighting the often-poor communication the administration has with them. I am committed toward providing international students the platform to showcase international research and to highlight the significance of their contribution to the university. I am also working on previous work of creating better soft infrastructure for international students which involves establishing a broader mailing list, monthly check-ins and potentially some specific training. This might also involve helping to facilitate a better sense of 'international community' amongst graduate students.

To kick start on my role, I am running a virtual international student check-in on Monday 30 November. The goal of this space is for international graduate students to be able to connect and to chat with each other, also maybe offering informal advices and suggestions to me on my new role. Please spread the word in your respective departments among international students. The zoom details for the meeting have been listed on SGPS events page and SGPS at Queen's International Student Affairs Facebook page.

That's it from me for now! I' am working with Anthony to bring you some really great events and advocating some of the more pressing concerns of International graduate students. Once again thank you for giving me the opportunity to continue and expand the good work of the SGPS as the International Student Affairs Commissioner, I am excited to be here.

I am always open to any comments, questions, or suggestions. Please feel free to contact me at international@sgps.ca

Best,

Rohit Shukla



Hello Council and members,

This report includes an introduction and highlights future events in the coming months:

Introduction

Hello everyone! My name is Kel Martin, and I am your new social commissioner. In this role I hope to listen to your feedback and work with you to host fun and engaging social events both online and in-person that meet your needs. I am an OCT certified art and drama teacher, and a current Master's of Education student. I hope to facilitate a wide range of events from socially distanced hiking and bird feeding, to paint nites and other art and crafting experiences. Among these events I hope to work with you and showcase your unique skills and stories through asking SGPS members to co-facilitate learning experiences such as learning about plants, dance, painting, candle-making, and so much more. I look forward to seeing you at upcoming events!

“Show and Tell” Plants (no cost)

Join us this December for our first session of the “Show and Tell” series which brings together graduate and professional students to share their unique knowledge and skills. Each event will include a co-facilitator SGPS member who will share knowledge and skills, a “Show and Tell” session where participants may share their own experiences/products, an activity, and door prizes. This first session themed “Plants” will involve a Master of Biology student sharing tips and tricks for indoor plant care such as identifying and eliminating plant pests, a sharing session (show us your plants!) and discussion time, sign up for sharing seeds/plants, and plant bingo or draw for prizes.

Holiday Crafting (\$0-10 cost)

Do you want the materials and knowledge to paint galaxies? Felt soap? Make your own ornaments? Or just a space to make your own art and chat? Join us this December for holiday crafting! This event will involve some work on your part, you need to register for your art kits (first one is free), and then join us with your kit(s) or own projects on Zoom for a guided crafting session. The zoom will be open for 2 hours of crafting fun, with the first hour reserved for brief tutorials on: ornament making, galaxy painting, and soap felting, followed by time to craft and chat while facilitators remain online for any questions. Kits for the three tutorials are available for delivery within Kingston, and the first kit is free, followed by \$5 for each additional kit. All are welcome to join and BYOP (bring your own project) to work on in the crafting space. Participants must register for kits by December 5th.

Upcoming Events

Join us this January for events such as “Show and Tell” Birds where we meet at a conservation site and hike on easy trails (1-2m wide fine gravel) and feed the birds. In addition January will have a Paint Nite involving watercolour painting.

Please feel free to contact me at social@sgps.ca if you have any feedback, questions, concerns, or want to be involved in future events as a speaker/ co-facilitator or volunteer.

Warmly,

Kel Martin
Social Commissioner