



**GRADUATE STUDENT ADVISORY COUNCIL
MINUTES**

**Wednesday, April 22, 2020
2:00 pm – 4:00 pm / ZOOM**

Meeting commenced at 2:00 pm

Chair - Paul Shipley, Associate Dean

The Chair added *Deans' Remarks* to the agenda and welcomed Dean pro tem, Jennifer Jakobi to discuss finances.

1. Chair's Remarks – Paul Shipley

The Chair extended appreciation to members for attending and acknowledged the difficulties graduate students are experiencing at this time.

2. Deans' Remarks – Jenn Jakobi

The Dean reported that CoGS is working with the university to find ways to support all graduate students. Students with urgent and immediate financial needs are asked to email Jenn directly, as they will be tracked and prioritized for assessment with the COVID-19 *Emergency Bursary Fund*.

CoGS is working with the Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (G&PS) office at UBC-V to identify ways to support students across both campuses; however, these supports will look different due to differences in the funding models of each campus.

The Dean also reported that in addition to CERB funding, the government of Canada announced that it has committed additional funds specifically for graduate students. These funds will come in the form of investment in employment, and investment in needs-based bursary awards.

Members were invited contact the Dean directly with any questions or concerns.

3. Monthly updates

a. UBCSUO – Cassidy Wallis

Cassidy reported that to date, the COVID-19 *Emergency Bursary Fund* has funded over 300 students, totaling over \$240K with students receiving between \$750-\$1000 each. The original fund has now been dispersed and another \$100K was recently added. Regarding eligibility, applications were ranked in terms of most needed and most urgent, such as students who could not make rent, or had to cover emergency travel.



A significant amount of UBCSUO funding for both undergraduate and graduate events was reallocated to the bursary fund.

The UBCSUO has also partnered with graduate students Rina Chua Garcia and Anne Claret to advocate for summer tuition awards.

b. **Senate** – Laura Mudde

Laura reported that much of Senate has been occupied with policy and authorization for virtual meetings. Discussions included enrolment targets, formal and informal exam scheduling, curriculum proposals for HES, FCCS, and IKBSAS, approval of the new Bachelors of Sustainability program, and extension of the Credit/D/Fail system.

c. **Graduate Council** – Paul Shipley

The Chair updated Council on the following items:

IT and remote defences: Remote defences and comprehensives have been going well. Approach varies from program to program.

Admissions: Almost all May admits have been deferred to September program start. Admissions for IGS are up.

Course offerings: The university announced that both summer terms will be held online.

Faculty are preparing for WT1 to also be online, or hybrid delivery in a best-case scenario. The hope is that this will open up paid work for graduate students in the summer, to help develop online labs, etc.

Leaves of absence: Students are recommended to be cautious when requesting a Leave of Absence, as this impacts access to services on campus, and eligibility for emergency relief funds. If a student has to travel home to take care of family, CoGS current approach is to hold requests until it is confirmed that the student has successfully made it to their home country in case flights are cancelled or borders are closed.

Cultural and Social Awareness Certificate: CoGS will have this credential program implemented for the fall. This will be a formal UBC credential that can be included on CV's and resumes. There will be a 2-day workshop starting this fall.

Policy-O4: Membership on Graduate Council, similar to GSAC, is being revised to reflect the split of the IKBSAS. This is an opportunity for optimization of representation on GSAC.

Annual Progress Reports: Deadline has been extended to July 2, but may be submitted earlier.



The Chair added *Communications Survey* to the agenda.

4. **Summer Tuition Fees** – Guests: Rina Chua Garcia, Anne Claret

The Chair welcomed Rina Chua Garcia and Anne Claret to discuss summer tuition fees. Rina clarified that they are acting independently of the institution, and are trying to help as many graduate students as possible.

Rina reported that they have been working in cooperation with the Graduate Student Society (GSS) at UBC-V, UBCSUO, and GSAC, to present a letter to the Board of Governors requesting a Summer Tuition Award for graduate students on both campuses. These funds are necessary as the current government benefits still exclude many graduate students.

An inter-UBC petition is available online via Google Sheets:

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1A8SppUM46jqu-bZXIXv4Hn8vZ1pvk-rS9WtOMUMcmCY/edit?usp=sharing>

Rina and Anne stated that the petition is ongoing and will be live until upper administration communicates a solution or proposal. They are closely following Prime Minister Trudeau's announcements in regards to support for graduate students. As of right now, criteria for funding is not clear, and does not mention international students, or students on leave. GSAC members are encouraged to share the petition widely.

Rina and Anne reported that organization has been difficult on the Okanagan campus, as the UBCSUO mostly covers undergraduate students. They have been able to connect with GSS but highlighted that increased graduate student representation may have to be addressed in the future.

CoGS will share the petition link with GSAC members after the meeting.

5. **COVID-19** – Jenn Jakobi

The Dean opened up the meeting for questions around COVID-19 and related issues:

- Q: Will the current situation have financial implications for UBC such as faculty members being let go?
 - o A: UBC has made a commitment to not let staff go or put them on leave at this time. Supervisors will still be available as long as health permits them to work.
- Regarding tuition waivers: UBC is looking to support students outside of a tuition waiver, to better support student needs and finances. This could include creating additional job opportunities, research opportunities, or other resources.



- The Dean confirmed that the summer term tuition payment due date has been extended to June 15. CoGS will look into why this is not reflecting online.
- Q: Regarding Tri-Agency grants, there is student concern about the deadline extension in terms of foreign travel awards. How does this work when borders are closed? Are any accommodations available?
 - o A: CoGS is limited to policy and deadlines imparted by the awards agencies, otherwise applications will be considered ineligible. While travel is currently limited for many institutions, it will not last forever. Applications are due now for the next year, and not only the summer, which means that travel could happen next January.
- CGSM and CGSD's have been declared, but there will not be an announcement from the institution until they are announced by the agencies.
- Q: Have there been any considerations for those towards the end of their research who are dependent on in-person interviews?
 - o A: There are exceptions being made for some research that is ongoing. All students are being encouraged to work with their supervisors if they are affected by research curtailment. There is an expedited review underway to shift in-person research to an online survey format or ZOOM format, depending on what is needed. With respect to those nearing completion, CoGS and G&PS have recommended priority investment to students who are at a crucial point in degree completion, in order to move forward. An announcement is expected by Friday and if not, at the VPRI town hall on Wednesday. Students are encouraged to seek out Ethics – they are mobilized and ready to create adaptations to get online if there is research that needs to go that way.

Office of Research Services: <https://ors.ok.ubc.ca/>

The Dean added that supervisors and committees are being highly recommended to be compassionate and forgiving regarding data collection and thesis defences. Even without a full data set, students may be able to go forward and defend, and complete research later for a peer reviewed paper.

Office of the Vice-Principal, Research & Innovation website: <https://research.ok.ubc.ca/>

6. Communications Survey – Jenn Jakobi

The Dean asked Council members for feedback on communications from CoGS during COVID-19:



- Prefer transparency with more frequent but shorter emails
- Request to keep website up-to-date
- Value 'searchable' email subjects to help sift through inbox
- Acknowledge the challenges with communications overload from many sources – UBC-O, UBC-V, IH, Government
- Request to add ongoing financial information and updates to emails, such as linked website at the bottom of messages

7. Daycare – Jenn Jakobi

The Dean explained that CoGS is looking into alternative options for childcare on campus, depending on how/when the return to school happens or childcare centres re-open. The alternative solution would not be regulated daycare, but would be something like a day/summer camp. Would this be worthwhile for graduate students?

The consensus from GSAC members was that summer camps for older children would be appreciated, but regulated childcare is still required, especially for younger children.

8. March 6 Extraordinary meeting – review

The Chair and GSAC members who were in attendance at the March 6 meeting discussed how bias was addressed by the presenters in regards to teaching evaluations. Members did not feel that the answers that were provided regarding bias were sufficient for the level of concern. Paul Shipley has since followed up with them with feedback on the presentation.

There have been no ICI building updates reported since the meeting.

Members inquired about the status of course evaluations for WT2. The Chair clarified that the institution has removed course evaluations for WT2 due to COVID-19. The Dean added that this was discussed at Deans Council and it was determined that no formal evaluations will be released. Instructors do still have the opportunity to send out surveys for course feedback.

9. Revisions to GSAC Terms of Reference – Paul Shipley, Discussion

Paul presented a potential solution for membership terms for GSAC, to align with the IKBSAS split and optimize graduate student representation

Current membership allocates two representatives per department/unit of IKBSAS, two for Engineering, two each for HES, Social Work, and Nursing, and two for FCCS. This allocation does not reflect actual student head count in each department. The proposed membership attempts to balance membership with the student body and is organized by Faculty, plus IGS:



Education – One representative

Engineering – Two representatives

Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences – One representative

Faculty of Creative and Critical Studies – One representative

Faculty of Health and Social Development – Two representatives

Faculty of Science – Two representatives

Management – One representative

IGS – Two representatives

Member provided the following feedback:

- Higher number of GSAC representatives (such as including a Vice position) may help with attendance, in case members are not able to make every meeting
- Suggestion to look at types of graduate students rather than population: such as international student representation, students with disabilities, etc, to reflect the varying needs of different students
- Concern that with two representatives for FHSD, for example, one school would not be represented (Either HES, Nursing, or Social Work)
- Clarification that the vote for IGS representatives would be the responsibility of the IGS Program Committee
- Distributing representatives by Faculty rather than School or department, would require a different way of communicating information out to students (for example, if a representative from Nursing had to distribute communications to HES or Social Work)
- Suggestion to create a communication template or best practices for GSAC members to refer to when sharing Council updates
- Suggestion to develop a long-term strategy to use for assigning seats, eg. Percentage calculation if basing membership on student population

Members suggested referring to the UBCSUO or GSS membership models for examples of membership structure and incorporating diverse student populations. Camille Rousseau offered to share some resources after the meeting.

Paul suggested increasing representatives for each Faculty by one, based on the proposed model:

Education – Two representatives



Engineering – Three representatives

Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences – Two representatives

Faculty of Creative and Critical Studies – Two representatives

Faculty of Health and Social Development – Three representatives

Faculty of Science – Three representatives

Management – Two representatives

IGS – Three representatives

CoGS will continue to work on developing a new membership model based on feedback and will bring back to GSAC in May.

10. Other Business

None.

Meeting adjourned at 3:24 PM