



**GRADUATE STUDENT ADVISORY COUNCIL
MINUTES**

**Wednesday November 27, 2019
2:00 pm – 4:00 pm / UNC 334**

Meeting commenced at 2:03 pm.

1. Chair's Remarks

2. UBCSUO update – C. Wallis, UBCSUO Graduate Student Representative

a. Healthcare update

C. Wallis reported that the UBCSUO is reviewing the student care plan and hoping to add more coverage, including increasing the coverage for psychologists, increasing network physicians, including massage therapy without referrals, more birth controls options, and adding dependents on a payment plan. Members also suggested increasing the allowance for eye care, preferably to a percentage covered rather than a dollar amount; LGBTQ* services such as hormone replacement therapy and queer-friendly mental health care; and a list of approved, covered medications. C. Wallis responded that a comprehensive list is not accessible but they are aware of the most common medications, and students are encouraged to ask about specific medications. She acknowledged that there is some push back due to the availability of the EmpowerMe phone line which already covers 100% of student referrals through the service.

b. Christmas hampers

The Pantry student food bank recently re-opened under new branding. Any student is welcome to fill and take home a grocery bag of food, without leaving identifying information. Christmas hampers are also being organized for single-person households and families. Applications for a hamper are due November 29. C. Wallis also advised members that the Leftovers Club (<https://www.facebook.com/LeftoversUBCO/>) on campus collects leftover catering to give to students. Unlike the Pantry, the Leftover Club is open after-hours via Facebook.

3. Vote: Okanagan Ombuds Advisory Committee representative

Sarah Lawrason was voted as the Okanagan Ombuds Advisory Committee representative for GSAC. Congratulations and thank you for taking on this important role Sarah!



4. Update: Graduate Council student representatives – D. Roberts

CoGs will distribute a call for expressions of interest to all graduate students on campus, and will bring nominations back to the January meeting of GSAC for a vote.

5. Graduate Student Space – Kristen Morgan, Chair, Senate Student Caucus

Kristen Morgan introduced herself and asked members to consider how communications surrounding the atrium space can be shifted, so that there is a better understanding of how the space is being used and allocated. She reported that student perception is that the space is used infrequently, and that it is not appropriate for the kind of office space that graduate students actually need.

D. Roberts reported that the atrium space is designed and paid for by the Barber school, and is assigned office space for Barber school graduate students, in the same way that other space on campus is assigned; however, K. Morgan indicated that some non-Barber graduate students have apparently been able to secure access to the atrium as well.

Members described that some graduate students have been offered and declined to use the space as it is not adequate for privacy or confidentiality. There was a consensus that the atrium space is considered a loss for undergraduate students, and is ineffective for graduate student use. Members expressed concern that they have nowhere else to go if the atrium is re-allocated, and the need for more transparency about the changes. Members also discussed the need for better space management and accountability across campus in general, as many assigned spaces are left vacant throughout the year or aren't being used efficiently. At the request of a formal space audit, D. Roberts mentioned that a granular space audit was done approximately 5 months ago which should be able to provide better data on space usage. She confirmed that desk allocation is managed at the department level and students are encouraged to contact their departments about their concerns. Members agreed that a wide variety of types of spaces, including group work space, as well as desk space, is needed.

K. Morgan reported that she has scheduled a meeting with the Provost in January regarding space on campus, and will report back to GSAC.



6. **New Graduate Student Orientation feedback session** - Haley Allen, Communications and Public Engagement Manager

H. Allen requested feedback for enhancements or additions to Graduate Student Orientation:

- Incorporate program-specific content and a way for cohorts to meet each other
- Invite program representatives to act as mentors/guides, or matching new students with current students to share experiences
- Workshopping ideas:
 - o How to effectively communicate with your supervisor
 - o How to resolve conflict
 - o Graduate student work-life balance
 - o Student-Program expectations
 - o Cultural safety for incoming students
 - o Seminar on transitioning from undergraduate to graduate
 - o How to form a committee
 - o Important timelines and deadlines
 - o How to interact with undergraduate students eg. Negative feedback; conflicts
 - o Invite BCGEU representative to talk about TA's/RA's and outline responsibilities
- Incorporate videos, podcasts for advice and tips
- More information on available graduate student spaces, eg. Collegium
- Divide Orientation into three sections: social/peer mentorship, logistics, and skill building
- Students advised that Orientation is the best time of year to share information, before workloads get too heavy
- Incorporate department-specific information during the tradeshow

7. **Focus topic for December GSAC**

Members shared input for future GSAC meetings:

- Discussion of strategic enrolment, and increasing pressures with enrolment
- Request to look into Collegium events booked over the lunch hours
 - o CoGS to follow up immediately



- Suggestion to create a monthly Graduate Student broadcast/newsletter
 - o Include link to GSAC members list
 - o Include section for updates from Senate, Graduate Council, UBCSUO
- Add Graduate Council, UBCSUO and Senate updates as standing items to the GSAC agenda
- Discuss student evaluations of teaching: how to understand and interpret student evaluations
- Encourage programs to provide introductory supervisory or TA packages, as these are not offered campus-wide
 - o P. Shipley noted that programs should be providing debriefing/expectations/parameters at the start of every TA appointment. CoGS is working on getting programs on board with assignment of TA-ships and responsibilities.
- Suggestion to request reviews of the supervisors/faculty that graduate students TA for
 - o Concern regarding power differential
 - o Policy O-9 specifies that student/supervisor issues be discussed starting at the departmental level, but TA-ships are considered employment and therefore fall under BCGEU contract. Students need to be aware of their rights, and the union contract is meant to moderate these discussions.
- Investigate effectiveness of TA credentialing workshop
 - o P. Shipley to check in with Peter Arthur (Centre for Teaching and Learning) regarding content
 - o Look at better ways to build a teaching portfolio

8. Other Business

The Graduate Community Facilitators have been discussing holding a Communications workshop via Mitacs, but need to be able to provide a certain level of attendance. GSAC members are requested to inquire with their departments about interest in attending a two-day workshop. Timeline is TBA. Members requested more details about what the workshop would include.

The Psychology department is developing a mental health backgrounder and are looking for contributions from different perspectives on campus. Interested students can contact Cassidy Wallis for more information.



The student Senate groups are looking to implement a 'Wellness Week' in the fall term, similar to Reading Week in February. Updates will be provided as they are available.

Meeting adjourned at 3:23 pm.