

GRADUATE STUDENT ADVISORY COUNCIL

Minutes

Wednesday, April 26, 2023

2:00PM-4:00PM/ ZOOM

Attendees:

Adebayo, Miracle	X	Manrique Hernandez, Johanna Elizabeth	X	Shabir, Nadhiyya	R
Ahmad, Hammad	X	Monir, Rifah	R	Shatzko, Amanda	R
Awotwi-Pratt, Stephanie	X	Nunes, Helena	R	Shwed, Alanna	X
Ganesh, Kirthana	X	Paudel, Bhuwan	X	Wallace, Mandy	X
Huggins, Madison	X	Piva, Larissa	X	Wiebe, Karin	R
Jarry-Bolduc, Gabriel	R	Rempel, Kerry	X	Woolgar, Lucia	R
Kooijman, Allison	X	Rousseau, Camille	X	Yang, Shirley	X
Kumar, Manish	X	Sarkar, Debangsha	X	Zand Dizari, Nassim	X
Lewis, Jennifer	X	Singh, Shambhavi	X		
<i>Shiple, Paul</i>	X	<i>Roberts, Deanna</i>	X	<i>Jensen, Kendra</i>	X

Meeting started at 2:10pm

Chair's Remarks

Student leadership award – Currently drafting language and hope to send to Senate soon. This should be available next year.

CoGS is taking a solid step in our goal to having formal supervisor training rather than an occasional workshop. A grant application is being submitted to fund an initial information-gathering exercise of the current state of graduate student supervision on our campus. The grant will fund two graduate students to run and collect data from graduate student focus groups during the next year in order to identify key training opportunities. The framework of the supervisor training program will be build in parallel with this project.

There are upcoming changes to unpaid graduate student email. IT will be transitioning all unpaid graduate students from FASmail to their cwl@student.ubc.ca email account. This means that first.name@ubc.ca will only exist when an employee and will be discontinued when you are no longer an employee. You will always retain your student.ca email account. IT has created an email address for those who have questions about this: ubcograd.fasmail@ubc.ca.

There are a few staffing changes at the College of Graduate Studies:

Haley Oliver – Manager, Communications and Engagement has left her role.

Alicia Meehan – current Associate Director will be transitioning into Haley’s former role. As a result of these changes, there will be pauses on some projects while this transition occurs.

The College of Graduate Studies is currently in the process of approving 89 students for convocation in June, which is keeping our admissions team very busy.

The Chair asked if any members have any information on a “support our science” walkout on Monday.

Calls to Action to Enable Meaningful Implementation of the Accessible British Columbia Act (Kirthana Ganesh)

One of the graduate students on CSG spoke about the Disability Resource Centre as it relates to graduate students. There appears to be more payload for undergrads than graduate students. There are gaps in the way the DRC is currently operating. Most relevant to all but some very specific to graduate student experience. There has been some absence of accommodation for graduate students and these are falling through the cracks. There are a lot of areas where they need more support. If you would like to discuss this further, please reach out to Rachel Fortin at Rachel.Fortin@suo.ca.

A member shared how beneficial it could be if the Disability Resource Centre can be clear on what they can and cannot support. There may be certain situations in which DRC staff aren’t fully trained.

The DRC has two advisors who specialize in supporting graduate students. Some student experiences may better be directed to seek support from UBC Health and Wellness. The Chair is happy to advocate with the DRC.

The DRC offers a note-taking service and it was noted that there appears to be not enough note-takers available. It would be beneficial if note-taking services was more widely known across campus.

Members would like to invite Jason from the DRC to a future GSAC meeting to speak directly with graduate students to learn more of what needs students are facing.

One member shared that she’s heard of some students having overwhelming experiences trying to seek support from the DRC, whereby staff at the DRC don’t have certain training in order to respond in a supportive way. Some of these situations may best be re-directed to the Health and Wellness office.

Concerns for student behaviour towards teaching assistants (Shambhavi Singh)

Some members shared their experiences of being a TA and the poor behaviour and treatment they are subjected to from some students. Some TAs are concerned about aggressive behaviours towards them. It was suggested to speak with the professor/supervisor to collaborate on resolving these issues. Some students don’t know how to approach a TA when they have something they don’t agree with. One suggestion is for the instructor to clearly discuss the role and duties of the TA.



There is a lot of information provided during orientation and it is sometimes overwhelming. There is concern that holding workshops throughout the year is a challenge due to low attendance.

Some thoughts on providing information with new modules through Canvas is overwhelming. There was a suggestion of having a “point of contact” person to reach out to be walked through (someone to consult with). It’s a critical skill for a student to know how to approach a TA and faculty members. Just before mid-terms and other exams, you’re likely to catch a student who is headed towards a crisis and could be other steps of timing. Faculty can put quizzes on Canvas to draw students’ attention to behavioural issues.

Other suggestions are to have existing systems in place where TAs are able to re-direct students towards appropriate resources so when it comes to issues, it’s on the student to be pro-active and re-active. They could flag a student for inappropriate action and have them take a course.

Another member’s suggestion is to have a code of conduct in a syllabus with a list of TAs and what is expected in order to help those who want to know what’s expected. This should be outlined in the beginning of a course about what expectations are rather than have the TA mediate.

Orientation 2023 (Shambhavi Singh)

Visual artist work space accessibility issues (Larissa Piva)

One member shared that a number of Visual Arts students are disgruntled over the inaccessibility of the workshop and the campus which is located on Innovation Drive. Walking to campus is a challenge as some of the projects students have with them are large and sometimes heavy and cumbersome to carry any distance. Visual arts students work with a variety of materials and have found that it is limiting to build it and then bring it on campus as there is no storage as well as the distance from the studio to the campus. Some students have shared that they are feeling they can’t get the most out of their schooling with these challenges. Some suggestions in terms of funding and cost of materials is cost from local shops offering a discount; having graduate only days in the workshops so students can access the space and possibly providing a shuttle to help transport the materials/project to campus; provide better storage on campus and convert a classroom that’s not being used very often. Discussions on funding for some of these suggestions should be directed to the program.

Students Union Report

The Students Union is holding regular hours outside in the courtyard starting the second week of May (May 10), every Wednesday and there will be coffee and snacks. Looking for more students at large to join. Please share with graduate students in your schools and faculties. Members will receive \$50 for every meeting that is attended.

There was a meeting with the EDI office to discuss plans to start a recognition from faculty members who have incorporated EDI into their labs. Trying to make labs more inclusive and diverse. Someone from the EDI office will be reaching out to CoGS to attend a future GSAC meeting.



During the January GSAC meeting, Food Services guest spoke of more food options with better hours and quality. The Chair will follow up on this.

A member spoke of the \$5 meal that used to be offered at the Sunshine cafe. It's been closed down now and will not be offering this again due to budget. This will have an impact on food security for students. Summer options are very limited as well. Some feel that food services seems to be geared more towards undergrads in terms of operating hours.

There was a discussion on the continued challenges with space availability for graduate students.

Report from Senate

No report.

Other Business

None.

Meeting adjourned at 4:00pm