



Good Afternoon Colleagues,

I hope that this report finds you well and refreshed after the holiday break, even with the second wave lockdown. I encourage all of you to support your colleagues in maintaining all public health advisories to continue to protect our community as we head towards a vaccination. I am motivated and excited for 2021 and what that means for the SGPS and look forward to continuing to engage with all of you!

### **BUS SUBSIDY -IMPORTANT**

There has been a delay or error made at the level of distribution for the Fall 2020 subsidies. All applicants who applied and were approved WILL still receive their funding but we are gathering information to understand why the money has not reached the students already. The AMS is on holiday until January 7th so I will have an update on this issue by the time of the council meeting, but I wanted to inform you all in my report. If any of your constituents reach out to you, please have them email me and I will explain the situation, apologize, and explain the timeline for deposit. Winter applications are now open and all interested students should be directed to me or this link if they are interested in applying: [Winter 2021 Bus Pass Financial Assistance Application – Formstack](#)

### **BYLAW AND POLICY**

Our incredible Bylaw and Policy Review Committee have been working incredibly hard this year and while you have seen and approved election policy, there is a lot more in the pipeline. We have approved the updated policies needed to run a successful election and now are continuing to make the changes to the remaining document. I will be reviewing some suggestions this week and am excited to see what improvements have been suggested

### **ELECTIONS**

Election period opens on January 16th! If you or someone you know is interested in any of the Executive positions, please encourage them to reach out to the respective Executive member for tips and advice!

### **ENGAGEMENT**

Student engagement will continue this semester with a number of new initiatives implemented in Fall 2020 carrying forward into 2021. These include but are not limited to :

- Bi-weekly President newsletter
  - Every other Tuesday
  - If you ever have a Graduate or Professional program advertisement or PSA you would like to include in my bi-weekly newsletter, please, please reach out! Our Executive Director, Andria does an amazing job bringing together important dates and notes but we are always looking to support you!
- Weekly President office hours
  - Tuesdays noon-1pm EST
  - Feel free to send any of your constituents my way if they have an issue that may be SGPS related and I can \*virtually\* sit down with them to discuss. The meeting rooms are private so they will have the ability to engage 1-on-1 with no outside pressure
- Monthly Town Hall
  - First Saturday of each month @2:30pm EST
  - While these are largely informal updates provided to interested students by Executive I encourage you to bring up any issues to me in advance that you would like to spend time discussing. We leave open the

ability to add agenda items all the way up to Saturday morning.

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,

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

Justine Aman  
SPGS President



Hello everyone!

I hope you had a restful break and are enjoying the new year! Two items to report on:

**Elections!** I will not be rerunning for a 2<sup>nd</sup> term as VP Graduate. With the election period quickly approaching, I would encourage you to submit a nomination. If you have any questions about the VPG position, please send me an email!

**Lockdowns and Research:** As Ontario goes into another lockdown, there are many questions surrounding stipends/time to completion and paying mandatory fees. Stipend extensions are being administered at the department level. You are eligible for a stipend extension if the lockdown has forced you to take an extra semester past the last semester of your eligible funding period (ex: a Ph.D. student needs to take an additional semester after completing their 4<sup>th</sup> year). This condition also applies to international students having their tuition reduced to a domestic level. Please email your program assistant to access these programs, but do not hesitate to reach out if you are running into any roadblocks.

With the lockdown being put into place again, students are concerned with paying mandatory fees for services not fully running. Queen's will be doing another fee reassessment period this term where they may decide to refund a portion of the mandatory fee. We will keep a close eye on the situation in the coming months and advocate for a proportional refund to students.

Cheers!

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 for 2021. Hopefully everyone had a safe and splendid holiday break, and feeling refreshed for the new semester.

Considering the holiday in December and a rather busy period with exams, there isn't much to report from the VP Professional.

### **New HR Role**

After discussions the past few months, the executive has decided it would be fruitful to implement a new HR position. This role would function to act as a separate and additional supplemental institutional memory, which the SGPS is woefully lacking at the present moment. Moreover, it will also serve to be a central location where all employees and staff can go for their HR needs. The current system is diffuse and disorganized, which causes severe inefficiency.

In January, as VP Professional, my intention is to have a rough job outline/description created. This will include finding various contractual provisions and sections from the bylaw and placing it in one document. The outline will be rough, and will likely be a work in progress for some time, only due to the very fluid nature the role will require. Thereafter, hopefully a job posting will be created and a salary will be determined. This would allow us to move forward and seek qualified candidates for interviews.

### **Elections**

Last year 4 out of the 5 executive positions were uncontested. Considering the depth of resources and gravity of responsibility each executive holds, it is a disservice to the students if they don't have a healthy pool of candidates to choose from. My intention will be to draw as many students as possible to run for the election.

Best,

John Jeyaratnam



Dear Council and SGPS Members,

I hope everyone had a restful Holiday break. I am hopeful that 2021 will be a great year. We officially returned to the office on January 4<sup>th</sup>, so there are only a few things I wish to highlight at this first Council meeting of 2021.

### **Bursaries**

Bursary applications officially re-opened on January 4th, 2021.

### **SGPS Rebate**

I had mentioned at the AGM, that the SGPS had received a COVID-19 rebate from our health and dental plan insurer, and that we were looking to pass those savings on to students.

I am happy to announce that the Executive approved a rebate of \$25 to each SGPS member enrolled in the health and dental plan. This will include students enrolled in either the Fall or Winter semester. The decision was made to give the rebate back to this group of students, rather than SGPS members at large, since it is really their payments that allowed such a rebate to be offered in the first place. The majority of SGPS members are enrolled in the health and dental plan.

The rebate will show up as a credit on student accounts. For students enrolled in the Fall, the rebate should already be processed, and for students enrolled in Winter, it will be processed after the cut-off for the January registration of the health and dental plan has passed.

### **Investments**

Investments from the SGPS general fund are coming up for renewal on February 26, 2021. The purpose of this update is to briefly provide information to the Council on the status of those funds.

Currently, there is \$1.1 million invested in GICs/Term Deposits. These are fixed term investments that are locked away for the term and cannot be used, thus generating a guaranteed rate of interest for the term. Essentially money is lent to the bank for a specified period of time, and in return interest is generated at a higher rate of return than simply storing the money in a bank account. This is a safe investment, and as a non-profit organization, it is one of the only options available to us. I am also confident that it satisfies our need to divest.

For re-investment, the \$1.1 million will likely be split up. The majority will go to long term GICs (or T Bills), and the remaining portion will be placed in short term GICs (T Bills) in case any cash flow issues arise as we finalize any payments for the end of the fiscal year.

As a final note, and one you may already be aware of, is that interest rates are pretty abysmal due to the pandemic and current economic situation. The returns are unlikely to be high for this upcoming year.

### **Fee Referendum & Financial Statements**

During my term, there have been many firsts implemented. Notability the option for student groups to provide fee rebates. Another first, is the request for fee reports to be submitted to the SGPS as part of the fee declarations.

In the coming weeks, I will be spending a significant amount of time reviewing the financial statements and fee reports submitted to me by the student groups. I will keep you all apprised of that process.

In addition, I will be starting to prepare for the fee referendum process.

If you have any questions, concerns, feedback, or suggestions on any of the above (or any other issues) please do not hesitate to contact me.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mitterer".

**Tamara Mitterer**

Vice President (Finance and Services)

Society of Graduate and Professional Students

vp.finance@sgps.ca



Society of Graduate and Professional Students  
Report of the Graduate Student Senator  
January 2021

Hello everyone!

I hope you had a restful break and are enjoying the new year! This month's senate will not be taking place until the 26<sup>th</sup>, so, unfortunately, nothing to report regarding that. However, I will not be rerunning as graduate student senator. With the election period quickly approaching, I would encourage you to submit a nomination. If you have any questions, please send me an email!

Cheers!

Courtney Bannerman



Hello Council,

I hope you all had a restful and enjoyable holiday break!

**SGPS Active and Running Clubs**

The SGPS Active and Running Clubs continue to grow in membership. We have members sharing routes that are less-icy and/or snowplowed, along with winter attire for staying warm and safe while being active outside. More challenges will be coming soon to continue to promote safe, physical activity during the winter months.

**Virtual Cooking with Grammas**

We have our first session for the new year coming up on **January 20 at 5:00pm-6:30pm**. Registration (can be found [here](#)) is now open and closes on January 18<sup>th</sup>, with a cap at 25 participants. The recipe will be released next week. Our December session had 15 participants join, with new members attending from various places across Ontario and Canada! It was a wonderful evening connecting with even more peers who are currently not located in Kingston!

Additionally, we are extremely thankful and excited to share that Student Affairs 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! SGPS Cooking with Grammas will occur the third Wednesday of each month from 5:00pm-6:30pm ET until the end of the semester! Please keep an eye on the SGPS social media for all the registration information!

I am currently in the planning phases for upcoming events with my fellow commissioners, so stay tuned for a fun-filled semester!

As always, please feel free to contact me ([athletics@sgps.ca](mailto: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 has had a joyous and restful holiday break!

In this new semester, I will continue to work on ongoing projects and hope to organize more events in collaboration with other commissioners.

I will continue my work on the Soft Infrastructure Working Group we launched last semester that saw the creation of the EDII Committee and the International Graduate Student Network. I am happy to report that we have had interest from several students across departments in being a part of these groups. I want to encourage all SGPS department representatives to circulate the information regarding the creation of these committees to your respective departmental associations and begin the process of writing these positions into your bylaws. If you have any questions regarding these committees, the working group, or how to go about creating these positions within your departments, please do not hesitate to contact me. In order to aid the work of students in these positions, myself, Paige (Indigenous Graduate Liaison) and Rohit (International Commissioner) have been working on an EDII and International Graduate student resource guide we hope to make available to the broader graduate student community.

In this new semester, I am also hoping to organize several events in collaboration with other commissioners. Madison (Athletics and Wellness Commissioner) and I have been collaborating on a Movement Series we hope to put together this semester. I also intend on hosting Open Forum Discussion sessions for graduate students to come together, network and share experiences.

If you have any questions or concerns about the EDII and International Student representative positions, or anything else in the report, please do not hesitate to get in touch at [equity@sgps.ca](mailto:equity@sgps.ca)

Wishing you all a great start to the winter semester.

All the very best,

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



Dear Council,

I hope you have had a restful and restorative break. I am looking forward to serving you in the new year as your Indigenous Graduate Liaison. Here are a few of the things I have been working on over the break to best serve the Indigenous graduate community.

**1. Indigenous Reads Talking Circle**

We are starting up again with a social in the winter on with a reading on *Why Indigenous Literatures Matter* by Daniel Heath Justice which will start on **January 14<sup>th</sup>, 2021 from 4-6pm EST**. If you would like to join the conversation, please email me at [indigenous@sgps.ca](mailto: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 starting a student led writing group that will begin **January 13<sup>th</sup>, 2021 from 9am-noon EST** 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](mailto: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 working group. We are currently working on a EDII SGPS resource guide that will assist students in navigating EDII work within their respective departments. We hope to have this guide available to all students by posting it on the SGPS Advocacy webpage by the end of the month.

If you have any suggestions, ideas, or concerns as they relate to indigenous matters and happenings at Queen's, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Gichi Miigwech,

**Paige Van Tassel**

SGPS Indigenous Graduate Liaison

[indigenous@sgps.ca](mailto:indigenous@sgps.ca)



Hello Council and Members!

Wishing you all Happy New Year!

### **International Students and Covid-19**

The Government of Ontario announced on December 21, 2020 a province-wide lockdown taking effect from December 26, 2020 that will last until January 23, 2021. This may raise questions for International students preparing to travel for the winter term. For any immediate guidance please refer: Travel to Canada and other important information for international students, visit the Queen's University International Centre (QUIC) website and in particular, QUIC's Arrival to Canada 2020/21 guide.

### **International student check-ins**

I am trying my best to stay in touch with International students amid this challenging time. Keeping this in mind, I am organizing first virtual international student check-in of this term on Wednesday 27 January from 4pm-5pm. 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. Please encourage international students from your respective departments to join the event. The zoom details for the meeting have been listed on SGPS events page and SGPS at Queen's International Student Affairs Facebook page.

### **Beyond Boundaries Conference**

I am organizing a panel discussion workshop at the conference in collaboration with University Council. We at the SGPS feel that graduate and professional students could really benefit from the experiences of our rich alumni. To that end, we were hoping some of them might be interested in sharing their professional expertise by participating in a "**Campus to Career: Alumni panel discussion and Networking**" during our second annual SGPS Scholarship Beyond Boundaries Conference occurring from March 20-21st, 2021. The panel will deal specifically with transitioning from student to professional life. The event will focus on various fields of interest and are designed to provide students with an opportunity to connect with Queen's Alumni; gain insight into areas of interest to them and get advice from professionals currently working in the field. If you know any alumni who might be interested to participate in the workshop, please inform them to reach out to me.

### **International Scholarship Awards**

I am happy to inform you that I am coming up with International Scholarship Awards. These are **three** competitive awards with an intention to even the gap in how many opportunities international students have available to them. This is a small, but significant step, in that direction. **Two** awards are exclusively for international students and the other is aimed at any graduate or professional students doing international research. Details of the awards can be found soon on the SGPS website.

### **Art Auction Fundraiser for International graduate students**

I am pleased to inform you that all the funds of this auction will go towards serving international graduate students at Queen's who have been financially struggling as a result of the high tuition fees and hardships imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic. More details would be provided by the International student working group (ISWG) who organized this event through email.

**Soft Infrastructure Working Group**

I am working with the SGPS Equity and Diversity Commissioner and Indigenous Graduate Liaison on building soft infrastructure working group. The aim of the group is to create a resource for International graduate student representative and EDII from each graduate department. The resource will help students in assess EDII work within their respective departments. The resource guide is in its finalizing stage and we are hoping to get it online for all the students soon.

**Support Advocacy**

I am planning to schedule a monthly meeting with the Director of QUIC to get a regular update on International students. I am also committed to supporting the needs of clubs/groups who are advocating on behalf of international students. As per my knowledge, this has primarily been done by PSAC 901 and International Student Working Group. If you know of any other advocacy groups/clubs directed at/for international students, please let me know. I have been in touch with ISWG and PSAC 901 through their monthly meetings and remain available for any conversations regarding international students and their advocacy.

If you have any information/concern that you think is important for international graduate students, please let me know. Also, if there are any events or workshops that you think will serve the community, I would be happy to share them via the SGPS –International Student Affairs Facebook Group. Please spread the word among your department who have not joined the group yet, to join the group. I am always open to any comments, questions, or suggestions. Please feel free to contact me at [international@sgps.ca](mailto:international@sgps.ca)

Best,

Rohit Shukla

Hello Council,

I hope you are all doing well, we hosted two events in December (Show and Tell: Plants, and Holiday Crafting) which went well and after a lovely break I have been preparing for two events for late January which has involved liaising with two guest speaker/instructors for the two events and I look forward to sharing the events among grad and professional students. Below are two upcoming events (with tentative dates).

**“Show and Tell” Loom Beading (no cost)**

Join us this January 28<sup>th</sup> from 5-6pm (tentative date) for another session of the “Show and Tell” series which brings together graduate and professional students to share their unique knowledge and skills. This session called “Loom Beading” will involve a Master Education student sharing their own beadwork and some techniques and background on the significance of beading in their practice. Participants will be sent art kits prior to the event and will get to engage in some loom beading during the event.

**Soap Felting (round two) (no cost)**

Join us this January 22<sup>nd</sup> from 4-5pm (tentative date) for soap felting (round two). After registering for a soap felting kit participants will join us on Zoom for a guided crafting session.

Progress pictures of kits and final pieces:



**Upcoming Events**

Join us this February for events such as “Show and Tell”, one of which may be Birds themed, where we meet at a conservation site and hike on easy trails (1-2m wide fine gravel) and feed the birds (mostly finches, sparrows, chickadees), led by a nature/hiking/bird connoisseur. In addition, February will have a Paint Nite involving watercolour painting a birch tree winter wonderland (participants free to paint something else).

These events will all be incentivized by offering a free art kit/materials, draw, or games with prizes such as gift cards.

Please feel free to contact me at [social@sgps.ca](mailto: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