



Society of Graduate and Professional Students
Report of the PRESIDENT
November 2020

Good Afternoon Colleagues,

I want to thank you all for your continued dedication to your departments and to the SGPS as a whole! As there are a number of working pieces in play in my position that will reach their conclusion by next week I have opted to give a longer verbal report rather than a written report that does not have full content.

As always, please reach out if you have any general questions or want to start a discussion on anything!

Yours in Health and Wellness,

Justine Aman
SPGS President



Hello Council,

It's hard to believe the term is coming to an end already. With fall turning to winter, time is whizzing by.

I have been busy in my role as HR. We have had to do several hiring to fill vacated positions. I would like to welcome Rohit to our team. He will be the incoming International Commissioner. He is dedicated to courageously advocating for international students and their concerns with Queen's as a University. I would also like to welcome Kel as the Social Commissioner. He is prepared to make graduate students' experience here dynamic and collegial – even with the present circumstances. Both individuals have a difficult road ahead of them. However, after looking at many applications and interviewing a large number of very qualified candidates we Anthony, the VP Social, and I have decided that Rohit and Kel are very well suited for the role and bring with them intimate knowledge of the workings of the SGPS, which will serve graduate students well.

Additionally, I have also been in negotiations with our Executive Director for the signing of another contract. We have made an offer, extending her employment for another two years, and hope that she will join us and continue to help graduate students as she has done in the past. Although the contract has not yet been finalized, we are very close to putting ink on paper.

I'd like to congratulate the Kingston community on having no new cases of COVID for the past couple of days. I'm just returning from there and its refreshing to be in a place where eating inside is not vilified by all. The graduate students who I met while there I'm sure are representative of all our graduate students in how they practice safe measures in ensuring no new cases emerge. I hope this trend continues in Kingston, and the rest of the world for that matter.

Best,
John
VP Professional



Hello Council,

This has been a busy month, and I have lots to update you on.

First, I would like to take the opportunity to welcome two new commissioners who are taking over roles starting November 1, 2020:

- Rohit Shukla is taking over as International Commissioner. Rohit brings a wealth of knowledge about international student issues, connections with QUIC, ISWG, and PSAC Local 901, and a great working knowledge of the SGPS' recent work for international students. I am also excited by Rohit's connection to the Engineering Department, which we think will help us expand our reach. This is especially important during the pandemic.
- Kel Martin is taking on the Social Commissioner portfolio for us. Kel previously worked the front desk at the SGPS, which means that they have a great working knowledge of our organization. They also bring a lot of event planning experience and really positive energy to this role. I'm very excited to start working with Kel!

I have meetings planned with both of these lovely individuals this week, and am very excited to begin our work together. I would also like to thank John Jeyaratnam (VP Professional) for sitting on the hiring committee with me this year. I really enjoyed working with you and appreciate your commitment to the process. Thanks also to everyone who applied, it was a tough decision with lots of great applications.

Second, I'm happy to announce that we will be hiring a Conference Coordinator for our second annual SGPS Scholarship Beyond Boundaries Conference – so those that are still looking for job opportunities, we have one for you! Applications should be open by the time you read this. Our first conference was a huge success, and we are ready for another great event this year. We have about sixteen sponsors on board and have already raise \$2650 in funds. More information is available [here](#).

Another opportunity I am hoping to create for students is the potential to have grad and professional students lead activities that they have expertise in for other grad and professional students. I am hoping to provide these students with an honorarium. If you have expertise in painting, dance, yoga, creative writing, drawing, tai chi, martial arts, Zumba, Pilates, or any other fun and de-stressing activities, or if you know people with the skills to teach others, I am hoping we will be able to make some connections and start offering sessions. Please feel free to email me if you are interested!

Finally, I recently designed a survey with the help of the commissioner team and Andria. The survey allows students to communicate with us about the type of events they would like us to put on. We have received a ton of responses so far, and the responses have been really helpful; we are already planning a few new events and some tweaks to ones we are already doing. If you would like to participate or (please!) promote this survey, we are accepting responses until Sunday, November 15. We are offering gift certificates to the Screening Room as prizes as well. The link to the survey is [here](#).

Thanks everyone,

Anthony
vp.community@sgps.ca



Hello Council,

I hope you all well and preparing for the colder weather that is approaching rather quickly.

October was another busy month with our on-going events:

SGPS Running and Active Clubs

The SGPS Running and Active Clubs continue to grow. There are conversations surrounding running and staying active as the weather drops, providing advice, tips and tricks on clothing and attire, motivation and best routes.

Virtual Cooking with Grandmas

We held our second virtual *SGPS Cooks with Grandmas* in partnership with Faith and Spiritual Life on October 21. Similar to the previous month, the Grandmas, who are from the Queen's Women's Association lead us through the virtual cooking class making Gramma Mary Ellen's broccoli spinach frittata. We had 9 SGPS members join us for the evening, where we learned new cooking skills and techniques, had many laughs and great conversations. Once the meal was prepared, we all enjoying the meal together, virtually. Our next event is planned for November 18 at 5:30pm and registration can be found [here](#).

Axe Capoeira

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, and 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.

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 keeping safe and well as the temperature begins to dip.

October was a busy month, filled with fruitful conversations with various campus groups, organizations, and committees. The Built Environment Advisory Group (BEAG) hosted an Accessibility Café to discuss the accessibility features of the JDUC renovation project. During the October 20th BEAG meeting, we discussed some insights and conversations that emerged from this session. I have also been part of ongoing conversations in the University Council on Anti-Racism and Equity (UCARE). In addition to attending all of the UCARE general meetings, I am also working as part of the Inclusive Community sub-council. Additionally, I attended my first meeting as part of the Senate Educational Equity Committee (SEEC) where we discussed the SEEC's mandate and goals for the year. Finally, I had a meeting with Tianna Edwards, the new diversity and inclusivity coordinator at the Yellow House, Centre for Student Equity and Inclusion. During this meeting, I highlighted graduate students' need for space on campus, whether that be a safe and inclusive space to find rest or a space for political organization.

A major project that I have been working on, along with Paige (Indigenous Graduate Liaison) and Claudia (former International Commissioner) is the creation of a soft infrastructure network that connects graduate student associations across the university. To this end, we want to encourage 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. While we appreciate that your department might not be able to fill each of these positions immediately, we encourage you to begin the process of writing these positions into your by-laws. 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 would like to pitch an idea for an event, please do not hesitate to get in touch at equity@sgps.ca

All the best,

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



Aaniin Hello Council,

I hope you are doing well and keeping warm as the cold weather sets. Here is an update on a few of the activities I have been working on as the Indigenous Graduate Liaison:

1. Indigenous Reads Talking Circle

The circle is now closed to new members due to the sensitive topics that will be discussing for the rest of the semester. The circle will start up again mid January with another reading of indigenous literature that is yet to be determined. If you are interested in other avenues for engaging with indigenous literature in a casual setting, Scholars of Colours at Watson Hall is having a group discussion November 30th from 6-7pm via Zoom which will discuss *Son of a Trickster* by *Eden Robinson*. The zoom link can be found at this Facebook post:

<https://www.facebook.com/ScholarsofColourWatsonHall/photos/gm.792560361602503/3453262548122369>

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

I am starting up a student led writing group with Indigenous students in partnership with Four Directions. A survey was sent to Indigenous students for suggestions on the time, frequency of occurrence and structure of the writing group. The survey will be open until November 6th and then proceed to start up the group based on the results.

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 over three days, two hours each day for 6 hours in total. Due to recent hiring within the SGPS, we need to find another time that works for the majority to carry out this training. 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. Soft Infrastructure EDII

I have been working with the Art History department to develop an EDII (Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Indigeneity) student rep position that works with both the faculty on their DEAP Tool committee and the graduate student association to create transparent and open line of communication amongst faculty and students to better serve the needs and issues of EDII in the department. We have successfully gained approval for a paid position funded by the Art History department and are currently working with the Equity office on the specifics of hiring process for this position. 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.

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Gichi Miigwech,
Paige Van Tassel
SGPS Indigenous Graduate Liaison
indigenous@sgps.ca