

August 2023 Council Reports

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Executive and Speaker Reports

SGPS President Report



Society of Graduate and Professional Students
Report of President
August 2023

Hey council,

A big welcome back to each and every one of you! It is hard to believe that it is August already, which means that September is just a couple of weeks away. An exciting time, but it feels that summer is never quite as long as I expect it to be in May!

The team has been hard at work over the summer to lay the groundwork for the year coming up. At the end of this report, I have included a brief summary of my goals for the fall and winter terms and the steps that we are taking to achieve those. The attention on financial instability that was brought forward last year continues to be moved forward by this team in meaningful ways, and I am hopeful that we can continue to see some progress on those fronts.

A few things to note for those of you who are continuing on in your studies. First, over the next few days you should be receiving your first newsletter for the year which contains important information about changes to the health and dental plan. We have moved from Sunlife to Securian as our service provider for this year and I really think the changes are all very positive. There will be a new mobile app rolled out which includes a lot of functionality like a drug look-up tool, a virtual card, and a lot more. Keep an eye on your inbox for the newsletter with this information!

Second, there are exciting changes happening around the university that you should be aware of. This year, orientation is going to look a bit different: Instead of a graduate resource fair we are going to be a part of the annual sidewalk sale. For any of you who attended Queen's as your undergraduate alma mater you know how big this event is! We expect to have 10,000 over the course of the day (September 9th); we will have a table set up with swag available. If you are new or want to learn a bit more about the services that we offer I would encourage you to stop by any time between 10am and 6pm that day. If you are a new student, there will also be a welcome reception on September 26th at 5pm and 7pm (the time depends on your faculty). This is a great opportunity to connect with other students and to see all of the resources that are available to you as a graduate or professional student.

Of course, we are also hosting our own set of orientation events. Our team of commissioners and liaisons have been working really hard all summer to make sure that we have plenty of exciting events, and I am very excited to see you all at any events that you can attend! Please check out the reports from our commissioners for information on these exciting events and keep an eye on our social media for more information as the events approach.

I want to share just one final piece of news that I think is really exciting. Most of you have seen the construction near Stauffer, at the corner of University and Union, and some of you may be aware that this is the site of the new Student Life Centre (aka the JDUC). After many years of planning, negotiation, and construction, the project is finally nearing its final phases with a planned completion for next summer. This means that we are back to negotiations. As a team we will be focusing a lot of our efforts this coming year on

making sure that we get the space that we need, at a cost that is as reasonable as possible, and in a way that continues to best serve our members. There are going to be a lot of conversations happening around this and you should hear more about the progress that we have made in the winter term. If you have any questions or concerns about the Student Life Centre please let us know and we will make sure that your voice is heard.

There is almost too much more to talk about in the short space that I have for this report, so please attend council for more updates, but I will just share a final note that you should all be aware of. As you know, mental health services are always in high demand on campus and we are always looking for ways to improve services that are available to students in this regard. To that end, a reminder that for this year we have expanded the EmpowerMe service to a new program called EmpowerMe+ that provides counselling services for 8 sessions. Even if you are unsure of virtual counselling I would really encourage you to try it out if you are at all feeling that you could benefit from it and, please, share any feedback that you have. Finally, if you are looking for in-person, short-term counselling I am pleased to share that Student Wellness Services will have an embedded counsellor for graduate and professional students for this coming year *and* that they will be adding a new walk-in service for mental health sessions. These walk-in sessions will be available Monday-Friday from 1-4pm; I hope that these are successful and provide a fast service for you if you need it.

Okay, that is all from me! Please check out my year plan at the end of this report and, as always, if you have any questions, comments, or concerns, please reach out to me at president@sgps.ca

Take care,

Devin Fowle
President

Year Plan

Goals:

1. Improve financial stability
2. Improving mental health services

Targeted Actions:

Improve Financial Stability

1. Improve the housing landscape
 - a. This is the most obvious direction to me and I think will have the most tangible impact on the financial stability of our students
 - i. Advocate to the University – There needs to be a group focused on housing instability at Queen’s, with experts from various areas to inform the best course of action. Right now, this is entirely absent. Initiating a group like this will be a very large step forward for having Queen’s take student housing seriously.
 - ii. Engage with community partners – Tony, our VPC, is working with me to accomplish this important goal. It is going to be necessary to support our community partners who are already working on these issues. Rather than always trying to reinvent the wheel, we can also work within the organizations and structures that exist to work on these issues.
 - iii. Advocate to the government – This is a longer term goal, but one that I hope can at least lay the foundation for more advocacy. I had some productive discussions over the summer with provincial representatives about directions for change, and I am hopeful that throughout this year we can make meaningful progress on a collaboration.
2. Improve graduate student funding

- a. I will continue to work to support Steacy, our VPG, on this important goal. Graduate student funding continues to be woefully inadequate and Steacy has been having some really exciting discussions this summer about how we can get creative with increasing funding. My hope is that these discussions continue and we are able to continue to see tangible benefits from this advocacy.

Improve Mental Health Services

1. Expanding relationships with university partners
 - a. There are already great organizations doing good work on mental health on campus, but part of the challenges that all groups are facing are all the lack of funding available to provide those supports. A major goal for me this year is to support those groups to help them provide the best mental health services possible. These groups have many more resources than we do and if we can help them, this benefits everyone.
2. Consolidating existing efforts
 - a. There has been a lot of work on mental health services over the prior few years, and there is always a risk that too many services without a clear goal and way of communicating them is not helping students. In discussions with university partners I want to continue to advocate for consolidating existing services in a way that makes existing services accessible, visible, and easily understood. I believe that we can provide strong mental health support if we take this targeted and intentional approach.



Hello Council Members,

Welcome everyone to second Council Meeting! Now that we are a few months into our roles and getting comfortable, it has been great starting to work towards some initiatives. 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. On Pages 2 and 3, you will see a non-exhaustive list of initiatives I plan to pursue this year, which include my desire to hybridize our classrooms and lecture halls to improve accessibility.

As you know, there are some changes coming this fall to the Health and Dental Plan; one of these changes include the new EmpowerMe+. It has been evident to Queen's that graduate students need reliable access to mental health services, and we are hoping to provide this through EmpowerMe+. We are working with SGSPA and DSA to ensure student accessibility to this program, while not being a financial burden.

Similarly to the previous SGPS executive, we have continued to advocate for more funding and affordable housing. I recently met with Christopher Lacroix, the Director of Academic Relations of the Graduate Student Society (GSS) at Simon Fraser University (SFU). The GSS, in partnership with their Teaching Support Staff Union (TSSU), spearheaded the GradCOLA (Cost of Living Adjustment) Campaign. The 10-point platform includes graduate student housing linked to 30% of graduate income, and a guaranteed minimum funding of \$32,000/year plus tuition and annual increases, for all research-based graduate (Masters and PhD) students. At the end of June, SFU announced all eligible PhD students (3.5 CGPA, within the first 12 terms of study) would receive a \$5,400 research scholarship. In the fall, they expect SFU will be announcing a guaranteed minimum funding for PhD students at \$28,000/year for four years, including the research scholarship, to begin September 2024. The GradCOLA Campaign arrived at \$32,000/year plus tuition by considering Graduate Students' average cost of living and inflation over the past 20 years. **Average funding for graduate students has remained stagnant since the early 2000s. \$20,000 in funding in 2003 is worth roughly \$30,500 today according to the Consumer Price Index. An annual gross income on minimum wage in 2003 was roughly \$17,500, in 2023 it is nearly \$35,000. The GradCOLA Campaign is effectively asking that graduate students receive funding comparable to minimum wage.** Through discussions with Christopher, he has provided us with great strategies for how to accomplish this at Queen's as well! More information about the GradCOLO campaign can be found here: <https://gradcola.ca/sfu-grad-chairs-in-support-of-gradcola/>

Earlier this June, I met with Gavan Watson, the new Vice Provost of Teaching and Learning, about making our classrooms and lecture halls more accessible through hybridization. He expressed they are very much in support of this initiative and provided me with contacts and ideas for getting making hybridization happen. Likely, we will put together portable kits and run a pilot project with interested professors. It is very promising and is a great win for accessibility at Queen's!

I have also been a part of the Orientation Committee, which met several times throughout the summer. The purpose of this committee was to go over what is currently being done for graduate student orientation, if it is

working, and if not, how should it be changed. Something important that was flagged was having a centralized location for a “To Do List” for new students, and a place students can continue to access for information throughout their studies. An OnQ course was developed and will be launched this September orientation!

I am managing a disability and will be working mainly remotely, but I’m happy to meet with you online should the need arise (vp.graduate@sgps.ca)!

Steady Coombs
Vice-President Graduate, SGPS

Year Plan

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| Objective 1 | Classroom and Lecture Hall Hybridization |
| Description | Disabled students, and students with varying abilities (chronic illness, caretakers, etc) cannot always be present in the classroom. Typically, the solution the school gives to these students is they will have to completely miss that content and catch up through friend’s notes or meetings with the professor. This treatment is unfair. All of our students deserve access to their education. The aim of this objective is to launch a pilot project in the graduate school to provide remote access to lectures through the installation of software and equipment. |
| Benefits | Increases accessibility in higher education for our disabled students and students with varying abilities. |
| Difficulties | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identifying professors interested in being part of this pilot project. - Determining who will fund the pilot project. |
| Long-term | In addition to increasing accessibility, this could become a revenue stream for the school by having hybrid and full remote enrolment options. |
| How | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identify what classes, classrooms, or professors that are suitable for delivering remotely. - Identify the equipment and software required, possibly building a portable kit that can work in any classroom. |
| Partners | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gavan Watson, Vice Provost, Teaching and Learning - James Fraser, Associate Dean (Grad), FAS - Andy Leger, Centre of Teaching and Learning - Equity and Human Rights Office - Queen’s Student Accessibility Services (QSAS) - ITS - Queen’s University Alumni Association (QUAA) |

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| Objective 2 | Formation of Departmental Student Associations |
| Description | Currently, not all departments in the graduate school have departmental student associations. These associations help build community, provide support and resources to their students, and distribute information (through SGPS and PSAC 901 reps) to their students. The aim of this objective is to provide a “how to” in forming these departmental student associations as well as providing some reoccurring meetings with these reps. |
| Benefits | Provides departmental support to students. It also gives students an organized way to communicate with SGPS and the university. |
| Difficulties | There is no centralized list of departments with these associations. |
| Long-term | Allows students outside of their department to communication with other departments, which is helpful when students are trying to organize to create change within the institution. |
| How | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Create list of how to create a departmental student association. |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide resources, such as where and how to ask for funding. - Incorporate this on our SGPS website. |
| Partners | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - PSAC 901, - known associations (Chemical Engineering Department, etc), - SGPS representatives (ex. Sarah Waldron, Biology SGPS rep). |

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| Objective 3 | Graduate Student Parking |
| Description | There is a wait list of almost 2 years to get parking at Queen’s University. Even if you are able to get parking, it is very expensive. The street parking is paid parking through the city. This is also a very expensive option. Most students are required to be on campus for their research or for TAing. The aim of this objective is to work with the city to provide street parking passes to graduate students for free, or a low price. |
| Benefits | By providing free or cheap parking, this reduces the financial burden for graduate students. |
| Difficulties | The university and the city do not have any incentives to provide graduate students free parking as this is a significant revenue stream for both. |
| Long-term | As the cost of living continues to rise, this reduces the financial burdens graduate students face. Providing free parking for graduate students may also help in graduate student recruitment. |
| How | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Speak to the city’s parking authority. - Speak with the university’s parking authority. |
| Partners | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - City of Kingston, - Queen’s University Parking Department, - PSAC 901 |

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| Objective 4 | Queen’s Daycare Availability |
| Description | Graduate and professional students currently pay an optional fee for the Queen’s childcare services but have no priority or no subsidy (\$500-\$700 per month). In fact, the service is used in large part by faculty, who have the financial means to go elsewhere. The aim of this objective is to provide both priority placement and subsidize some costs of childcare for graduate students. |
| Benefits | Many students delay family planning due to the lack of funding and childcare as graduate students. Providing priority childcare for graduate students reduces the stress graduate students face. Additionally, subsidizing reduces the financial burden. |
| Difficulties | The day care currently lacks space and resources to expand. The DayCare Task Force is working toward asking for improving both. |
| Long-term | As the cost of living continues to rise, this reduces the financial burdens graduate students face. Providing subsidized childcare for graduate students may also help in graduate student recruitment. |
| How | Discussions with SGSPA, Student Affairs, PSAC 901, and other universities to see what their childcare services look like. |
| Partners | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - DayCare Task Force - SGSPA - Student Affairs - PSAC 901 |



Greetings Council,

Welcome, and thank you to all those who are attending the August council meeting. This summer has been a busy one, and I am excited to update you about the ways that the amazing Finance Committee and I have been working together to support students. The following are my updates:

1. Annual Budget

The annual budget was developed with three goals in mind: 1) to reflect the interests of SGPS members by funding initiatives that support students; 2) to promote financial sustainability; and 3) to minimize instances of under-utilized budget items. [A breakdown of this year's budget](#) and an [explanation of changes to the proposed budget](#) are linked.

2. Revamping the Financial Assistance Program

The financial assistance program has been revised to promote the SGPS's ability and capacity to support students. A summary presentation of the program can be found [here](#).

The following is a summary of the most significant changes to the financial assistance program:

- Introduction of the General Health Subsidy
 - The general health subsidy aims to support students by covering a wide range of medical or health-related expenses. This subsidy replaces the mental-health subsidy and covers mental health services in addition to other health-related costs.
- Introduction of the Gender-Affirming Care Subsidy
 - The SGPS is pleased to present the gender-affirming care subsidy. This subsidy will support students who receive gender-affirming care by covering a wide range of services, medications and products.
- Introducing of Grants
 - The grant program is back, and we are introducing three grants that will be available to students starting in September. The grant program provides funding for student-led initiatives that aim to promote accessibility, diversity and inclusion and sustainability at Queen's.
- Increase in the UHIP Subsidy
 - Due to the large number of international students who require financial support, we have decided to increase the budget for the UHIP subsidy.
- Discontinuance of Cost of Living Subsidy

- Due legal issues associated with providing this subsidy, the SGPS is no longer able to offer the cost of living subsidy. We recognize that many students are experiencing moderate to severe levels of financial stress and the executive team will continue to search for other measures of supporting students.

3. Opening the Financial Assistance Program

As of June 26th, the financial assistance program is up and running. Students experiencing financial stress are strongly encouraged to apply for financial assistance for eligible expenses. A guide to the financial assistance program can be found [here](#).

A special thank you to the hard-working and dedicated Finance Committee. Matthew Kuciak, Katie Zutautas, Ramtin Mojtahedi, Noah James, and Samuel Makinde for their hard work over the summer to process financial assistance applications. In addition to processing applications, the Finance Committee meets once per month to discuss how SGPS members can be better supported with this program.

4. Promoting Future Financial Sustainability

The SGPS recently moved forward with investing excess funding with the hopes of safeguarding the financial security of SGPS and its future members. Previously, the funding in question could only be utilized for health and dental-related costs. Some of this funding is used to provide students with general health and dental subsidies, but the remainder will be invested and reassessed on an annual basis. The executive is proud to work with a wealth management firm that will work within our limits to ensure this money is invested in a manner that upholds the SGPS's values, and the interests of students.

In addition to our investment initiatives, the SGPS is working hard to advocate for student issues on a number of issues that have significant financial implications for our members. One example is the ongoing negotiations to come to an agreement on what the SGPS will pay for its space in the new JDUC building.

5. Nurturing a More Inclusive Campus For Individuals Struggling with Mental Health Challenges

Recently, the SPGS organized an Online Suicide Alertness training with Student Wellness Services. We had over 65 students attend the training. We recently applied for a campus safety grant, and hope we are awarded funding so we can continue to provide training that helps make Queen's a safer campus.

Thank you for taking the time to read and consider this note. Please see below my year plan.

Sincerely,

Gaby Fekete (she/her), Vice President Finance and Services

My plan is simple and threefold. During my tenure as Vice President of Finance and Services, the pillars that I will focus on are:

1. **Empower** students and student-led initiatives through funding
2. **Improve** the organization's financial sustainability
3. **Support** for students experiencing challenges with mental health

Empower students and student-led initiatives through funding

The financial assistance program has two parts: subsidies which are provided to individual students, and grants which are being reintroduced to fund student-led initiatives. This program aims to empower students by ensuring they have access to financial support, and that they can implement initiatives they feel are representative of the graduate student community's interests.

This year, the subsidies have been readjusted to accommodate the growing needs of students and the financial stressors they are facing. The budget for almost all subsidies was increased, with two new subsidies in the roster: the general health subsidy and the gender-affirming care subsidy.

- The general health subsidy will subsidize student access to a range of health services. This subsidy replaces the mental health subsidy, which is now covered by the general health subsidy.
- The gender-affirming care subsidy was a pilot program last year, but this year is a formal part of the subsidy program and will remain so going forward. The gender-affirming care subsidy reflects the SGPS's commitment to helping gender-transitioning folks access the healthcare they need.

We are also pleased to reintroduce grants to the financial assistance program. Grants were formerly offered to fund student-led initiatives on campus, and this year we will reinstate three types of grants. Students can apply for funding if they wish to put in place initiatives that: improve diversity and inclusion, accessibility or sustainability at Queen's. Applicants must show a clear connection between how the funding will be used, and an impact that achieves at least one of the three aims mentioned.

Improve the organization's financial sustainability

Improving the SGPP's financial security and sustainability is a three-part process: developing a balanced budget, ensuring that excess funds are invested, and applying for funding where possible. These goals are pivotal to ensuring the organization's financial security for years to come by maintaining fund levels and allocating funds efficiently.

This year's budget was developed based on data from last year's spending, and the executive's goals in mind. A key priority in developing this year's budget was minimizing levels

of under-utilized budget items and reallocating funds where possible to budget lines that quickly become exhausted.

With respect to investment, the SGPS has moved forward with investing excess funds that are currently dedicated to dental and health. Going forward, we will work with our wealth management firm to ensure that any funds invested are invested responsibly, and with our commitments to students in mind (such as our commitment to divest from fossil fuels). Lastly, the SGPS will continue to apply for funding opportunities to fund student initiatives. For example, the SGPS has applied for grant funding allocated for Campus Safety initiatives.

Support for students experiencing challenges with mental health

The SGPS is committed to supporting students experiencing challenges with mental health. Part of our commitment is reflected in the mental health services we offer students including coverage through the health and dental plan, access to EmpowerMe+, and funding through general health subsidy. In addition to these actions, the SGPS is currently exploring how we can offer programming to students that can make Queen's a safer campus. A recent example is the SGPS's efforts to organize training sessions that would boost student awareness of suicide. In the future, we hope to continue providing programming and are working towards this goal by allowing grant funding that would enable us to do so.



I hope that you all have had an amazing summer! It is hard to believe that we are already nearing back to school. For those of you who are commencing your first year at Queen's, welcome, and for those of you returning welcome back!! I look forward to the year ahead and I am very excited to meet each and every one of you.

2023-2024 Year Plan

The Executive team has been working over the summer to identify the areas that we want to target over the upcoming year. I have thought about my goals and aspirations for the 2023-2024 term and have developed a plan for the year. Of course, there may be more elements that I strive to tackle depending on need and interest from the broader community, but this will aid in providing a general framework for the elements I wish to achieve. My plan is available at the end of my report.

Updates

Below are some updates about the work the Executive and I have completed over the summer.

During Orientation, the SGPS will be at the annual Sidewalk Sale. This is a very big event which aids in supporting the Canadian Cancer Society and funds local and innovative research. At our booth, we will have SGPS swag and can give you a run-down of the services that the SGPS offers. The Sidewalk Sale is on September 9th and runs from 10:30 AM – 6:00 PM. We hope to see you there and look forward to connecting!

An exciting element that the Executive is actively engaged in is the planning of the new Student Life Center (SLC) also known as the John Deutsch University Centre (JDUC). I am involved with the TriParty Agreement Negotiations in relation to the governance and organization committee for the SLC, and we are having various conversations to commence negotiations with the University and the AMS. If you have any questions or concerns about the SLC please reach out so that we can ensure your voice is heard.

I am also part of the Grad Club Committee. The Grad Club runs many fun events such as the Yuni Verse Drag Show that is happening on Friday August 11th from 8:00 PM until 11:00 PM. You should definitely check it out if you have the opportunity! I would also like to highlight that the Grad Club is not only for graduate students and is accessible to the broader Queen's community so feel free to bring your undergraduate friends or your family to events when visiting!

Overall, I am very excited to be the VP Professional this year and to have the opportunity to advocate for the SGPS community over the months to come. My main priority for this year is to improve the

professional student experience in any way I can. My position is to assist and advocate for professional students with the elements that are integral to their success at Queen's. In order to drive the most change, I need to hear from all of your voices so that I can best represent professional students and address your concerns. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to reach out to me at vp.professional@sgps.ca

All the best,

Maya Kawale
Vice President Professional, SGPS

Year Plan

Goals

1. Building Community
2. Fostering Communication
3. Promoting Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion
4. Events for Professional Students
5. Amend the SGPS Bylaws Surrounding Human Resources

Initiatives and Planning

1. Building Community
 - i. **Legacy Events:** One of my goals is to generate more of a 'buzz' around legacy events. The pandemic has created a lack of continuity and understanding of the big events that certain faculty's put on. This has impacted student involvement and I would love to see greater engagement with events this year.
 - ii. **Marketing Minimum:** Before events I would like to implement a one-month marketing minimum for larger and more costly events. Some of which include Med-Law games and Cabaret for a Cure. Ideally, this will aid in spreading awareness about these events by allowing for students to gain more knowledge which will boost excitement and attendance.
 - iii. **SGPS Community:** Create bonds with the various faculties and departments within the SGPS. Perhaps this can be done by having an event with both graduate and professional students.
2. Fostering Communication
 - i. **Communication and Visibility:** I would like to see more communication between the Executive and SGPS members. To achieve this, I think that it may be helpful for the SGPS to gain access to the various Facebook groups for incoming classes of students and current students to post about what the SGPS is and relay our contact information. This may allow for more students to be aware of the executive team and bring more visibility to the SGPS so that students can reach out when they have concerns.
3. Promoting Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Indigeneity
 - i. **Impactful EDII:** I would like to see more impactful EDII initiatives throughout the year. Rather than simply posting and having words be the forefront, I would like for there to

be a way to make a tangible impact. Perhaps this can be done by having an anonymous suggestion forum so that students can share their experiences without having to identify themselves.

4. Events for Professional Students

- i. LinkedIn Headshots: LinkedIn professional headshots would be great for SGPS students as well. I think having one session each semester would be fantastic and would be beneficial for SGPS' students.
- ii. Excel Workshops: Another idea could be to hold Excel Workshops for students. Excel is so important and applicable to various elements of the workforce.

5. Amend the SGPS Bylaws Surrounding Human Resources

- i. Human Resources: Another goal of mine would be to refine the human resource section of the SGPS bylaws so that there is a more formal process for complaints and investigations. Perhaps, an external law firm can aid with this. This would help us to have a better idea of what the steps are to proceed with when issues arise so that we are not having to figure it out on a case-by-case basis.



Dear Council,

In a flash, most of the summer is behind us, and it is time for me to deliver my second report to Council. As I last reported to council in May, this report is quite substantial in content.

Hiring

As I reported in May, the SGPS received several applications for the positions of Athletics Commissioner, Deputy Equity Commissioner, and Indigenous Student Liaison. These positions were heavily contested. I am grateful to all who applied and to the hiring committee, composed of the SGPS Executive and the Equity Commissioner, who reviewed all applications. The profiles of the final Commissioner team are available on the SGPS website (sgps.ca).

Planning for the 2023-2024 year

I have completed the 2023-2024 Strategic Plan for the Vice President Community. It is available at the end of this report.

Committees and meetings

- Canadian Federation of Students (CFS)
 - The Vice President Community is the SGPS' representative to the CFS. We are Local 27.
 - The Executive Committee of the CFS-Ontario met on July 20. Unfortunately, I sent my regrets to this meeting.
 - The 2023 CFS-Ontario Annual General Meeting will be taking place in-person in Mississauga, ON from August 17 to August 20. I am already registered to attend and am excited to meet with other student leaders from across Ontario to discuss opportunities for collective action. Councilors can anticipate a fulsome update on the Ontario Annual General Meeting in September.
 - The CFS Support Student Parents and Caregivers Campaign Working Group met twice over the summer. I am a member of this working group.

The Support Student Parents and Caregivers Campaign aims to provide student parents, caregivers, and supportive students with the research, resources, and materials they need to advocate for parent-friendly campuses; and to join in solidarity with childcare advocates, early childhood educators, and groups fighting to end child poverty by echoing local and national demands. The campaign pillars are (1) universal, public childcare, (2) financial support for student parents to help end child poverty, (3) on-campus childcare and child-friendly spaces, (4) academic accommodations for student parents and caregivers, (5) research and data on single parents on campus, (6) representation of student parents on childcare boards on campus, and (7) diverse and inclusive family support, including queer family support.

- The CFS Mental Health Working Group met once over the summer. I am a member of this working group.

The working group reviewed seven recommendations.

1. Invest in public health care and mental health care systems, including eliminating tuition from care profession programs and paying health care workers living wages.
 2. Ensure all forms of health care and mental health services are universally accessible and free.
 3. Provide funding for the implementation of community-based, rapid response teams on campuses and in communities.
 4. Provide funding for Statistics Canada to conduct research on disaggregated data and mental health statistics for international students eligible for public health insurance.
 5. Make international students eligible for public health insurance.
 6. Increase investments in accessible mental health supports that are adequately funded and staffed in order to compensate for the loss of campus resources and the increasing rise in mental health needs amongst post-secondary students and recent graduates.
 7. Remove barriers to accessing mental health support by offering grants to community-based and culturally relevant service providers that treat post-secondary students.
- Student Wellness Services (SWS)
 - Met with Cynthia Gibney, Executive Director of SWS on May 11.
 - Discussed limitations of SWS's budget model.
 - SWS is funded by a Ministry of Education grant, meaning addition funding for SWS means less funding for the educational mission of the University.
 - SWS does not receive any funding from the Ministry of Health.
 - Demand for SWS increased by convoluted policies around academic accommodations.
 - SWS is working on an online booking system, although funding remains a challenge.
 - Provost's Advisory Committee for the Promotion of the Arts (PACPA)
 - PACPA adjudicates proposals for the Brockington Visitorship, the Chancellor Dunning Trust Visitorship, the George Taylor Richardson Memorial Fund, and the Robert Sutherland Visitorship. I sit on the committee.
 - I took the opportunity to speak to the Committee about the financial challenges faced by SGPS members.
 - Office of the Vice-Provost Global Engagement
 - Met with Heather Kincaide, Director and Strategic Internationalization Lead.
 - November is Queen's Global Month.
 - Working in collaboration with SGPS to design student activities during Queen's Global Month.
 - Community Engagement
 - One of my year goals is to amplify SGPS's presence in the Kingston community.
 - I have been contacting community organizations who already have a layer of connection with the SGPS. Specifically, community organizations who have a mandatory or optional fee on the SGPS fee slate. The short-term deliverable from this outreach is a new SGPS service that lists community partners, a description of their work, and an easy way for SGPS members to get involved with these groups.
 - Housing Advocacy
 - Housing is one of the biggest issues faced by SGPS members. Decent and affordable housing for SGPS members is one of my goals for the year.
 - In collaboration with the SGPS President, my housing advocacy efforts have proceeded with a focus on building partnerships. Key partners include student groups like the AMS and CFS, and community organizations. Advocacy will target the Queen's, Kingston, Ontario, and Canada levels.

- A major initiative this year will be to get a housing working group established under the auspices of the provost with broad student representation to generate recommendations on the University's role in the student housing crisis.

If you have any questions, comments, or concerns, please contact me at vp.community@sgps.ca.

Yours in service,

Tony Hu
Vice President Community, SGPS

Year Plan

Strategic Plan - Vice President Community

Objective 1. Affordable and decent housing for SGPS members

Description. Following several periods of sustained inflationary pressure, the cost of living has increased dramatically. Housing is a necessity. Unfortunately, graduate student stipends have slipped and are no longer adequate. Further, the University's ambitious enrollment targets are increasing the demand for housing, thereby pushing the cost of housing even higher.

Benefits. Housing is one of the biggest stressors for students. Financially, housing is a major expense. The unaffordable housing market in Kingston causes significant stress for many students who struggle to balance their budgets with their academic and personal commitments. Inadequate or poor-quality housing can also detract from a student's general sense of wellness and belonging at Queen's University.

Difficulties. Status quo.

Long-term. Better housing for graduate and professional students.

How. Talking to University administrators, city council, non-profits, housing developers on public-private partnership model. Tenant right education. Creation of a University-wide housing advisory group to understand the University's role in fixing the housing crisis. Collective action through the Canadian Federation of Students.

Objective 2. Amplify SGPS' presence in the Kingston community.

Description. Queen's University is at Kingston. Queen's students are Kingston residents. General town-gown hostilities preclude meaningful and valuable collaboration between SGPS members and the greater Kingston community. Allying with community organizations accelerates progress towards the goals of the SGPS.

Benefits. Increasing awareness of the SGPS in the Kingston community, increased opportunities to work and volunteer with the community, solidarity on issues affecting SGPS members.

Difficulties. Relationship building takes time.

How. Meeting different groups, sending emails, seeking opportunities to collaborate, attending community events.

Objective 3. Advocating for more robust mental health support for SGPS members.

Description. Mental health is health. SGPS members—graduate and professional students—are not immune to facing mental health challenges. The need for more robust mental health support is felt particularly acutely by SGPS members due to several compounding factors: precarious financials, limited housing, and holding multiple roles at the University including teaching and research. Mental health support must appear before students face crisis situations. This means being proactive about health promotion, especially mental health promotion. This means increasing access to counselors for short- and long-term counselling.

Benefits. Graduate and professional students are core stakeholders of the University. They engage in learning, research, and teaching. In so doing, they advance the University's mission and profile internationally. Fragile mental health support stops the ability of these students from achieving their potential.

Difficulties. Substantial funding limitations on the University's operating budget because of inflationary pressure and province-mandated inability to raise revenue. No single group is most responsible or held accountable for student wellness. The SGPS health and dental plan is already expensive.

Long-term. Better mental health for graduate and professional students.

How. Talking to University administrators, provincial government, and collective action through the Canadian Federation of Students.



Queen's University is situated on traditional Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee territories.

1. **Revision of the SGPS Bylaw and Policy Document** has been completed. A copy has been attached to my previous e-mail. Once the copy has been finalized, it will be uploaded to the SGPS website.
2. **Creation of Council Representatives handover document** is currently in progress. I expect to finalize this copy by the end of the month. This will be circulated to all SGPS Council Representatives and various departments across the University and uploaded on the SGPS website.
3. Finally, to ensure that we continue to increase **attendance, inclusivity, and engagement in Council and General Meetings**, we encourage you to do the following:
 1. **Try your best to attend meetings.** If you cannot attend, please e-mail speaker@sgps.ca and let me know beforehand. Per Bylaw and Policy, if you are unable to attend, you are entitled to one proxy vote so long as you notify me beforehand.
 2. **Come prepared.** Please take some time (at the very least 5 minutes) to read through the agenda, relevant documents, and Council Reports provided. This will not only increase participation and engagement, but will also ensure the smooth running of meetings.
 3. **Get in touch with me.** As Officers of the Council, we depend on Council Representatives to let us know what and how we can do better. If you have any questions or concerns, please e-mail speaker@sgps.ca.

If you have any questions or input, please do not hesitate to get in touch with me at speaker@sgps.ca.

SGPS Council Speaker
Aileen Editha (she/her)

Commissioner and Other Reports

Athletics and Wellness



Society of Graduate and Professional Students
Report of the Athletics and Wellness Commissioner
August 2023

Dear Council,

I hope everyone has had a wonderful summer! Having begun my role as Athletics & Wellness Commissioner in June, I am happy to say that I have thoroughly enjoyed my role thus far and I am thrilled to be part of this team. The first few weeks were all about settling into this new role and learning about SGPS structure and procedures.

Over the month of July, I collaborated closely with the SGPS Social Commissioner Gabby on summer events and Orientation events. I also had a very productive meeting with the Manager of Active Living in the Athletics & Recreation department, with whom I will be working on a number of initiatives throughout the upcoming term.

In this report I would like to share with you the Athletics & Wellness events for which planning is underway as well as my overall 2023-24 year plan.

1. **August 23, 4:30pm Zumba class at the Arc**

I am pleased to report that our first Athletics event will be held on August 23 in the form of a Zumba class. Promo for this event is underway on Instagram – it would be great if everybody could repost the promo graphic for this!

2. **September Orientation Athletics events**

- 20 September, 4:30pm: Triple Threat group fitness class
- 27 September, 4:30pm: Yoga group fitness class
- In-person guided Arc tours (date & time TBD)
- Virtual Arc tour
- Kickstart sessions (date & time TBD) - *members will be given an orientation session by an A&R personal trainer on a specific area of the Arc and shown how to use the equipment in that area.*
- Instagram Giveaway: members will have the opportunity to win a group fitness pass which will allow them to take all fall group fitness classes for free!

3. **2023-24 Athletics & Wellness Year Plan**

- **Group fitness classes:** I plan to offer members grad student only, free group fitness classes on a bi-monthly basis.
- **SGPSA collaboration:** I hope to partner with the SGPSA on their dissertation bootcamp sessions and offer movement and stretching sessions during these sessions. This may entail partnering

with the A&R department, as they are launching a new Fitness Ambassador program which will be comprised of student volunteers trained to guide 'fit breaks'.

- **Wellness workshops:** Working with the Student Wellness Services department, I plan to offer our membership a 2-3 wellness workshops throughout the year. The specific types of workshops are still to be finalized, but ideas include healthy cooking sessions, how to create a self-care plan, and any other ideas SWS may have.
- **Holiday Instagram giveaway:** To drive engagement with our social media account, I plan to hold an Instagram giveaway centered around fitness & wellness. The giveaway will be mini bands, a yoga mat, or another group fitness class pass for the winter term.
- **Grad Games:** A possible end of year event in which we would set up different sports games in one of the Queen's campus parks to give grad students an opportunity to get together and play sports games such as Badminton, spikeball, and so on.
- **SGPS Health & Wellness resource page:** Working with Andria, I would like to create a dedicated health/fitness/wellness resource page on the SGPS website. This space would include information about the SWS, the GoodLife membership discount, the ARC's group fitness class schedule, and so on.

That's it from me, please don't hesitate to contact athletics@sgps.ca if you have any questions or feedback.

Meghan Mendelin (she/her)
SGPS Athletics & Wellness Commissioner
Society of Graduate and Professional Students
athletics@sgps.ca



Hello Council Members,

As my time at Queen's comes to an end, I am currently in the process of transitioning our Deputy ED Commissioner into this role!

Over the past few months, this is what I have done:

1. Collaborations
 - a. Working with our Socials commissioner to ensure Orientation goes as smoothly as possible!
2. Transition for next year:
 - a. Gender Affirming Bursary
 - i. The bursary is opening next semester, currently training the Deputy on it's use!
 - b. SGPS Black Liaison Commissioner
 - i. Ensuring the launch and start of this position runs smoothly!
 - c. Orientation
 - i. Supporting current efforts for collaboration and event building
 - d. Soft Infrastructure Network
 - i. Working with the Deputy to reconstruct the network (e.g., who is available, who is interested, etc.) for the new year
3. 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 – working on it!
 - d. Built Environment Advisory Group – Deputy is taking over!
 - e. University Council on Anti-Racism and Equity (UCARE) – working on new year ideas!
 - f. Inclusive Communities UCARE Sub-Committee – working on new year ideas!
 - g. Steering Committee related to review of CSES response to Hate Crimes – paused until new year!
 - h. Senate Educational Equity Committee – paused until new year!

Best,

Jane Mao

BScH, SXGD Certificate, M.Ed Candidate

equity@sgps.ca

Equity and Diversity Commissioner

Society of Graduate and Professional Students



Queen's University is situated on traditional Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee territories.

Dear Council,

I hope everyone has had a restful summer. As we are approaching September I am very much looking forward to serving as this year's liaison for the Indigenous community here at Queen's. The transition into my role has been very smooth. I have been learning and adapting to the ways in which the SGPS operates. I'm so happy to be a part of this year's team and to advocate for my fellow Indigenous students.

Over the month of July, I have been thinking about different orientation events we can offer to Indigenous students here at Queen's. I met with Jessica Parks from Four Directions ("4D") and we brainstormed various different events that we believe would be greatly received by Queen's Indigenous students.

In this report I would like to share with you the Indigenous Student events for which planning is underway as well as my overall 2023-24 year plan.

1. **September Orientation events**

- In-person guided tour of the different graduate buildings (Law, Medicine and Education) as well as a tour of 4D
- Virtual tour of 4D
- Dish with one spoon lunch catered by Indigenous vendors
- Bowling at Splitsville

2. **2023-24 Indigenous Student Liaison Year Plan**

- **Maintain a presence at 4D:** It is extremely important to me that I foster a relationship of trust and care between myself and my fellow Indigenous students. I will not be able to be a voice for them if I am not listening to their needs. Therefore, I plan to regularly be at 4D and introducing myself to my fellow Indigenous students. I also plan to hold casual check ins with them and gain insight on what type of events and support they are wanting out of the SGPS.
- **Networking Event:** I plan to organize a networking event for Indigenous students to be able to chat with Indigenous members working in all the fields our graduate schools offer (Law, Medicine and Education). I hope that they can hear the perspectives of Indigenous professionals and gain some warm mentorship and guidance.

- **Wellness events:** I plan to organize different events that can promote wellness and alleviate stress for Indigenous students during the hectic school year. Some ideas include a beading events with Professor Lindsay Borrows, and a painting event.
- **Book Club:** Jessica kindly informed me that a book club was a hit with last year's Indigenous students. I plan to implement a book club again, with in-person and virtual meetings to discuss books written by Indigenous authors.

Thank you all for your time, and kindly let me know if you have any questions or concerns. You can always reach me at indigenous@sgps.ca.

Rosemary Gasparro (she/her)
SGPS Indigenous Student Liaison
Society of Graduate and Professional Students
indigenous@sgps.ca



Hello Council,

I hope everyone has had a wonderful summer so far! As we approach the beginning of the school year, I have many exciting updates about SGPS Orientation and how we will be welcoming incoming and returning graduate and professional students! In this report. These past few months, I have been meeting and collaborating with SGPS Commissioners and Exec to ensure Orientation is as inclusive and accessible as possible!

Below is the full list of SGPS Orientation events planned for this September. I will be highlighting volunteer opportunities (highlighted in yellow) for Council to get involved with Orientation, any help would be greatly appreciated!! These events will be advertised through our newsletters and social media accounts; it would be amazing if everyone can please repost the event graphics on your Instagram/Facebook stories to increase reach and engagement. Thank you!

1. SGPS x QUIC Welcome Packages and Campus Tours

Date: August 29th and 30th 11:30am, 12:30pm and 1:30pm

Location: TBD

Description: To improve student engagement among international students with SGPS this year, SGPS is collaborating with QUIC to provide SGPS information pamphlets and pens in each of their welcome packages! Additionally, SGPS is currently advertising QUIC welcome and information sessions and will be helping with campus tours in the last week of August! I will be sending a sign-up sheet in the coming week for those available to help on the 29th and 30th with the QUIC campus tours!

2. Queen's University Sidewalk Sale

Date: September 9th from 10:30am-6:00pm

Location: University Ave.

Description: Queen's Sidewalk Sale is an annual event in which clubs, organizations and businesses in the Queen's and Kingston community will be running booths along University Avenue! Sidewalk Sale attracts over 10,000 students and community members every year. SGPS will have a booth for students to meet our team and learn about what SGPS has to offer! Andria and I have ordered giveaway items and prizes to give away at our booth as well.

Below is a Google Drive sign-up sheet for SGPS members who would be able to volunteer some of their time on the 9th to help run the booth! Additional details about Sidewalk Sale can also be found through this link:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/175Mc_l4MebNj6FtBGkE7_vcuGfBb-s/edit?usp=sharing&oid=112604100648024304988&rtpof=true&sd=true

3. SGPS Trivia & Apps

Date: September 12th from 7:00pm-10:00pm

Location: The Grad Club, 162 Barrie St.

Description: The aim of this event is for students to meet new friends, play some trivia and enjoy catered appetizers! The first part of the evening will be a social for students to meet and connect with one another and the second half will be a 4-round game of Trivia! Prizes will also be up for grabs. It would be great to have some SGPS volunteers for this event checking tickets at the door and overseeing catering. Please reach out to me via Slack or email (social@sgps.ca) if you are interested and available!

4. Misty Underwood Nature Walk Talk

Date: September 16th from 1:00pm-3:00pm

Location: Lemoine Point Conservation Area (Transportation Provided)

Description: Land-based educator, Misty Underwood, will be hosting a nature Walk Talk at the beautiful Lemoine Point Conservation Area! Students will be able to meet new friends on this hike and learn about the land through storytelling and Indigenous teachings.

5. SGPS x Yellow House Board Games Night

Date: September 19th from 5:00pm-6:30pm

Location: The Yellow House, 140 Stuart St.

Description: SGPS is collaborating with the Yellow House to connect graduate and professional students as well as introduce them to resources, clubs and services aimed to create a safe and welcoming community for students who identify as Queer, Trans, Black, Indigenous and/or People of Colour (QTBIPOC). This event will consist of board games and catered snacks!

6. SGPS Movie Night

Date: September 25th from 8:00pm-10:30pm

Location: The Screening Room, 120 Princess St.

Description: For our final Orientation event, SGPS will be hosting a movie night at the Screening Room in downtown Kingston! Prior to the start of the movie, students will have the chance to socialize and meet one another. Popcorn and a drink will be provided for each attendee!

7. SGPS Orientation x SGPS Athletics

Description: Meghan and I have been working together to promote ARC resources and fitness to incoming and returning students! We recently filmed an ARC video tour which will be posted on our socials and the SGPS website. Meghan is also planning 2 Zumba/Fitness events during September Orientation which I am so excited for!

That's it from me, please don't hesitate to reach out to social@sgps.ca with any questions, concerns or suggestions!

Gabby Torretto (she/her)
SGPS Social Commissioner
Society of Graduate and Professional Students
social@sgps.ca