



**GRADUATE STUDENT ADVISORY COUNCIL
MINUTES**

**Wednesday, September 23, 2020
2:00 pm – 4:00 pm / ZOOM**

Meeting commenced at 2:03 pm

All members introduce themselves.

1. CoGS Staff Update – Deanna Roberts

Deanna reported that a new Dean of the College of Graduate Studies, Dr. Peter Simpson, has been hired as of July 1 for a five year term. Dean Simpson comes from Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies at Western University

CoGS front desk staff Sara McDonald has retired; Natalia Penuela Gallo, a recent Masters graduate, has been hired for reception.

A co-op student, Lark Spartin, has been hired until April to work with Haley Allen in communications, with a specialty in visual communication.

Deanna also reported that new graduate student orientation was held online this year, based on feedback from GSAC and new COVID requirements. A series of 12 workshops hosted by various campus partners were held between August 31 – September 4th and were attended by over 150 new graduate students.

UBC 501 was also created to familiarize graduate students with campus. This new canvas module is now available to all graduate students at any time, and will be updated and refined over the next several years based on student feedback.

UBC 501: <https://gradstudies.ok.ubc.ca/orientation2020/>

CoGS Staff Directory: <https://gradstudies.ok.ubc.ca/about/contact/>

2. UBCSUO – Guest: Ali Poostizadeh, SUO President

Ali Poostizadeh explained that the UBCSUO represented all undergraduate and graduate students on campus, providing services such as health and dental and student advocacy. A key goal of the UBCSUO is affordability, particularly in regards to graduate students, who represent 10% of the student population. UBCSUO aims to continue increased support of and engagement with graduate students and acknowledges the need for a greater graduate student voice on the Board. He reported that one key change this year will be to increase representation for graduate students in addition to the current representative Cassidy Wallis.

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



Cindy Pearson described the role of the Ombuds Office as a resource centre for students to find information and receive guidance for issues related to fairness and help navigating difficult situations. The office is confidential, impartial (does not advocate for individual students or the university), and independent.

Concerns brought to the office include parking issues, housing, grade appeals, supervisor conflicts, academic misconduct, and others. The office can assist students in exploring options, understanding policies, identifying next steps and making referrals. One main goal is to identify trends to make recommendations for systemic improvements. The most common situations are navigating appeal processes, and graduate student supervisory concerns.

The office is available full-time during the academic year and for eight weeks over the summer. Currently, students can contact via email or the online form for appointments. Support is available by phone, email, or ZOOM. <https://www.ubcsuo.ca/services-ombudsperson>

One future goal for the office is to address intercultural competencies, and cultural differences and conflict resolution, and hopefully create a resource available to graduate students and supervisors.

4. Graduate Council monthly update – Paul Shipley

Paul Shipley described the role of Graduate Council on campus.

The primary topic of discussion has been graduate student funding and employment during COVID, particularly for students currently outside of Canada who are not legally able to access typical GRA funding. GRA assistance in the form of a stipend is being proposed as a way for faculty to pay their students, and will go into student accounts to cover tuition and fees. Communication regarding the GRA stipend will be available soon.

TA and GRA positions not related to thesis work are not possible.

Workshops are moving online and will be similar to last year. The Cultural and Social Awareness Credential Program is now approved and CoGS will be promoting it over the next few weeks. This program is an official UBC recognized micro-credential composed of eight workshops that graduate students can take and receive a certificate of completion for. Updates and links to the credential program will be available soon.

Paul also reported that the Graduate Community Facilitator program has now been renewed for 2020/21; and that the Online Learning Coach program has two graduate student coaches available who are specifically assigned to help graduate students with online learning. More information: <https://students.ok.ubc.ca/academic-success/learning-hub/online-learning-coaches/>

Members asked about the expectations of communicating GSAC business with peers in each program. C. Wallis suggested contacting the program's administrative unit, informing them of their roles and asking to access the student list to send out an



introductory message. Paul Shipley also suggested cohort building via ProSem courses.

CoGS will be distributing a welcome message to all graduate students informing them of their campus representatives for GSAC, Community Facilitators, Graduate Student Senators, and Learning Coaches.

5. CoGS Program and Curriculum Committee, Graduate Student Representative – Paul Shipley

P. Shipley explained the role of the CoGS Program and Curriculum Committee and requested nominations for a graduate student representative. Gabriel Dix agreed to fill the position; Marissa to follow up with details.

6. Process for other committee member selection

GSAC members discussed crafting a campus-wide call-out for representatives to fill the graduate community positions available on GSAC – Aboriginal students, Disabled students, International students, and LGBTQ* students. CoGS will distribute a student email and also reach out to relevant offices on campus for nominations.

New members will be voted on by GSAC at the October meeting.

7. Other Business

None.