GSS Council Minutes
Thursday, April 2nd 2015 | GSS Ballroom | 5:30 pm

Present: Alison McAfee, Andrea Jones, Antoine Ponsard, Behzad Shoolestani, Chen Vu, Christopher Roach, Coco Tang, Colúm Connolly, Daniel Wood, Ehsan Espid, Elizabeth Bulaeva, Eric Becklin, Eva Choi, Grant Tran, Harry Li, Jennifer Campbell, Julienne Jagdeo, Kathryn Knudson, Kevin Mehr, Kreso Sola, Krish Maharaj, Mary-Anne Shonoda, Min Xia, Mirza Sarwar, Nayantara Duttachoudhury, Nicholas Dawson, Patrick Lo, Raphael Roccor, Rebecca Sherbo, Sarah Simon, Sarah Fernando, Shona Robinson, Susan Song, Tobias Friedel, Naila Kuhlmann (proxy for Vivian Lam), Xun Zhou, Yulia Merkulova.


Absent: Chhavi Tripathi, Gianluca Oluic, Guillaume Beaulieu-Houle, Luz Angelica Caudillo-Mata, Olenka Forde, Suzie Maginley, Tahara Bhave, Victoria Belahov, Vinodha Chetty.

Chair: Abdul Alnaar

Guests:
Mark Wellington, GSS General Manager;
Neal Yonson, GSS Policy Researcher;
Karen Leung, GSS Communications and Marketing Director.

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A. Call to Order and Adoption of the Agenda

The meeting was called to order at 6:15 pm.

1. BIRT the agenda be adopted as presented.

   MOVER: Kevin Mehr             SECONDER: Harry Li

   MOTION PASSES
   35/0/0

B. Introductions

C. Council Motions

2. Student Senators to the Faculty of Graduate and Post-Doctoral Studies

   WHEREAS no graduate student ran for the two Faculty of Graduate and Post-Doctoral Studies senator seats.

   BIRT the GSS appoints Sarah Simon, Nick Dawson as Faculty of Graduate and Post-doctoral studies student senator.

   Motivation
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Colum: student senators are responsible for all academic matters, including admissions, awards and scholarships, approval of new courses and programs, examination policies, and curriculum changes. Senate starts work in a couple of weeks. It is important to appoint new representatives now, so they have time to look at the committees to join.

Chair: nominations are open. Anybody who wishes to run for the position, please take a seat in the front row.

Point of information: what is a required time commitment?
Julienne: minimum of 5 hours per month to attend Senate and committee meetings; read related documents, etc. Very welcome to spend a lot more time.

Point of information: give an overview of the process?
Chair: each candidate will be given two minutes to present their platform followed by q&a. A couple of letters of intent to be read out to Council. Will start with introductions — name and department.

Candidates [present]: Sarah Simon, Chemistry; David Choy, Experimental Medicine; Nick Dawson, Experimental Medicine, Amin Nouri, Chemical and Biological Engineering, Zarina Giannone, Counselling Psychology;

Point of information: are there more applicants, and if they are in the room?
Colum: there are three more applicants who could not make it to the meeting. They were notified of date and time of the meeting.

Campaigning

Sarah: departmental representative for Chemistry at the GSS Council. As a Councillor sat on different committees: House Finance, Executive Oversight, Code and Policy, etc. Also a member of the Faculty of Science Council, Panel on Supervision, and executive positions for chemistry and biochemistry student societies. Will be able to provide strong assistance given the experience and knowledge of grad issues. Main goal is to create policies on the student–supervisor relationships. Create "a contract" between supervisor and a student to keep both sides accountable. Another goal is to open discussion on mental health and well-being of the students. Will continue to work closely with GSS.

David: from the department of Experimental Medicine, microbiology immunology. From his experience, there is a gap between doing research and getting a job. Students want to be able to find one when they are done with their degree which is extremely difficult nowadays. If elected will help develop and push for programs in student career and professional development. These programs are run by Grad Council, through Senate Caucus. Have no experience working with both bodies, but have a strong platform and will advocate for more funding and scholarships, and for Public Scholar Initiative.

Nick: 6th year at UBC, seat on Council since February 2015. Have experience working in leadership roles: chairing committees, involved in re-structuring of CFRI programs. Focus on two main things: advocacy for minimum stipends, and bringing the concerns over student–supervisor relationships to the Senate.
Amin: from Chemical Engineering. There are two issues why have decided to run. The first reason is to improve the quality of teaching by empowering teaching assistants at the University through the special training. The second is to improve access to scientific information. Met students who did not know how to do research or make proper citations. Have experience as teaching assistant for a number of laboratory, science and senior engineering courses both at UBC and SFU. Will advocate for specific training, peer-learning as well as training as to management skills to enhance the quality of teaching at UBC. Planning to join Library committee to help work on using different research engines, online resources, etc., make sure UBC Library has the means to do so.

Zarina: withdraws her candidacy due to time commitment.

Note: Chair read out candidates’ letter of intent.

**Letter from Rohit Singla**

My name’s Rohit Singla, and I am emailing you to express my interest in one of the two Faculty of Graduate and Post Doctoral Studies Student Senator Positions.

Throughout my life, I have strived to better my community, my peers and myself.

Over the course of my BASc at UBC, I had the pleasure of exploring leadership roles on and off campus. I worked to maintain the breadth and depth of my involvement, representing UBC and the Faculty of Engineering at events like Shad Valley, Destination UBC, Imagine Day, and the SPUR festival, a national festival of politics, arts and ideas. I worked to grow with others through leadership, serving as an undergraduate teaching assistant, leading as part of UBC Orbit, a nano satellite design team, and coaching the high school team I once played for – not only consistently winning in a competitive league, and more importantly helping over 10 students go onto university with football scholarships in hand. At present, I am co-president of the Technology in Medicine Club where I aim to connect young doctors with young engineers; hoping to bridge the gap between the invariability of medicine and the ingenuity of engineering.

With my engineering background and leadership experience, I feel I am a strong candidate for a student senator position. As a senator, I would aim to

* improve the integration of technology in the class room through better discussion systems
* reduce the stress on and improve the mental health of students via changing the definition of exam hardship and improving instructor coordination on midterm exams
* further the availability of scholarships and awards available to students

As such, I have an interest in joining the Student Awards and Curriculum Committees.

Thank you for taking the time to read my platform. I look forward to hearing back from you and the GSS. If you would like further information, my contact information is below.

Sincerely,
Rohit Singla

**Letter from Jessica Wong**

My name is Jessica Wong and I am a first year MSc student in the Computer Science department. I am interested in becoming one of the Faculty of Graduate & Post Doctoral Studies Student Senators.

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I did my undergrad here at UBC in the Computer Science and Microbiology and Immunology program and have been involved in the UBC community in various aspects. I have been a MUG leader on Imagine Day, a MISA peer tutor for BIOL 112, a Wellness Peer for two years, and I volunteered on various committees in the Computer Science department. UBC is a great school to be at and I have enjoyed my time here as both a student and as a teaching assistant. I have been a teaching assistant for six semesters now and now that I have experienced both sides of the learning environment here, I realize what a big impact program changes and academic policies can make to the whole education experience. Having focused on enhancing education on both the individual, and department level, I wish to now try to make a difference on the school wide level. The curriculum of a program, the academic policies that govern our degree, and the way that material is taught is what separates students from enjoying their time at school from having to tediously trudge through it for the end goal of a degree. UBC works hard to try and ensure that its students will enjoy their time here and I would like to be a part of that effort.

Thanks,
Jessica

Letter from Parker Jobin

Fellow councilors, I am nominating myself for Student Senator. For those who don’t know me I am the super tall red head councilor from the MD/PhD program. I’d first express my regrets for not making the session thanks to prior plans for the weekend. Second I’ll try to convince you to vote for me as one of your representatives. To get on your good side I’ll keep it short and sweet so everyone can get home as quickly as possible. As this is the senate we’re talking about I’ll lay out some ideas for my platform that I think many of you’ll agree with.

1. Graduate student funding: Following the leads of previous senators, I will work to guarantee minimum stipends for all graduate students. If last month’s GGS Annual General Meeting was any indication we need to advocate for funding where we can get it. Working with the senate budget committee is one way I hope to facilitate that for UBC graduate students.

2. Graduate student rights: If elected, I intend to work for you. That means holding the University accountable for student rights and that you build your awareness of your rights. Specifically, I hope to work with current senators including Eric Zhao to strike a task force to push UBC to take leadership on student rights, ensuring the GSS and you are represented among the AMS, UBC ombuds, and the Senate Appeals Committees. The ultimate goal is the eventual formation of a student rights charter, a policy document already possessed by other university’s like McGill.

3. Graduate student mental health & wellbeing: UBC is your home to study. Thus I will be dedicated to work for a better experience by helping ensure academic policies are designed with your mental health in mind. One example of this will be focusing exploring the implementation of a fall reading break which potentially could relieve student stress. This would entail student surveying and analysis of access to counseling services at different times during the term. Another issue is the student–supervisor relationship, one that I hope to affect by working with the mental health ad hoc committee using student feedback.

If you like the cut of my jib please vote for me, I hope graduate students continue to be heard at every level of administration in UBC. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Chair: nominations are closed now.

Questions&Answers

Daniel: are questions addressed to all candidates?
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Chair: yes, each candidate has 1 minute to answer.

Chris: which committees are you planning to join?

Amin: Library and Teaching committees to empower teaching assistants.
Nick: Academic Policy to discuss supervision.
David: committees regarding Public Scholar Initiative and development of student engagement.
Sarah: committees involving discussion of supervisor–student relationships, Teaching & Learning committee, ad hoc committees.

Julienne: how do you plan to stay engaged with graduate student population?

David: through the events run by GSOs and GSS; attend all meetings at GSS. The biggest part of the role to report back to the GSS.
Nick: by attending GSS meetings, establish open dialogue with on- and off- campus organizations. Also through the Caucus meetings.
Amin: important to be in touch. There are events when lots of students are attending. Try to be present at those. Ask their recommendations and needs. Of course in cooperation with another student senator. As well as attending departmental events.
Sarah: pledge to attend every GSS Council meetings to continue maintaining the direct link between Senate and GSS, as well as in communication with AOs and grads through GSS newsletter send out bi-weekly.

Behzad: what do you base your platform on?

Amin: TA experience when grads did not know how to make citations. Students need to be aware of the online resources.
Nick: First, GSS Survey. It is unfair not to have a guaranteed minimum stipend when you work hard. Second, talked to current student senator of the responsibilities and topics to pursue.
David: from personal experience, it is hard to find a job. University has a huge pool of admin staff to support career development.
Sarah: Senate is currently revising the policies regarding mental health, so far has been going well. Also, current discussion on student–supervisor relationships.

Motion: to extend Q&A for 5 minutes.

MOVER: Daniel Wood  SECONDED: Min Xia

MOTION PASSES

Daniel: as any representative needs to be a good public speaker, do you have experience with external organizations?

Sarah: have a lot of experience – advocated for water conservation in Barriere as a city ambassador, represented the province, have speech-based awards.
Amin. Have been to several AMS clubs in the executive positions. Have experience of public speaking and will be able to handle workload. 
David: Have got experience through numerous meetings, clubs; primary as VP Finance at the Asian Club. 
Nick: Experience from previous work as a city advocate, also as a fundraiser for CFRI, GSOs and etc.

Chair: all voting Councillors will get a ballot to write down up to two names. A ballot which has been passed or exposed is considered void. Chair and assistant will collect the ballots.

Point of information: maximum two names may be written down on the ballot. Two candidates who received most of the votes will be appointed Senators. If a tie, goes to a second vote.

Chair: results were tallied. Sarah S. and Nick D. have got most of the votes.

Mover: Sarah Fernando 
Second: Eric Becklin 

Motion passes

3. Interim Financial and Executive Oversight Officer

BIRT the GSS appoints Charlie Deng as Interim Financial and Executive Oversight Officer (April – August 2015)

Tobias: nominate Sarah Simon.
Sarah: respectfully declined.
Colúm: nominate Charlie Deng.
Charlie: accepted.

Motivation

Charlie: thanked everyone. Ever since started at UBC, have attended many GSS events, appreciate the hard work. Trying to get more involved to ensure the Society can keep financial health going forward. As a partner of a small business has experience in finance and accounting. Helped several graduate student organizations like IGSN in the position of VP Finance to budget and keep efficient communication. Believe that the skills and experience will allow to achieve the goals.

Questions & Answers

Julienne: what is your plan in the position of Financial Executive Oversight Officer?
Charlie: practice guy – plan to facilitate effective communication, plan ahead for fiscal year.
Colúm: What will be the dynamic due to oversight of Execs?
Charlie: intend to become a facilitator. As long as we can keep communication, I don’t need to see or oversee. Pretty confident that can facilitate team work.
MOVER: Chris Roach         SECONDER: Sarah Simon

Daniel: really appreciate those students who put their names for the Senate.

MOTION PASSES

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D. Other Business and Notice of Motions

E. Adjournment

BIRT there being no further business the meeting be adjourned at 7:15 pm.

MOVER: Chris Roach         SECONDER: Sarah Simon

MOTION PASSES

Meeting is adjourned at 7:15 pm.