



Society of Graduate and Professional Students  
Report of President  
May 2023

Hey everyone,

Welcome to the spring and summer terms! It is hard to believe that the semester is behind us already and we are on to the next stage – I hope that whatever the summer has in store for you is good and that you are able to take some time to enjoy it.

I have been working closely with the new team as we get our feet under us in our new roles. There have been plenty of exciting things happening already, even though we are just a couple of weeks into our terms! Earlier this month, I had the opportunity to attend the Faculty of Arts and Science graduate council along with our VP Graduate, Steacy. There were some really great discussions at this summit, which I am sure Steacy will be sharing with you all in her report!

We have been welcoming some of our May start students to the university over the past couple of weeks, which is always great. It can be challenging as a May start student to find your community as quickly, so we are happy to be providing some social events in the coming weeks to continue building a sense of community; if you are able, please come out and participate in some of these activities!

Our new health and dental plan has been decided and we will not be continuing with Conversation as the use of the service was limited relative to the cost of the program. Instead, the health and dental plan beginning in September will use an expanded version of EmpowerMe called EmpowerMe+, which extends service to 8 sessions. We have also been having productive discussions about the future of the embedded graduate counsellor at Student Wellness Services, which we will update you all on.

I want to wrap up by highlighting some things happening with and beyond our organization. First, we are in the process of hiring for an Athletics commissioner and a Deputy Equity commissioner and we expect to have those roles filled by the end of May. We had a strong pool of candidates this year, so we are very excited to welcome our new commissioners. Second, I want to draw everyone's attention to the upcoming 3-minute thesis competition which will be taking place on May 17<sup>th</sup> at 10am at the Isabel Bader Centre for the Performing Arts. This is the group of Ontario finalists so expect to see some strong showings from Queen's and other Ontario universities! Finally, Queen's is asking for feedback from anyone who has taken part in a cyclical program review – if you have been a part of one of these reviews, Queen's would like to have you take part in an independently-facilitated focus group in the first week of July. If you would like to provide your feedback on your experiences in the review process, please email me and I will pass along your information.

I hope you all have a wonderful summer! If you have any questions, comments, or concerns, please reach out to me at [president@sgps.ca](mailto:president@sgps.ca)

Take care,

Devin Fowlie  
President



Hello Council Members,

Welcome everyone to our first Council Meeting! As we are now 2 weeks into our new positions, I hope everyone is starting to settle in and get comfortable in their roles. It has been a busy 2 weeks, so I'd like to highlight some items from the events and meetings I have attended, as well as inform you of my plans moving forward.

### **FAS Graduate Summit**

On May 1<sup>st</sup>, Devin and I attended the Graduate Summit, organized by FAS and James Fraser. There were both presentations and discussion sessions throughout the day, with the main focus being the graduate student experience. Topics included: departmental budgets, student funding, student enrolment, professional development, accessibility and inclusivity.

During the graduate summit, I met many passionate faculty and staff interested in making a difference for graduate students. One discussion was about how the school can support EDII through accessibility and inclusion. The discussion focused on how the school can support our BIPOC students but lacked discussion on students with disabilities or vary abilities. This was unfortunately at the end of the day, and we ran out of time for further discussion. However, I am aware that FAS is interested in hybridizing classrooms, and I plan to assist on this initiative. I also met a staff member that was previously temporarily disabled and is interested in sharing her experience with me. I will be meeting her for this discussion during the week of May 15.

### **Upcoming Plans**

#### **1. Orientation Committee**

This committee is reviewing what is currently happening during orientation, whether it works, and what is missing. The first meeting is happening on May 10.

#### **2. Dean's Showcase of Teaching and Learning**

This event is to bring together Engineering instructors, teaching assistants and staff to recognize excellence, share successes and gain insights and perspectives on best practices in teaching and learning. It is taking place on Wednesday, May 24th from 8:45 am – 12 pm in Mitchell Hall, Room 225. I have pre-registered for the event and look forward to attending talks and participating in discussions on blended learning, EDII, and women in engineering.

#### **3. Wellness Champions Advisory Committee**

I will be sitting on the Wellness Champions Advisory Committee starting in June. The purpose of this Committee is to further the work of Health and Wellness initiatives at Queen's University, to enhance the effectiveness of programming, and to increase employee engagement.

#### **4. Contact James Fraser - Classroom Hybridization**

This is an initiative I've very interested in installing university wide and is a long-term goal for the year.

I also sit on the FAS Graduate Council, FEAS Graduate Council, and GSEC. I plan to continue to advocate for improving the student experience. Both FAS Graduate Council and GSEC are moving to email communication for the summer. I plan to continue Devin's work with the EmpowerMe+, the Housing Committee and the Queen's Daycare.

I am managing a disability and will be working mainly remotely. I look forward to working with you all!

Steady Coombs  
Vice-President Graduate, SGPS



## **Introduction**

Hello everyone! I am very excited for this upcoming year and to begin my first few weeks as the Vice President Professional. For those of you that I have not had the pleasure of meeting yet, my name is Maya, I am going into my second year of law school, and I am currently working at a corporate law firm in downtown Toronto for the summer.

I want to welcome all of the new students joining us this year and thank the SGPS community for entrusting me with this position! I look forward to advocating on behalf of the professional student community at Queen's University and serving as a point of communication. I would like to discuss my plans for the upcoming year, and I look forward to getting to know many of you in the near future.

## **Current Initiatives**

### ***i. Commissioner Hiring***

The most pressing initiative that is currently being tackled is Commissioner Hiring. I am working alongside Tony, Devin, and Jane to conduct interviews so that we can hire and onboard the new Commissioners into their roles. The interviews will take place next week and we hope to have the hiring process completed by the end of May.

### ***ii. SGPS Handbook***

One of my priorities this summer is to create an SGPS Handbook for future Executive teams so that there can be a centralized information hub when they have questions. This may allow for less confusion during the transition period and minimize the abundance of questions that Andria answers during these hectic months.

### ***iii. Human Resources***

One of the key elements of my role is to oversee human resource elements of the SGPS. I am working to create a more efficient and cohesive way to book time off. This is being accomplished through the use of a shared calendar tool where the Executive is being informed of each other's schedules to eliminate confusion and foster a common understanding of dates.

## **Planning for the Upcoming Year**

Over the summer, the SGPS team will be planning for events and initiatives for the year to come and will be getting prepared for the new and returning SGPS members to arrive on campus.

In this report, I wanted to highlight some of the wider goals that I would love to see accomplished during my term as the Vice President Professional.

### ***i. Fostering Community***

With the impacts of Covid on the Queen's community still present, I would like to foster the sense of community that we once had and work to rebuild the various long-standing traditions at Queen's. I would like to encourage more participation and see a greater turn out for these legacy events. I am keen to address any concerns that SGPS members may have returning to

in-person events so that we can create a smooth and comfortable transition for everyone. I am looking forward to the SGPS community being able to build connections and engage in these activities during this term!

***ii. Deepening Communication***

During this upcoming year I would like to see more communication with students and the Executive team. We love hearing from students! To be a good advocate for the SGPS community we need to hear from all of you. It is essential to have a diverse and complex understanding of the broader issues that face the community as well as issues impacting minority groups. Please do not hesitate to reach out if you have any ideas or concerns going forward. We will do our best to address all issues and areas of concern to ensure everyone is having the best experience that they possibly can at Queen's!

**Conclusion**

I look forward to connecting with all of you this year! I am always open to hearing student feedback. Please feel free to reach out to me at any point during the year, my email is [vp.professional@sgps.ca](mailto:vp.professional@sgps.ca).

Sincerely,

Maya Kawale  
Vice-President Professional, SGPS



Dear Council,

My name is Tony Hu (he/him or they/them), and I would like to introduce myself as your elected Vice President Community. A bit about me: I am entering my second year of medical school. My past post-secondary education was in chemistry, which I studied as a member of Innis College in the Faculty of Arts & Science at the University of Toronto. Previously, I served as the Graduate Student Trustee, elected by SGPS members to the Queen's University Board of Trustees. On May 14, I left my role on the Board of Trustees to start my new role as Vice President Community. While the other SGPS Executives began their terms on May 1; due to exceptional circumstances, today (May 16) is only my second day as Vice President Community. Thank you to SGPS members and SGPS Council members for your understanding and versatility these past two weeks. I am so grateful for your support of student leadership at Queen's.

### **Hiring**

The SGPS received several applications for the unfilled positions of Athletics Commissioner, Deputy Equity Commissioner, and Indigenous Liaison. These positions were heavily contested, and I want to thank all who applied. The hiring committee, composed of the SGPS Executive and the Equity Commissioner reviewed all applications. All applicants will be informed of the final status of their applications soon. Apart from these positions, all other Commissioners have been hired, thanks to recent changes made to streamline the process of renewing the contracts of Commissioners who wish to serve another term. The SGPS has also extended the contract of the Black Student Research Assistant until the end of the summer. Councilors can anticipate a presentation outlining the recommendations generated by the work of the Black Student Research Assistant.

### **Planning for the 2023-2024 year**

One part of the Vice President Community's mandate is running campaigns on areas of advocacy interest. In my platform, my moonshot was on improving the student experience. The student experience is multifaceted; it encompasses academic success, emotional wellbeing, financial stability, decent housing, and physical wellness. Given the time-limited term of my role, I would like to focus my campaigns at the municipal, provincial, and federal level on the cost-of-living crisis and housing crisis. At the Queen's level, my focus will be on campus culture and student support. Still, it is early in my term, and, over the summer, I will work to further refine my priorities and year plan.

### **Committees and meetings**

- Canadian Federation of Students
  - The Executive Committee of the Canadian Federation of Students-Ontario held its first meeting for the 2023-2024 year on May 11 and May 12, 2023. The Vice President Community is the SGPS representative to the Canadian Federation of Students.

Unfortunately, I had to send my regrets to these meetings due to the delayed start of my tenure as Vice President Community.

- Provost's Advisory Committee on the Promotion of the Arts
  - The previous Vice President Community represented SGPS members on the Provost's Advisory Committee on the Promotion of the Arts. I will continue representing SGPS members on the Provost's Advisory Committee on the Promotion of the Arts. The Committee will meet on June 5, 2023.
- Board of Trustees
  - On May 12 and May 13, 2023, I attended my final set of meetings as Graduate Student Trustee on the Board of Trustees.

If you have any questions, comments, or concerns, please contact me at [vp.community@sgps.ca](mailto:vp.community@sgps.ca).

Yours in service,

Tony Hu  
Vice President Community, SGPS



Hello everyone,

I would like to welcome the new Executive into their roles; the SGPS Council and its Officers are excited to be working with you in bettering the organization as a whole.

I would also like to state that, as members of the SGPS Council voted in April 2023 Council Meeting, the Deputy Speaker (Katie Zutautas) and I have been re-elected as Officers of the Council for the 2023-24. We are very grateful for the opportunity to further contribute to the workings of the SGPS Council—and, indeed, the SGPS as a whole—and to continue the work that we have been doing. Throughout the summer, we will continue to work on the following areas:

1. Revision of SGPS Bylaw and Policy Document
  - a. Make changes as necessary to correct formatting, grammatical and spelling errors throughout the document.
  - b. Reflect changes that have been passed through motions in Council meetings and the May 2023 General meeting.
  - c. Ensure visual accessibility of the document.
2. Updating the SGPS website to ensure that new documents and supporting resources are available to oncoming students and Council Representatives
  - a. We have created additional resources to ensure that Council representatives feel adequately supported throughout their term in the SGPS Council, which incorporated the valuable feedback we have received from our 2022-23 Representatives. These will be uploaded onto the website during the Summer when website traffic is relatively lower compared to regular term times.
3. Creation of SGPS Council Representatives handover handbook and guidance on how to communicate with departments across the University regarding the election and selection processes for Council representatives. We aim to have this done and distributed by Fall 2023.

If you have any further questions or comments on how to better improve SGPS Council and the SGPS more broadly, please get in touch with us: [speaker@sgps.ca](mailto:speaker@sgps.ca)

Aileen Editha (she/her)  
SGPS Council Speaker





Hello Council Members,

Congratulations on finishing the semester everyone!!! Sooo excited for summer and all the fun things. I'm also excited to set up and create some structure for this position over the summer to ensure September runs smoothly.

This is the first semester of the role:

1. Deputy Interviews
  - a. We are starting the process of hiring, and May hours will mostly be spent here
2. Gender Affirming Bursary
  - a. The bursary is live!
3. SGPS Awards
  - a. Awards have been announced!! Yay!!
4. Committee Commitment
  - a. Public Service Alliance of Canada DCL 901 (PSAC 901) – on hold until summer
  - b. Provost's Action Group for Gender and Sexual Diversity (PAGGAS) – on hold until summer
  - c. Soft Infrastructure Network – paused until Deputy is hired this month
  - d. Built Environment Advisory Group – had our final meeting this semester!
  - e. University Council on Anti-Racism and Equity (UCARE) – had our final meeting this semester! We will brainstorm new ideas and create direction for the committee in the summer!
  - f. Inclusive Communities UCARE Sub-Committee – had our final meeting this semester! We will brainstorm new ideas and create direction for the committee in the summer!
  - g. Steering Committee related to review of CSES response to Hate Crimes – had our final meeting this semester!
  - h. Senate Educational Equity Committee – chair stepped down, so meetings have been canceled for the rest of the semester

Best,  
Jane Mao  
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Equity and Diversity Commissioner  
Society of Graduate and Professional Students