



**GRADUATE STUDENT ADVISORY COUNCIL
MINUTES**

**Thursday, January 16, 2020
2:00 pm – 4:00 pm / ADM 101**

Meeting commenced at 2:01 pm.

Dr. Shipley introduced Tracey Sutton, Health and Wellness, and Dr. Gino Di Labio, Dean pro tem of IKBSAS, as guests.

1. Graduate Student Health and Wellness resources – Guest: Tracey Sutton, Health and Wellness

Tracey Sutton introduced the services provided by the Health and Wellness office, including the clinic, counselling services, and campus health (healthy initiatives on campus). As the counselling lead, Tracey runs groups and 1:1 counselling for students. There is a minimal wait time to access services and get students started; however, due to the need for services, long-term/ongoing counselling is not offered. She reported that main reasons for accessing services include anxiety, depression, relationships, and specifically motivation and supervisory relationships for graduate students. Off-campus referrals are possible but usually need to go through a students' GP. Tracey reported that they have submitted a proposal to hire a counsellor specifically for graduate students. The Student Health Plan covers \$600/year for counselling services, and students are encouraged to access services through the EmpowerMe line, which provides several free sessions and a reduced rate thereafter.

Health and Wellness does refer students to the Interprofessional Clinic as well, and meets with Dr. Lutes each semester. Katherine Rose added that the Interprofessional Clinic runs two days/week and does include longer-term treatment, but the waitlist is several months.

Health and Wellness also runs an Anxiety Management group, which is free and includes a 3-month subscription to the Y; as well as a Sleep Group on Wednesday nights and Lowering Anxiety Through Self-Regulation.

Members discussed the following:

- Normalization of issues such as depression, hardship, isolation, and poor sleep and eating habits for graduate students
- Difficulty with accessibility of care, especially in the Okanagan, including issues with transportation



- The need for privacy and confidentiality (from parents, family, and students)
- Need for longevity of care
- Additional barriers to accessing care for international students, including having to pay MSP
- CoGS has also experienced increased requests for student assistance
- Responsibility of the institution/education system for providing health care needs for students, versus the responsibility of the healthcare system
- Graduate students are students as well as employees, yet are not able to access the same level of care as university staff
- The role of supervisors in graduate student mental health (potential first point of contact, or source of stress)
- Increased opportunities for learning for supervisors to be able to respond more effectively

2. **Arts Atrium** – Discussion. Guest: Dr. Gino DiLabio, Dean pro tem, IKBSAS

Dean DiLabio explained that the Arts Atrium renovation was proposed by a department head and overseen by the Faculty. It was intended to provide much-needed space, and was undertaken to address a small portion of the broader campus space issue. He reported that the campus is at a space deficit of between 25-40% by Government space standards, and is acute enough to affect faculty hiring priorities and enrolment practices.

GSAC members were invited to provide feedback:

- Q: Were any surveys or assessments done prior to the renovation?
A: Likely not. The decision was likely made on the basis of expectation of an intake of grad students into the Barber school, so there was a sense of urgency to find desk space for new students especially considering the processing time involved.
- Concerns around whether the campus space surveys include Faculty of Medicine students. Dean DiLabio confirmed that UBC-O does not have ownership of the Reichwald Health Sciences building or the program, and acknowledged frustration that rooms in RHS stay empty while the university experiences class scheduling issues. He confirmed that deficit numbers are accurate as they were not included in the space survey.



- Q: Is there a completion date for the new residence buildings?
A: The aim is to have the buildings completed in the summer, with occupancy in the fall term. These residences are to address the existing housing shortfall, as the university is responsible to provide housing for at least 25% of students.
- Concerns regarding negativity from undergraduate students towards graduate students over the loss of study space. Part of the rationale for converting the Atrium space was the creation of new study space for undergraduates in the COM building, as well as COM 310 for graduate students.
- Concern from graduate students outside of IKSBAS, who also require appropriate space. Many Social Work students use the Collegium for group work because of a lack of group space elsewhere.
- Dean DiLabio reported that there has been a large number of requests from other Deans to access the space. If Barber students do not want to use the space, there is the option for other students to get access to it, or to convert it back.
- Dean DiLabio reported concerns from some faculty members with offices around the perimeter, that the Atrium was being used as a “flop” space by students
- Atrium space is inappropriate for certain disciplines of research, eg. Confidential information
- Request to ask graduate students about their specific desk needs going forward, including for example whether they need to meet with undergraduate students
- Need for adequate campus communication when spaces are transferred, which was missing when the space was renovated. It was not made clear who was responsible or who to contact; how or why the space was changing, or what the new space was. In some cases, these inquiries were sent directly to graduate students.
 - o Dean DiLabio acknowledged the need for better communication, and reported that it was complicated by the fact that the project was initiated during the summer months.

GSAC members discussed assigned desks being left empty in their offices, and inquired whether any department-level space audits have been performed. Dean DiLabio responded that individual departments are expected to manage and report their space needs, and agreed to follow-up with department heads on desk usage. GSAC members indicated that they would be happy to share their spaces with other students in need.

Members are encouraged to reach out if they have any additional comments or questions.



3. Graduate Awards Payment Timelines – Guest: Nathan Sletten, Awards Officer

A GSAC member brought forward a question regarding awards payment timelines, and suggestion to offer the Graduate Fellowship in three payments rather than two.

Regarding payment timelines, Nathan explained that CoGS and Enrolment Services use the Student Information Service System to distribute award payments. Award payments are uploaded in August and set to distribute at the start of each term. Award payments are firstly applied to any outstanding student tuition and fees and any residual amount is deposited to the student's bank account (or available by cheque if direct deposit is not set up). Normally, award payments are deposited into student's bank accounts within 2 - 5 business days of the start of term, but should take no more than 10 business days. Any students missing funds after 10 business days are encouraged to contact CoGS. Nathan further stated that there are some timing issues with external funds that are received by our office later than the award start date (eg WorkSafe Research Award), but Tri-Agency scholarships and any internal funding should be paid within 5 business days of the start of term.

Regarding payment schedules, Nathan explained that they are governed by the university fiscal calendar (April 1 – March 31), and therefore funds cannot be carried over into the May instalment period. If a student started their program in May, they would receive payment in May and September, and could potentially request payment in January. If a student starts in January, they will receive one lump sum payment.

4. Chair's Remarks

Dr. Shipley reported that the Graduate Collegium is no longer bookable over the lunch period (11:30 am – 1:00 pm) unless the space remains open to all students.

He reported that he is working with the CTL to revise TA training to include soft skills training and how to manage student evaluations, as well as the creation of a UBC certificate. Members are encouraged to send in additional suggestions. One member suggested including the Disability Resource Centre in planning TA workshops.

At the November GSAC meeting, members discussed distributing a peer-to-peer grad student newsletter. Dr. Shipley reported that CoGS has a system which is able to accommodate this if anyone is interested in leading the project.

An ongoing updates section has been added to the GSAC agenda.



5. Monthly updates

a. **UBCSUO** – Cassidy Wallis, Graduate Student Representative

January is Sexual Assault Awareness month on campus. All students are encouraged to attend the Policy SC17 (Sexual Misconduct Policy) consultation and town hall on January 27 at 11:30 am – 1 pm in UNC 200. Comments on the policy are open until January 31. UBCSUO will be addressing changes in an open letter.

Sexual Assault Response Training for TAs is being offered on January 29 from 1 – 4 pm in COM 311. More information at: <https://svpro.ok.ubc.ca/saam/>

UBCSUO has been working on a mental health campaign and is reviewing the student health and dental plan.

b. **Senate** – Laura Mudde, Graduate Student Senator

Senate discussed prerequisites around assigning emeritus status to faculty, and selecting speakers for convocation.

Streamlining the current curriculum approval process was also discussed, as some new courses can take several years under the current process.

The Learning and Research Committee is working on TA workshops, and the Learning and research committee is working with peter on TA workshops, and the Building and Resources Committee is working towards the goals of Outlook 2040.

c. **Graduate Council** – Paul Shipley

The following new and revised awards were discussed at the December meeting of Graduate Council:

Tri-Agency Supplement (new): \$6K/Master's and \$7.5K/Doctoral. Will allow units to top-up Tri-Council grantees while freeing up departmental funds.

International Two-Year Master's Partial Tuition Award (new): Dollar value based on time of study and program. Aligns with the doctoral award.

UBC Okanagan Postdoctoral Fellowship (new): Planned for \$50K. CoGS to look into the effect on income brackets, and adjust the amount to \$40K and use \$5 – \$10K in research support funds if needed. Planning for three awards in the first



year. These awards will provide opportunities for graduates to stay on campus after transitioning out of PhDs.

UBC Okanagan Aboriginal Postdoctoral Fellowship (new): 3 – 4 awards in addition to the above. These awards will allow graduates from local bands to continue working in their communities.

Aboriginal Graduate Fellowship (revised) – funding source switched from CoGS internal allocation to TREK Endowment

Aboriginal Graduate Entrance Fellowship (revised) – funding source switched from Excellence Funds to TREK Endowment

CoGS awarded six Graduate Dean’s Thesis Fellowships, two Finch Master’s awards and one Finch PhD award.

The Board of Governors has not yet released the Endowment funds that are allocated for graduate students. An update will hopefully be available for the next GSAC meeting.

Graduate Council has approved up to 2 people to attend defences via videoconference. Both the supervisor and neutral chair must attend in person.

6. **Vote: Graduate Council student representatives** – Paul Shipley

GSAC voted for the three Graduate Student Representative positions on Graduate Council. No applications were received for the Course-Based Master’s Representative position.

Research Master’s Student:

Melody Sayrany - 0

Shiva Zargar Ershadi – Unanimous

Doctoral Student:

Sadia Ishaq – 5

Viki Kumar Prasad – 4

Ahmed ElMouchi – 0

Yuri Rodrigues – 0

The successful students will be contacted prior to the next Graduate Council meeting on January 22. CoGS will reach out to all course-based students to fill the remaining vacancy. Welcome, Sadia and Shiva!



7. MSc and PhD defense timelines –Paul Shipley

Dr. Shipley presented the Timeline to Defence document for Master's and Doctoral Theses. He reminded GSAC members that approval of the University Examiner can happen well in advance of the thesis defence, and does not need to be incorporated into the thesis approval timelines. For Master's theses, Notice of examinations should be submitted at least four weeks before the proposed defence date, to allow the Examiner to evaluate the thesis.

The Doctoral timeline has been reduced to six weeks, which is the minimum time to allow for an External Examiner to review the thesis, and CoGS to process the report a week prior to the exam date. The External Examiner does still have to be approved 10 weeks before the exam but this can be completed separately. It is recommended to book this person in advance as soon as possible.

Members discussed what to do in circumstances where approval is delayed due to missing signatures by committee members. Dr. Shipley advised that the appropriate process is to follow up with the supervisors, graduate program coordinator, and escalation to CoGS if the issue is not resolved. CoGS has strict deadlines for review and will treat delays seriously.

8. Focus topic for February GSAC

None.

9. Other Business

Members discussed challenges around the selection of appropriate committee members on the Okanagan campus. While the current Senate policy requiring two faculty members on a committee is necessary to ensure that students have adequate support in case of an emergency (loss of committee member), it was acknowledged that some programs are particularly overburdened due to supervisor-graduate student ratios.

Members were reminded that committee members could be from any department on campus. Committees are not restricted to the student's own department. One suggestion was to seek out committee members for each method used in the research, for example.

This issue is campus-wide, and will also be discussed at Graduate Council.

Meeting adjourned at 3:36 pm