



**GRADUATE STUDENT ADVISORY COUNCIL  
MINUTES**

**Wednesday October 23, 2019  
2:00 pm – 4:00 pm / EME 4116**

**Meeting commenced at 2:05 pm**

**Members all introduce themselves.**

**1. Dean's/Chair's Remarks**

The Dean welcomed members and thanked everyone for attending. She introduced Dr. Paul Shipley as the new Associate Dean of Graduate Studies, and Chair of GSAC.

**2. CoGS Staff Update – P. Shipley**

P. Shipley updated Council on two new staff at CoGS:  
Haley Allen – Communications and Engagement Manager  
Caitlin Voth – Awards and Special Projects Assistant  
Members were encouraged to familiarize themselves with their CoGs program assistants:

**Data Science, FCCS, Education** - Aperrna Sasheendren

**IGS; thesis scheduling** - Damien Bell

**Engineering** - Michelle Beck

**FHSD, IKBSAS** (Excluding Data Science, Computer Science) - Laura Bissell

**Computer Science** - Sara McDonald

**3. Workshop and Events Update – D. Roberts**

Events and workshops are located on the CoGS website at:

<https://gradstudies.ok.ubc.ca/events-workshops/>

D. Roberts reminded Members that workshops emails are distributed to all graduate students on a monthly basis. The next workshop is *The University's Relationship with the Host Nation*, October 24, hosted by Aboriginal Programs and Services.

**Coming up:**

Writing the Masters' Scholarship Application Tutorial – October 30 at 9:30 AM

Writing the CGSM Application Drop-in Session – November 6 at 12:00 PM

Procedural Fairness 101 – November 7 at 2:00 PM



Members were advised to start considering the 2020 Three-Minute Thesis (3MT) competition.

#### 4. Office of the Ombudsperson – Guest: Cindy Pearson Leonard, Ombuds Officer

The Office of the Ombudsperson for Students is an independent, impartial and confidential resource to ensure students are treated fairly by the university and can learn, work and live in a fair, equitable and respectful environment.

C. Pearson clarified that the office is not attached to the university, and does not advocate for either students or the university, but advocates for procedural fairness and assists students with issues such as housing, academic misconduct, parking infractions, etc. One main goal of the office is to identify trends and make recommendations for systemic improvements, which are compiled into an annual report.

<https://ombudsoffice.ubc.ca/okanagan-campus/>

UNC 217

Tel: 250.807.9818

Email: [ombuds.office.ok@ubc.ca](mailto:ombuds.office.ok@ubc.ca)

Hours: M-F (9:00AM to 4:00PM)

##### a. Call for nominations: Okanagan Ombuds Advisory Committee

C. Pearson Leonard reported that since the Okanagan Ombuds Office re-opened in April, the Vancouver Ombuds Advisory Committee has recommended a separate committee for the Okanagan.

The Okanagan Ombuds Advisory Committee is looking for one graduate student representative elected by GSAC to serve on the Committee. Terms of Reference:

<https://ombudsoffice.ubc.ca/who-we-are/>

CoGs will distribute a call for nominations, and bring this item back to the November meeting of GSAC for a vote.

#### 5. UBCSUO Executives

The UBCSUO Executives in attendance introduced themselves:

Romil Jain, President

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

Holly Denby, VP Internal – Oversees the membership and student services and support aspect of UBCSUO, including the health and dental plan, tax clinic, policy committee, clubs and course unions.

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

Nimrah Pannu, VP Finance – Oversees club funding, legacy funds, etc.

R. Jain also included Taylor Dotto, VP External, who oversees campus life and UBCSUO campaigns.

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



R. Jain acknowledged that historically, there has not been much support for graduate students from UBCSUO. C. Wallis, the Graduate Student Representative for UBCSUO, remarked that the relationship this year has been productive and positive. Current priorities include the addition of dependents on student health plans and increased funding allocated for graduate student events.

UBCSUO executives reported on the tuition consultation in partnership with the UBC Alma Mater Society (AMS) and the UBC Graduate Student Society (GSS), which found that more than 70% of students rely on funding from personal savings, friends and family.

Council members inquired about plans to address proportional representation of graduate students at the UBCSUO. R. Jain responded that UBCSUO is collaborating with AMS regarding structure and process; members of GSAC are welcome to present to members of the UBCSUO Executive if there is interest.

Graduate students are encouraged to reach out to C. Wallis, the Graduate Student Senators, or the UBCSUO Executives with any questions or comments.

#### **6. Graduate Council student representatives – M. Brown**

Members discussed the process for electing Graduate Council student representatives. A January to January term starting January 2020 was proposed. CoGS will follow up with current members Rina Chua and Michael Morgan to gain interest in continuing until January, at which point a call out for all three positions including the vacant Non-Thesis Masters position will be distributed.

#### **7. UBC BCGEU Collective agreement – M. Brown**

M. Brown reminded members who are union employees to fill out their BCGEU membership cards in order to gain access to the Members portal for important agreement updates, workshops and events: <https://www.bcgeu.ca/>

P. Shipley directed members to Page 59 of the Collective Agreement (Page 72 of the docket), **Letter of Understanding #1 and #2**, which outlines guidelines for workload and grievance processes for Teaching Assistants.

In response to questions regarding the content of the collective agreement, members were directed to access the BCGEU portal for bargaining session announcements and to receive notifications of agreement updates.

C. Wallis announced that a group of students are documenting their weekly hours in order to demonstrate to the union the issues surrounding TA work load. Any students interested in participating are invited to contact Cassidy.



## 8. Updating GSAC Membership – Discussion, P. Shipley

Council members discussed revising the current GSAC Terms of Reference, which currently does not include formal requirements for IGS student representation. P. Shipley noted that there is a potential imbalance of representation due to language issues within the document.

A suggestion was made to change Membership to “Two Graduate student representatives from the following *programs*”, rather than departments or Faculties.

This item will remain open for further conversation.

## 9. Focus topic for November

Council members discussed potential agenda items for the next meeting:

- Accessibility of grad-student specific mental health resources on campus
- Policies regarding graduate student teaching approvals, specifically in regards to how they affect opportunities for Education students (see [Graduate Studies Policy and Procedure Manual](#), “Teaching a Course for which a Board of Governors Appointment is required”)
- Availability of graduate student spaces, including appropriate space for group work and storage; related to available resources for supporting the current student body and concerns about projected growth
  - o CoGS confirmed that the Atrium space is assigned graduate student office space and is managed through the Barber School.
  - o UBCSUO reported that they have also heard student concerns regarding the atrium. R. Jain encouraged GSAC members to write a letter, which UBCSUO would endorse.
- U-PASS flexibility for graduate students during the summer term. UBCSUO agreed to follow up regarding opt-in procedures.
- Off-campus housing support, especially for students coming from outside of the Okanagan
  - o Members suggested that a Housing and Tenancy Officer or similar, who could vet listings and assist with disputes, would be helpful
  - o Partnership with Happipad – home sharing platform?  
<https://www.happipad.com/>
  - o Members were advised that UBCSUO has a tenancy lawyer. Students can contact [president@ubcsuo.ca](mailto:president@ubcsuo.ca) to be connected.



- Suggestion for UBCSUO to compile a student resource guide
- Revisit CoGS graduate student orientation day:
  - o Suggestion for students to have a way to meet others in their cohort/program
  - o Connect current students with incoming students – develop infrastructure for a mentorship program; identify and invite grad student mentors ahead of time
  - o Topics: How to avoid burnout; common challenges to be aware of; communication 101; how to thrive
  - o Information delivered at the last orientation could have been received via email or online
- Increase opportunities for student-student and cohort interactions; IGS students in particular are looking for ways to connect
- Education mentorship program for incoming students
- Look into thesis submission timelines, eg. time between submission and defense, and ability to make revisions to thesis until defense date
  - o P. Shipley noted feedback from committees is not allowed once the thesis is deemed 'examinable'; however, essential issues should be addressed well before the thesis is submitted.

## 10. Other Business

None.

**Meeting adjourned at 3:29 pm**