



**GRADUATE STUDENT ADVISORY COUNCIL
MINUTES**

**Wednesday February 27, 2019
2:00 pm – 4:00 pm / EME 4116**

Meeting commenced at 2:00 PM

1. Dean's Remarks

Campus heats for 3MT have concluded. Students are encouraged to attend the final event on March 14, at The Innovation Centre. Registration is free. 75 tickets are already sold.

2. Student feedback session: Proposed Doctor of Philosophy in Computer Science

Ian Cull, AVP Students and Bernard Momer, Associate Dean, IKBSAS

The Dean introduced I. Cull and B. Momer. They explained that University policy requires a student consultation for new programs and requested feedback on the proposed Doctor of Philosophy in Computer Science. Tuition rates are in line with other thesis-based Doctoral programs on campus. Student feedback will be included in the report to the Board of Governors.

A member inquired how the program will be able to guarantee a certain number of courses of interest. B. Momer responded that the program has hired three new faculty members, and that there won't be changes in course offering. He explained that students currently in the IGS program would be transferring into the Computer Science PhD program.

B. Momer and I. Cull thanked GSAC for their time and support.

3. Graduate Council recap – C. Vien

C. Vien reported that new Graduate Student Representatives Rina and Michael plan to attend the next GSAC meeting. Report from Graduate Council includes:

- Creation of online progress reports are in progress, will hopefully be live for April 1.
- Discussion of Progress report "gray areas", and interpretation of satisfactory standings
- Discussion of termination of student/supervisor relationship. This is covered by CoGs policy and requires an Unsatisfactory progress report to proceed. The student must be involved in the process and provided an opportunity to respond. Council also discussed remediation towards satisfactory progress.
- Discussion of areas of efficiency for CoGS

C. Vien stated that Rina, Michael and herself intend to meet after the next Graduate Council meeting to review.



4. **Grad Student representation with UBCSUO** – Update and discussion

L. Mudde reported that the last town hall meeting was not well attended, but there was an informal discussion on progress and concerns.

The group is continuing research into the cost of tuition fees and cost of living with International tuition fees. They plan to gather anonymous data on expenses from students to document how they are living, and details on TA inequalities and differences in workload. Due to student Visas that limit work to 20 hours/week for International students, expenses become challenging. She reported that there is not a lot of advocacy on campus to help with this, and not many opportunities other than applying for the tuition waiver. This makes meeting time to completion expectations for their programs difficult.

The Graduate Student Association (GSA) is working on creating a logo to increase visibility and is looking at ways to increase funds and raise awareness with events such as a BBQ.

GSA discussed the possibility of a new paid position with the Students Union that could explicitly advocate and research on behalf of graduate students. There is also a need to fill the now vacant UBCSUO Graduate Student Representative position.

A Council member brought feedback from the previous Representative that there were challenges advocating for graduate student issues when the SU Board is otherwise composed of undergraduate students. A better balance of representation is required. GSAC voiced concern that, as graduate students are already fee-paying Members of the UBCSUO, their issues should be addressed.

The Dean inquired about the mode of communication provided by the UBCSUO. Members responded that they send out monthly newsletters.

GSAC discussed petitioning for a minimum of one additional graduate student representative on the SU Board. The Dean responded that CoGS can draft a proposal on behalf of GSAC advocating for more positions, to forward to the UBCSUO. This proposal can reference the three new Graduate Council student positions as an example.

5. **International Student tuition fees** - Discussion

Members discussed avenues available for financial aid for International students, as they are not entitled to bursaries or loans and are excluded from many scholarships. They discussed a lack of incentive to participate in extracurricular and community activities when under stress of financial instability.

CoGS agreed to look into available financial supports for International continuing students, and possibly the creation of a leadership award.



The Dean reported that he met with Development to discuss awards, but this was primarily focused on incoming students. He agreed to pass on the message regarding continuing students.

He explained that CoGS manages merit-based awards but that financial aid is coordinated elsewhere. Excellence Fund money comes directly from International student fees and is redirected into new faculty, new startups, and some awards including the IDF and International Partial Tuition. He expressed the need for some of these funds to go to International graduate students who are contributing to UBC. CoGS can advocate that this type of award be created.

The Dean reported that CoGS is working on improving the services that students are receiving (e.g. quality of supervision), the Board of Governors sets tuition fees and continuing fees. After the minimum number of months of study, domestic students receive a decreased tuition fee while international students continue to pay the same tuition amount. These extra funds don't necessarily go directly back into supporting students.

The Board of Governors solicits graduate student feedback once per year, and the Dean encouraged students to take advantage of this to voice their concerns.

Programs are being encouraged to provide a minimum funding level, which UBC-V has already put in place. Some programs have an internal policy on minimum funding but it is not campus wide. Graduate Council is moving in this direction, and CoGS is looking into acceptance letters and tracking that students are receiving what was promised. A new UBC system will be introduced which will be able to track all funding data for a student.

Regarding discrepancies in TA hours and workload, expectation of "dark" (unpaid) hours should be reported to Human Resources, as TA positions are part of a union. Students are also encouraged to bring issues of this nature to the new Ombudsperson.

C. Wallis shared with Council that the Psychology program expects all students to track and submit their hours to ensure accountability on all sides. She agreed to share the worksheet template with Council members, via Marissa.

6. Graduate Student Spaces Update – D. Roberts

D. Roberts reported that the Commons Graduate Collegium is not officially open as the Library is having trouble with the SALTO system. However, students with existing access to the ASC 460 Graduate Collegium will find that they do already have access to the Commons space. CoGS will be sending out an official notice to all graduate students once technical issues are dealt with. The new space is a working and study space and includes a printer and bookable meeting rooms.

7. Supervisor/student expectations webpage – D. Roberts



The new Graduate Student-Supervisor Expectations webpage is live under Academics. It includes a checklist of expectations, and students are recommended to complete the checklist within the first two months of their program. It is meant to set expectations early so that both parties have committed in writing how they conduct their relationship. There is also a supervisor best practices document and information on conflict resolution. Workshops on this topic are held for both students and faculty throughout the year. This process is tied in with the new Policies O-4 and O-9 which allows CoGS the ability to restrict supervisory privileges when necessary. Members reported that the HES department has made it mandatory for all parties to complete the student-supervisor checklist.

8. Grad Student Funding – Update, D. Tannant

The Dean reported that the UBCSUO has reached out to CoGS, the DVC and Provost's office to advocate for the creation of additional funding for graduate students. The Dean will report on the outcome at a future GSAC meeting.

Council members inquired about the eligibility timeline for UGF funding. The Dean explained that students must be eligible at the time of nomination (within 24 months for Masters, and 48 months for PhD). Eligibility is dictated by the date of months in program as of April 30. Awards are paid out in September.

Council members also discussed the payment of tuition fees after degree conferral. D. Roberts explained that all students are required to pay a minimum number of 'Steps' for their program and are obliged to pay the minimum number of tuition installments even if they have completed the program early. The program is considered complete when the thesis is finished, reviewed, and uploaded to cIRcle. If a student has paid the minimum number of installments, and finishes early after the minimum, any extra continuing tuition fees paid are refunded. Fee structure is set by the Board of Governors. Students who are paying continuing tuition fees are encouraged to finish as soon as possible in order to decrease tuition payments.

9. Other Business

Members discussed advocating for a second graduation ceremony and the Dean agreed to follow up. UBC-V currently holds two ceremonies/year.

C. Wallis and A. Ahsan reminded Members that seats are still available for the Big White event on Friday March 1st. Tickets are \$15 per person for skiing, tubing or snowboarding and each participant will receive a \$10 voucher back for anything up at Big White. Bus leaves at 2 pm and back by 8 pm.

Meeting adjourned at 3:31 pm