



**GRADUATE STUDENT ADVISORY COUNCIL  
MINUTES**

**Thursday May 2, 2019  
2:00 pm – 4:00 pm / UNC 334**

**Meeting commenced at 2:02 pm.**

**1. Chair's Remarks**

The Dean welcomed guests from the UBC Okanagan Students' Union:

Romil Jain – President

[president@ubcsuo.ca](mailto:president@ubcsuo.ca)

Holly Denby – Vice-President Internal

[vpinternal@ubcsuo.ca](mailto:vpinternal@ubcsuo.ca)

Sarah Furgason – Advocacy & Governance Coordinator

[sarah.furgason@ubcsuo.ca](mailto:sarah.furgason@ubcsuo.ca)

The Dean noted for the record that the Students' Union is enthusiastic about working with and supporting graduate students and is happy to address any concerns.

**2. Student communications update – D. Roberts**

As a follow up from the March 27 meeting, D. Roberts reported that the new student declaration in the academic calendar explicitly allows student organizations to access student emails in order to conduct business. Program coordinators and administrators have been notified by CoGS and are able to share emails for the purpose of course unions or student groups.

This change should alleviate much of the frustration surrounding graduate student communications across campus.

S. Furgason clarified that the UBCSUO does not have access to this information and relies on university groups to provide that.

The Dean reported that results from the 2019 CPGS Survey will be shared with GSAC when they are available. The student response rate was 24%. Results of this survey will provide valuable data to compare UBC-O with UBC-V and other institutions across the country.

**3. Irving K. Barber Student Association update – L. Mudde**

Since the March 27 meeting of GSAC, L. Mudde met with Paula Tran and Sarah Furgason to discuss the Graduate Student Association and graduate student involvement in the UBCSUO. A few solutions were identified:

- It may be more effective to use GSAC, as an existing channel (rather than a new club/course union/student association), to increase representation with the UBCSUO



- Recommendation to invite a representative of the UBCSUO as a standing member of GSAC; and ideally have a member of GSAC appointed to the UBCSUO Board.
- This would allow all three groups (Graduate students, CoGS, and the UBCSUO) to have more open communication and discussion
- The Graduate Student Association is not likely to continue; alternative uses for the existing funds will need to be determined. Functioning through GSAC will allow graduate students to take advantage of existing resources such as support for room and meeting bookings

S. Furgason suggested that a UBCSUO representative attend GSAC meetings while the UBCSUO Graduate Student Representative seat is vacant. The Dean agreed that this would be a good way to communicate Student Union information out to graduate students via GSAC. S. Furgason acknowledged that UBCSUO understands more can be done to support graduate students; and also that more graduate student representation is required on the Board. She confirmed that there are currently 14 UBCSUO Board positions filled, with three vacancies.

The Dean stated that this system would also allow GSAC to move forward with issues that are beyond the mandate of CoGS.

CoGS will provide S. Furgason with the dates and meeting information for GSAC, to be relayed to the UBCSUO Executive.

#### **4. UBCSUO Executive attendance at GSAC – L. Mudde**

Discussed above.

#### **5. Cross-campus TA Survey update – L. Mudde**

L. Mudde spoke to Members regarding a TA survey on campus for graduate and undergraduate students. This would provide student feedback on workload and hours for each program. Conversation at previous GSAC meetings indicated some students have experienced challenges with instructors and inequalities in TA positions across campus. L. Mudde and S. Furgason have discussed how the UBCSUO can assist with distributing the survey.

The Dean reported that HR has not received any complaints regarding TA-ships and that it is not an issue that they are aware of. He recommended that GSAC members get in touch with the HR contact for the BCGEU TA agreement. Members indicated that this information was not readily available or easily accessible to them, beyond the initial TA offer letter. The Dean suggested that GSAC invite the BCGEU contact to a future meeting for feedback on the TA survey questions. L. Mudde agreed to locate this information and report back to GSAC.

GSAC members were invited to email their suggestions for survey questions to M. Brown at CoGS, to be brought to the next meeting: [marissa.brown@ubc.ca](mailto:marissa.brown@ubc.ca)

Members discussed the benefits of distributing a survey, including:

- Provide guidance on developing a systematic process for students to voice their concerns – what do students need and want from the process?



- Supervisors and instructors need to be familiarized with the established process, and should communicate the process to their TA's
- Consistency of process across campus, across programs and departments
- Survey results can be communicated to faculty via Deans Council and Graduate Council
- Re-evaluation of hour requirements of TA positions for each program (current workload is treated the same for every program)
- Identify areas of concern, and for which students

Major concerns include:

- Agreement documents underestimate expected hours
- Marking workload varies wildly between professors and courses (some less, some much more). Equalization of hours is needed
- Confusion regarding the process and appropriate individuals to make a complaint to
- Concern regarding fairness to students when being rushed to complete marking within limited hours

S. Lawrason reported that HES has distributed questions about TA-ships for their program in the past; she agreed to provide a copy of these questions as a sample for the GSAC TA survey.

Members agreed to plan to distribute the survey in Fall 2019. This will also provide an opportunity to inform students of their rights, union representative, and complaint process at the beginning of the year. L. Mudde, S. Furgason and H. Denby discussed the possibility of using remaining GSA funds to provide a prize for the survey.

S. Furgason confirmed that UBCSUO staff can provide tech support for building the survey via Qualtrics. CoGS will provide the student list. A working meeting for GSAC will be scheduled in June to discuss the survey.

## 6. Other Business

GSAC members discussed the vacant Graduate Representative seat on the UBCSUO Board. Unless an interim representative is found, the position will be vacant until the bi-election in the fall.

Members agreed that the upcoming UBCSUO budget should have graduate student input, and S. Furgason confirmed that the UBCSUO will establish the budget in July.

**Motion:** The Graduate Student Advisory Council requests that the vacant Graduate Student Representative position on UBCSUO be filled as soon as possible.

**Motion carried.**

S. Furgason will follow up with UBCSUO and report back. Interested applicants for the position are encouraged to contact Sarah: [sarah.furgason@ubcsuo.ca](mailto:sarah.furgason@ubcsuo.ca)

Members also discussed the need for a change to UBCSUO bylaws in the future, to have at least two additional graduate student representatives added to the Board.



Feedback for the UBCSUO budget will also be added as a topic of discussion for June's meeting.

**Meeting adjourned at 3:29 pm.**