

## **GRADUATE STUDENT ADVISORY COUNCIL**

### **NOTES**

**May 24th, 2023**

**2:00-4:00pm / ZOOM**

**Attendees:** Paul Shipley, Deanna Roberts, Rifah Rafia Monir, Nassim Zand, Stephanie Awotwi-Pratt, Allison Koojiman, Camille X. Rousseau, Shambhavi Singh, Karin Weibe, Miracle Adebayo, Hammad Ahmad, Alanna Shwed, Amanda Shatzko, Shirley Yang, Kirthana Ganesh, Bhuwan Paudel

### **1. Chair's Remarks**

Paul –

Paul will be working with the grad orientation team on adding respectful workplace and anti-racism education as part of either the orientation event or the UBC 501 online orientation for graduate students. Paul will also connect with the Student Academic Success Committee about the student code of conduct and whether it is institution-wide or specific to the Vancouver campus.

Food services updates: Hours have been extended so that there is 8-8 coverage. \$5 lunch option was supported by a funded program. The funding has run out, so it has had to be discontinued.

Accessibility: Jason Taylor, Accessibility Advisor and Liaison with the College of Graduate Studies from the Disability Resource Centre will come so that we can continue our discussions around accessibility with his input and contributions.

IGS updates: The Urban and Regional Studies Theme is suspending admissions for the September 2024 admission cycle. A new theme on Indigenous Knowledge has been approved at the Senate level.

The Master of Design program is being reviewed at Ministry. The review panel did a site visit last week. The initial impression of the visit was quite positive, so there is a reasonable chance that this program could be approved.

CoGS people update:

Alicia Meehan is now the CoGS Manager of Communications & Engagement

Laura Bissell is now the CoGS Associate Director of Admission & Records

Hiring for both the receptionist and training lead positions are underway

### **2. The ongoing struggles of IGS students regarding their working space (Nassim Zand)**

Nassim – I made a form to survey IGS grad students about their space. I have had a struggle to have my own desk. Eight students participated. Questions were about current space and desired space.

Some responses to the survey:

- changing desks daily is not conducive to learning

- inequitable (windows, size, location, etc.)
- Always have to carry my heavy backpack looking for a spot
- meeting rooms always booked
- International students cannot apply for as much funding, usually living under such pressure and are limited on resources to create a home working space.

As a TA and RA you are expected to be working on campus. You need a private space to meet with students, to grade, to quietly work.

I want to advocate, especially for international students.

Stephanie – Not having space, I feel excluded. When I have sat somewhere for a period of time, people get territorial and want space. I end up working at home a lot as I don't have a space on campus. Adds to not feeling part of campus. No community. I can use professor's office, but this is their space and they are often using it. I am disappointed by lack of support given by campus.

Rifah – I second what Stephanie said. Very uncomfortable to work at shared space. Small cubical. Two proper desks taken by those who arrive early. This shouldn't exclude me from being able to work in a comfortable space.

Bhuwan – the day I joined this committee we had this discussion. Do we have any data on how many spaces were added?

Paul – Planning came to us and had a plan for creating more efficient space. Only faculty that did renovations to add space was Science.

Bhuwan – students should have assigned desks. They are doing the work. The faculty should be responsible, but we have to push. Otherwise, there is no point in adding more students.

Paul – Some departments take this seriously, others do not. We are spreading the message. We all have to continue to do so.

Nassim – Not just having a designated desk, but having a quality designated desk with window, not stuck in a small desk in a corner. Not just quantity – about quality as well.

Kirthana – Psychology head put out a call to students to see who was open to sharing their desk. Those who were open to it, sat with other students to agree on desk use time.

Stephanie – there are so many IGS students and so many themes. There is more of a territorial feel.

Paul – I will raise this at the next IGS Program Committee meeting.

### **3. Graduate student accessibility and accommodations (Jason Taylor, DRC, 2:30, attachment included)**

The DRC has a student-initiated model. Students identify and register using medical documentation. Intake considers documentation, impacts, program requirements and consideration of how to remove barriers.

As Liaison Advisor for graduate students, most of students I see come to me in crisis because they try and get through their degree without declaring their disability and have fallen behind, or communication with

supervisor has broken down and they come to DRC to salvage relationship and program. DRC meet with supervisor, faculty and student. LR7 is the Policy we use to address disabilities and meet students where they are at. Create accommodations appropriate to each individual student.

Registration can take 2-4 weeks. Encourage students to register before crisis. Even if they think they will never need support.

Paul – How are accommodations around working in research environment different from academic?

Jason – Students can have impacts around executive function, organizing or other areas. We work with faculty members and the Centre for Scholarly Communication on things like completing reports and research papers related to lab work. We help to lay out reasonable timelines and expectations (work hours, medication impacts, extended completion times.)

Stephanie – Are there temporary accommodation supports (pregnancy or councilor recommendation, etc). available?

Jason – We consult with faculty around program specifics and learning objectives. Accommodation decisions are made by DRC. Pregnancy isn't a disability. For temporary illness (ie. Broken arm) the student should reach out to faculty member. For an illness or injury that lasts more than four months (rehab, supports) the DRC can work with them.

Paul – New policy that allows eight-weeks of leave whereby you maintain student status. Student Parental Accommodation Policy: <https://gradstudies.ok.ubc.ca/policies-procedures/registration-records/#item6>

Nassim – If a student asks for help, they should be aware of policies that can support them.

Paul – I will ensure this gets communicated out to faculties again.

Bhuwan – if a student takes leave and they are international, do they have to leave the country?

Paul – GEO has a graduate student advisor and they can provide advice.

Camille – Do you provide support for students once they move on into professional positions in academia or beyond?

Jason – My role is only a year old. I haven't had connection with grad students on how to navigate post-student life. Important conversation, but this does not currently fall under the mandate of the DRC.

Alison – With respect to funding and access to academic positions, I'm curious about funding allocations for students with disabilities. What is available? Are students with disabilities winning grants? Would be good to have a baseline with stats.

Paul – We don't have the data to find out. I can say we have extended funding for students with disabilities in the past. If a student isn't funded because their program has been extended, that is not equitable and we will fight for funding. We did put in a funding request for money to support students with disabilities and this was not granted.

Jason – email [Jason.taylor@ubc.ca](mailto:Jason.taylor@ubc.ca) if you have questions.

#### **4. Creation of Academic Prizes for Graduate Students from Each Department or Program (Rifah Rafia Monir)**

Rifa – Undergrad students have several prizes for recognition of excellence, sadly, there isn't a lot of these for graduate students. For us, there is only the Governor General's Gold Medal. One master's student and one PhD student. I think each department should have one to recognize graduate students.

Paul – there are a few different graduate student awards: <https://gradstudies.ok.ubc.ca/tuition-awards-and-finance/award-opportunities/>

Rifa – Are there specific departmental awards for academic excellence?

Paul – There are few awards based on academics, as many programs do not require coursework and the academic experience is so varied.

Camille – The School of Education offers several academic success graduate awards.

Paul – The route forward is through the programs themselves.

Nassim – I have concerns about this kind of award based on differing grading criteria I have seen. Would it be fair to be evaluated by the number of A+'s?

Stephanie – My worry, even with other applications, if there is merit-based scholarship, student's will feel that their worth is attached to that and could impact their mental health. I would prefer if students are individually supported through appropriate funding.

Paul – I don't see this as an option for IGS. Too few courses, too diverse of courses. There are other programs, like math, that might be a good fit.

#### **5. Graduate Supervision Recognition Consultation (Jannik Eikenaar, 3:00)**

Two drivers for this. Kirthana suggested that our campus should be recognizing graduate student excellence, particularly around inclusiveness. Secondly, in the fall, we are planning a number of inclusive excellence recognitions. I would like to be able to recognize supervisors who are leading the way in Equity, Diversity and Inclusion. My preference is that this not be competitive, but that students bring forward nominations and we celebrate many individuals, not just one. I want to get your perspective on how to do this well. Are there criteria or factors you would like us to consider? How should recognition unfold?

Nassim – Some supervisors have multiple students, some have less. Would this affect their eligibility?

Jannik – I don't think the number of students being supervised should be a criterion.

Allison – I would see this supporting culture change and how you do that meaningfully? Could we think about this through a different lens? How is this heart-centred? How does this change lives?

Jannik – I think having this as a student-nominated recognition will help with this.

Stephanie – I am excited about this. I was part of the Anti-racism Taskforce. I am the person I am today because of some of my supervisors. I think a student on the selection committee is a must. Maybe showing longevity (undergrad to grad to beyond support of students). Embedding some of the Anti-racism Taskforce

initiatives in the criteria and how the supervisor emulates the desired qualities. How are they helping student to translate knowledge from academia to the real world?

Camille – How are we defining inclusive excellence? Are students able to self-define this? There is an argument for doing this or not. When you ask students to nominate, you may be putting students in an uncomfortable position as it means they have to self-identify. Be mindful of the language we choose. I want to understand what is the attraction of the award for the supervisor?

Kirthana – In terms of making award meaningful and making the nomination process accessible, there has to be an opportunity for the student to share stories.

Allison – Is there a sweet-spot in recognizing the team and not just the supervisor? Might that attend to some of the risks with respect to identification or exploitation?

Jannik – Interesting comment. I don't want this to be a recognition of an individual in their content area. We want to recognize the impact. Maybe this is the way.

Paul – Inherent power differential between supervisor and student. There is a lot of power in being recognized for EDI in TriAgency applications. I fear supervisors putting pressure on students.

Allison – recognizing the student with the supervisor may alleviate this.

Jannik – We try to go into this kind of work in good faith, but we are also aware of the possibility for misuse. This will be something we consider as we develop criteria and process. We want to clarify the value of the recognition and the potential for misuse. I will draft criteria and process and then bring these back to GSAC in the fall.

Miracle – Will this be campus-wide or assigned to each faculty?

Jannik – undetermined right now.

## **6. Students' Union Report**

Kirthana has completed her role with the Student's Union.

Paul encourages anyone on this Committee to put their name forward.

There is a post on Instagram with details.

## **7. Report from Senate**

Amanda – Just had final meeting for the year and end of the Triennium. Done for the summer. Intake of new student senators.

When students graduate, there is a policy that says you cannot alter your regalia. Caps are given to students. Indigenous students have asked for permission to pick up caps early and bead them for graduation. Permission has been granted. We will now be looking at policy for other such requests for cultural inclusion in the celebration.

If anyone has questions about policies, we have a lot of working committees. If you want amendments, bring these up in future meetings and I can bring them to the appropriate committee.

## **8. Other Business**

Nassim – some students have struggled with benefits as RAs and TAs. Could we have some workshops at the start of semester to refer to and learn more about how to read the contract and be aware of benefits.

Paul – I'll dig into this.

Camille – School of Education recently got an email about the ability to extend your `firstname.lastname@ubc.ca` email, but it seems this is no longer an option.

Deanna – IT only offered this extension to a select number of individuals based on their use. One benefit of the `CWL@student.ubc.ca` email is that it will automatically transition to your `CWL@alumni.ubc.ca` email, so you won't lose any of your messages. Currently, when you are no longer employed, you lose your `firstname.lastname@ubc.ca` email

Kirthana – one issue with the `@student` email is storage capacity.

Deanna – I will raise this at my next meeting with IT.

Meeting adjourned: 3:55 pm.