



**GRADUATE STUDENT ADVISORY COUNCIL  
MINUTES**

**Wednesday, January 27, 2021  
2:00 pm – 4:00 pm / ZOOM**

**Meeting commenced at 2:01 pm**

**All members introduce themselves.**

**Welcome to new Graduate Community Facilitators!**

- 1. Health and Wellness: Graduate student supports, services and barriers** -Sophie Vinette, Counsellor; Jean Bryans, Nurse; UBCO Health and Wellness

Jean Bryans provided an overview of the health clinic at UBCO. Due to the pandemic the clinic is not as busy as usual, but students are asked to call ahead when possible and are still able to schedule in person visits. The clinic is currently open year round Monday – Friday, 9 am – 4 pm with plans to include evenings and possibly weekend hours in the fall. Service is available for chronic illness, wound care, ordering bloodwork when students are away from their regular doctor, and reproductive health. Existing Canadian prescriptions are honored but they are not able to accept out of country prescriptions. Referrals are also possible when needed.

Sophie Vinette discussed counselling services available at the clinic including support with stress and anxiety, low mood or depression, safety around suicidal thoughts, burnout and relationship concerns. Graduate students in particular are navigating multiple demands with family, academics, finances, supervisors, and high workloads, as well as isolation and cultural factors. The clinic uses a step care model approach, consisting of an initial 30 – 60 minute meeting to prioritize top concerns, then follow up. The clinic also offers a variety of groups and workshops as well as tools and online resources. Service during the pandemic has been primarily delivered online. Individual short-term counselling is available. For longer-term support, the clinic can help with finding other resources through the student health plan and community.

GSAC members inquired if counselling is accessible for ESL students. Sophie confirmed that there is an international counsellor on staff, and several other staff members with different cultural backgrounds. The UBC Student Assistance Program (SAP) also allows students to request a counselor that speaks their language. This can be done online, phone, or in person depending on location and availability. Jean added that the health clinic now offers direct billing for iMed.



Currently, most student call backs happen same-day and same-day visits can be arranged if needed, or refer to hospital or urgent primary care centre when necessary. Counselling can currently accommodate same day visits for urgent cases and otherwise within a few days depending on the students' availability. An urgent spot is kept at the end of the day for counselling.

Students are encouraged to contact Sophie to provide feedback for services for graduate students. [Sophie.vinette@ubc.ca](mailto:Sophie.vinette@ubc.ca) or [healthwellness.okanagan@ubc.ca](mailto:healthwellness.okanagan@ubc.ca).

Phone: 250 807 9270. <https://students.ok.ubc.ca/health-wellness/counselling-mental-health/>

Kirthana added that the Interprofessional Clinic is also available and offers a free walk-in service of 30 min sessions for students and community members. Offer 3 – 5 sessions, can call or email and then login virtually. <https://psych.ok.ubc.ca/psychology-clinic/#contact>

The clinic does not explicitly offer alternative medicine or Indigenous practices in care, but students are assessed with a holistic perspective and there is limited access to referrals for those kinds of care. Counselling does have an Aboriginal counsellor available who also works with APS.

Counselling and physician services are not available to students who are currently out of country due to insurance liability, unless a specific professional has additional coverage. Requests will be answered to try and find support for that student closer to home.

## **2. Indigenous Strategic Plan** – Alex Ash, Indigenous Strategic Planning Manager; Vicki George, Associate Director

a. Indigenous Strategic Plan: [https://aboriginal-2018.sites.olt.ubc.ca/files/2020/09/UBC.ISP\\_C2V13.1\\_Spreads\\_Sept1.pdf](https://aboriginal-2018.sites.olt.ubc.ca/files/2020/09/UBC.ISP_C2V13.1_Spreads_Sept1.pdf)

Alex and Vicki offered a brief overview of the Indigenous Strategic Plan, which has been updated since the first Aboriginal Strategic Plan in 2009 and addresses the TRC, UNDRIP, and MMIWG that have come out since then. Engagement sessions began in 2019 with over 1200 participants from both campuses, and 1273 responses from the online survey, with a total outreach of approximately 15,000. The ISP was officially launched in September 2020.

UNDRIP: [https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2018/11/UNDRIP\\_E\\_web.pdf](https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2018/11/UNDRIP_E_web.pdf)

MMIWG: <https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/final-report/>

TRC: [https://nctr.ca/assets/reports/Final%20Reports/Executive\\_Summary\\_English\\_Web.pdf](https://nctr.ca/assets/reports/Final%20Reports/Executive_Summary_English_Web.pdf)

The plan is supported by a network of UBC Indigenous relationships, including: host nations of the lower mainland and Okanagan valley; indigenous peoples of BC; Canada and US border nations, Metis and Inuit, and international indigenous peoples from around the world.



A UBCO committee (IAC) is currently working on updating its terms and will do similar role to ISPIC (Vancouver) but for the Okanagan campus. A new committee, ISPEAC, will cross both campuses. The nomination process for ISPEAC will follow once IAC is confirmed, and will include both role based and some nominated positions.

This is the first of its kind for Indigenous strategic plan in Canada, and encourages accountability at all levels. An ISP website will be available closer to the spring, and they are working on piloting an implementation workshop series which should be finalized by late February/March.

Regarding the presidential task force on anti-racism, Vicki reported that the position of the ISP is that they are moving in the same direction and there is some overlap, the ISP has a specifically Indigenous lens and responds to colonialism and racism. It is distinct work. There are Indigenous staff members and students who are engaging and providing feedback to the task force.

[www.indigenous.ubc.ca](http://www.indigenous.ubc.ca)

### **3. Chair's Remarks**

Paul Shipley reported that 101 students have enrolled in the CASA credential. A second credential, on career and professionalization, is being approved and should be announced in the next few months for launch in May/June.

Graduate Council has approved a motion to amend the policy for committee membership from majority of UBC Okanagan faculty to at least two members from the Okanagan campus. DuoLingo and CAEL have been temporarily approved as a COVID measure for eligible English language proficiency tests for applicants for 2020/2021.

First-class GPA is no longer an eligibility requirement for the GDES for incoming students. This matches the current policy for UGFs.

### **4. UBCSUO Update – Cassidy Wallis**

Cassidy reported that the Graduate Student Committee has had their first two meetings and have identified a number of goals, including the creation and dissemination of a petition fighting for a minimum stipend package for doctoral students. They are asking for a minimum \$22,000 stipend/year for four years for doctoral students, which will match current funding at UBC-V.

SUO elections are upcoming and the nomination period opens February 1 – 12. All positions are available and graduate students are encouraged to run so that there can be a substantial voice for graduate students at the voting level of the SUO. The Graduate Representative Position (Cassidy's position) will also be open.



## 5. **Senate Update** – Riley Petillion

Riley reported that the AMS is petitioning UBC-V to discontinue the use of proctoring services as they are invasive for students and ineffective in addressing cheating. GSAC agreed that this also unfairly targets students who may not have a quiet or private space to work. A similar presentation will be given to UBC-O Senate Learning and Research committee next month. The AMS is suggesting instructor-centric solutions that focus on better exam writing and a stronger emphasis on academic misconduct.

## 6. **Graduate School Community modules on canvas** – Karin Wiebe

Karin presented challenges with hosting a place for graduate student community discussions in the Okanagan School of Education and petitioned members for ideas from other Faculties. What community modules are being used and are they active?

- HES reported using Canvas for posting events, workshops, talks, and credential programs. Email is used for communication between GSAC and the graduate student society.
- Psychology is creating a Canvas module to link students together, primarily as a way to build connections between students and facilitators without having to use email
- Social Work cohorts have created their own Facebook groups, or Discord servers

## 7. **English language proficiency requirements** – Kirthana Ganesh

Kirthana presented an overview to GSAC regarding TOEFL and IELTS exams, including what they measure, the testing process, marking rubric, cost burden, and English language testing as indicators of success. Based on the information presented, Kirthana advocated for the removal of English language testing as an application requirement for graduate school and solicited feedback from Council members.

GSAC members discussed the following:

- Alternative ways to evaluate language proficiency, including: interviews, personal statements, references, and research publications
- Make language testing a requirement after formal admission to graduate school, but not before. It was noted that international students already require testing for VISA applications. It was also noted that not all graduate programs would be able to fill vacant seats if students did not meet requirements after admission.
- Increased clarity in application process for proof of language of instruction
- Increased on-campus resources for English language assistance for graduate students
- More affordable and accessible English testing options
- Need for graduate students to have English proficiency in order to effectively TA and mentor the students that they are teaching
- Aligning goals with the anti-racism task force



- In-house English language proficiency tests

Interested members are invited to contact Kirthana for further discussion and input. Deanna Roberts suggested that members look at what other institutions may be doing that is different or novel for English language proficiency requirements.

#### **8. Other Business**

None.

**Meeting adjourned at 4:00 pm.**