



GRADUATE STUDENT ADVISORY COUNCIL
AGENDA
January 10, 2024
2:00-4:00pm / ZOOM

Attendees:

Adebayo, Miracle		Harper, Breanne		Sandler, Michael	
Ahmad, Hammad	X	Heth, Zach	X	Sharma, Akshta	X
Al Barazi, Mariam	X	Khattar, Nataasha	X	Shatzko, Amanda	
Awotwi-Pratt, Stephanie	X	Kizza, Ronald	X	Shwed, Alanna	X
Conneely, Ryan		Kooijman, Allison	X	Singh, Shambhavi	X
Crawford, Carolyn	X	Manrique Hernandez, Johanna	X	Wiebe, Karin	X
Desai, Anajali	X	Monir, Rifah Rafia		Yang, Shirley	
Gnyawali, Kaushal	X	Morshedzadeh, Yenganeh	X		
Shiple, Paul	X	Roberts, Deanna		Bissell, Laura	

Meeting started at 2:02pm

1. Chair’s Remarks

The Thesis and Dissertation Embargo Policy has undergone a significant update. Previously, students could apply for a one year embargo, followed by a potential one year extension.

The policy has been modified so that it is possible to continue applying for extensions if warranted.

The UBC Okanagan Robison Award has received approval, specifically catering to students with disabilities who have a specific accommodation for additional time to complete their academic programs through the Disability Resource Centre.



The UBC Okanagan Graduate Dean's Student Leadership Award is set to launch, with the first submission deadline on Feb 26th, 2024. The application process involves filling out a straightforward form designed for ease and efficiency. Successful applicants will be eligible for a \$500 award. Everyone is encouraged to apply – see link below.

[\(https://gradstudies.ok.ubc.ca/resources/award-opportunities/ubc-okanagan-graduate-deans-student-leadership-award/\)](https://gradstudies.ok.ubc.ca/resources/award-opportunities/ubc-okanagan-graduate-deans-student-leadership-award/)

2. Campus Planning Update – See attachment (Madeleine Zammar)

Madeline Zammer was a guest at this week's meeting to introduce and build awareness around the Campus Plan and to share and collect feedback from Graduate students. The Campus Plan is the key land use policy and physical plan for the campus. It looks at the long-term vision for our campus and serves as a tool to guide future campus growth. Highlights were as follows:

- Housing and Campus Experience
- Parking and Transportation
- Indigenous Relations
- Diverse and Equitable spaces
- Climate Action
- Integrating New Emerging Priorities
- Integrating campus growth with the growth of Kelowna
- Future timelines for the Campus Plan



The main purpose of this engagement was to introduce the seven emerging themes and discuss community values with Graduate Students, as most of the students they hear from or engage with are Undergraduate Students. There will be a follow up survey going out sometime between Jan 22nd –Feb 9th with questions to help gauge student satisfaction with the chosen emerging themes and how they rank in terms of importance. There will also be an open house on January 23rd, 2024 at the Administration Foyer from 11:30pm-1pm, everyone was encouraged to come.

Please see the attached Slideshow for more detailed information.

Open discussions were had on a variety of topics including:

Diverse and Inclusive Spaces:

Concerns were raised about the availability of spaces for Black students, prompting a proactive conversation around fostering more inclusive environments on campus. The university has engaged with the Equity and Inclusion office to address these concerns. Recognizing the significance of how individuals perceive the campus as a communal gathering space, efforts are being made to enhance the overall experience for everyone.

Climate Action and Sustainability:

Adapting to the evolving climate, particularly the increasing heat in the Okanagan region, needs to be a priority for the campus. The need for additional sun shelters is recognized to ensure that outdoor spaces remain enjoyable and accessible. Specific areas like ponds, utilized for outdoor classes, and the back woods area, used for adventure therapy, were listed as the only current usable outdoor spaces during the hot summer months. Contingency plans



are also under development to address challenges such as smoky conditions when it might be safer for students to stay indoors or refrain from coming to school. The Sustainability Office is actively working on establishing a comprehensive framework to guide future planning in response to these climate-related concerns.

Family Housing:

Addressing the challenge of finding suitable housing for students and their families on our campus is a recognized concern. The current campus plan is actively examining this issue, drawing inspiration from Vancouver's existing model. The possibility of establishing a Graduate-specific housing unit is being explored as part of the strategy. By studying approaches implemented on other campuses, the university aims to identify effective solutions that cater to the current housing needs of both current and future students.

Transit:

Concerns were raised about the bus schedules remaining unchanged over the past few years despite a significant increase in the student population. The university acknowledges this issue and is actively advocating for more accessible transit options for students. While challenges with the current transit yard are acknowledged, there is hope for improvements by 2030. Additionally, discussions are underway to rethink the transit exchange in Rutland, potentially bringing positive changes within the next two years. The idea of a multi-floor parking building is being considered, but the timing for financially backing such a substantial project poses challenges that require careful consideration.

Student Spaces



Graduate students express a need for more dedicated spaces to work, both informally and through bookable spaces. There's a call for larger venues for events, as the current reliance on the ballroom exclusively diminishes its novelty over time. The request extends to include additional outdoor spaces to cater to diverse preferences (table tennis, a pool, a larger gym) and needs. The aim is to provide grad students with a more versatile and appealing environment for their work and events.

3. Discontinued Letter – Eng. Graduate Students Society (Kaushal)

The issue revolves around the distribution of Employment Letters, which are currently provided to those who qualify. However, a complication arises with Graduate Research Assistantships (GRAs), as they are not employment, they are scholarships. GRAs cannot be included in Employment Letters as employment, as they were not structured as or taxed as employment. This creates challenges for students attempting to verify employment, leading to application denials. On the other hand, Graduate Academic Assistantships (GAAs) are acknowledged as employment and continue to be included in Employment Letters. Unfortunately, there isn't a foreseeable solution moving forward, as using award funds to represent employment is considered fraudulent.

4. Other Business

PhD Student – Continuing Fee:



There is a concern regarding International PhD students who, after passing the full year mark, are not eligible for a reduced tuition (continuing fee) similar to domestic students. The issue will be raised in upcoming meetings to explore the possibility of extending this benefit to international PhD students as well.

Food Facility Hours:

The average time for classes to conclude, often around 6:30 pm, poses a challenge as it is not aligned with the operational hours of on-campus food facilities, with most closing at 4 pm. Recognizing this discrepancy, there is a need to address and improve the availability of food options on campus to better accommodate students with classes ending later in the evening. This issue will be a focus for future improvements.

Meeting adjourned at 3:39pm