

As part of my report to AGM, I would like to highlight several accomplishments from this past year:

## **REPRESENTATION**

### **University Council on Athletics and Recreation**

A new oversight committee for Athletics and Recreation was established this year, which for the first time includes representatives from the AMS and SGPS to represent the interests of student fee-payers.

### **Teaching Fellows Policy and Representation**

At the request of the SGPS, Vice-Principal (Academic) Patrick Deane agreed that the SGPS would henceforth provide representation for Teaching Fellows on committees dealing with policies, pay and working conditions for Teaching Fellows. Details will be worked out in the coming weeks.

### **Senate Representation**

At the request of the SGPS, the Senate Operations Review Committee is currently reviewing the composition of the university Senate. They have agreed that Senate representation for faculty members and students should be based on full-time enrolment numbers by Faculty. This will result in the tripling of graduate student seats on Senate.

### **School of Graduate Studies and Research New Governance Structure**

The Senate approved a new governance structure for the School of Graduate Studies and Research. Beginning next year, the SGSR will be known as the School of Graduate Studies; the Graduate Council will be abolished; Graduate program representation will be based on Faculty rather than Graduate Divisions; and the new Graduate Executive Council will include two SGPS members, double the previous recommendation.

## **GRADUATE SCHOOL**

### **Graduate and Professional Student Funding Review**

The review of QGA funding policy was completed in December. At the insistence of the SGPS, it was agreed that there will be a regular review of QGA allocation policy.

### **International Graduate Student 5<sup>th</sup> Year Fees**

Last Spring, international PhD students at Queen's who qualified for tuition fee waivers were notified by the SGSR that the policy of charging them the domestic tuition fee rate in their fifth year and beyond would cease effective this past September. The SGPS succeeded in convincing the SGSR to reverse their decision for students in their fourth or later year who would be affected with little advance warning. We are attempting to reverse the decision for all continuing qualified students.

### **Graduate Enrolment Equity**

Given that programs to help recruit and retain students from underrepresented populations currently exist for undergraduate and professional students but not for graduate students, the Dean of Graduate Studies has agreed to begin analyzing enrolment trends in order to assess possible means for improvement.

## **PROFESSIONAL STUDENTS**

### **Student Funding**

On the QGA review committee last term, we managed to reverse the initial proposal to eliminate QGA funding eligibility from students in LLM, MAC, MEd, MES, MIR, MPA, and MPL programs.

### **Education Students' Society**

The Education Students' Society (ESS) voted to leave the AMS and join the SGPS. After their vote is ratified tonight, the approximately 700 students in the ESS will become full SGPS members.

## **DISPUTE RESOLUTION**

### **TA Dispute Mechanism**

Last month Senate amended policies to establish a new TA dispute mechanism. If a TA is not satisfied with how a dispute has been handled by the course instructor or within the Department, s/he may contact the Coordinator of the Dispute Resolution Mechanisms, Harry Smith. The Coordinator will attempt to mediate and find a resolution. If this is unsuccessful, a University Student Appeal Board (USAB) will be empanelled to hear the case and resolve it.

### **Publishing Conflicts with Supervisors**

At the request of the SGPS, the Steering Committee of the School of Graduate Studies will be undertaking a review of intellectual property policies as well as data use policies at Queen's as part of a process to clarify for each Department and Program what the norms and practices around the rights of students to publish their work should be, as well as to establish a dispute resolution mechanism to handle conflicts with supervisors. The SGPS has a seat on the committee.

### **Safe Disclosure ("Whistleblower Protection") Policy**

At the request of the SGPS, the Principal has established a committee to draft a safe disclosure, or whistleblower protection, policy to protect students, staff, and faculty. One of the goals is to provide protection to graduate students who are concerned about the potential consequences of reporting illegal or unethical behaviour by their supervisors. The SGPS has a seat on the committee.

### **Harassment of Graduate and Professional Students by Faculty**

At the request of the SGPS, the Faculty Association and the University have agreed that the prohibition on workplace harassment contained within the current Collective Agreement applies equally to faculty harassment of students within the workplace. SGPS members who feel they have been the object of harassment by a faculty member may now bring concerns to the Coordinator of the Dispute Resolution Mechanisms, Harry Smith. If a student wishes to pursue a complaint, a case may be pursued confidentially.

## **STUDENT SERVICES**

### **Grad Life Working Group**

At the request of the SGPS, Student Affairs established a Graduate Life Working Group, which has organized efforts on items such as orientation week, social events, child care, international student support, and housing needs.

### **Graduate and Professional Housing Needs**

At the request of the SGPS, the Principal has established a working group to investigate the current and future housing needs of graduate and professional students at Queen's. This would include residence spaces, student apartments, family housing, 8 month leases, etc. Focus groups will be conducted in the next few weeks, a survey will go out in the Fall, and a report with recommendations submitted to the Principal in November. The SGPS has a seat on the Working Group.

### **Graduate Residence**

At the insistence of the SGPS, the university has decided that the existing Graduate Residence tower above the JDUC will be retained and renovated rather than demolished as part of the Queen's Centre project.

#### **Child Care**

At the request of the SGPS, a university working group is researching viable possibilities for increasing child care options for students. Discussions on ways to partner the University, the SGPS, and the AMS on better child care provision will be forthcoming.

#### **Expanding Horizons**

At the request of the SGPS, various units of the university that offer academic support have coordinated their offerings to have an integrated calendar and listing as the Expanding Horizons program.

### **UNIVERSITY AFFAIRS**

#### **Graduate Student Capital Funds**

As part of Ontario's Reaching Higher program, Queen's is set to receive approximately \$43,000,000 over the next several years for space needs related to the growth in graduate student enrolments. More than \$3 million has already been received by the University, with a further \$2.6 million expected in the coming months. The SGPS has begun tracking how those funds are spent to ensure that SGPS members' office, study, and research space needs are met.

#### **Responsible Investing Policy**

The Board of Trustees voted March 6th to approve a Responsible Investing Policy for Queen's. The policy enables members of the Queen's community to petition for a committee to investigate accusations of social harm caused by firms in which Queen's has invested to determine whether or not action in the form of shareholder engagement via proxy votes or possible divestment is warranted.

#### **Sustainability Projects**

In addition to our on-going efforts to adopt more environmentally friendly practices in the SGPS, we established a new Sustainability Standing Committee. The Committee has worked on: suggesting better internal practices; working with the AMS and university sustainability officers to improve campus sustainability; and working with the AMS and the university to develop a system for funding student projects. The university is now in the process of establishing a new Campus Sustainability Council that will include people from the university, the AMS, the SGPS, and student organizations to collaborate on sustainability projects.

#### **Principal Search Committee**

As SGPS President, I served for 8 months as a Senate representative on the search committee for the next Principal of Queen's, Daniel Woolf, who assumes office in September.

### **SGPS INTERNAL**

#### **SGPS Executive Director**

After an extensive search, Sean Richards was hired as the new Executive Director of the SGPS. After training in June, Sean assumed his new position in July, and has done a fantastic job improving office administration and making more services and information available to our members on-line.

#### **Orientation**

At the request of the SGPS, Student Affairs and the School of Graduate Studies partnered with the SGPS to host the first ever general SGPS Orientation Week in September, with a resource fair and campus tours. It was so successful, that the university has pledged additional support for next year.

**Queen's Centre**

At the insistence of the SGPS, the university approved additional space for the SGPS in the new Queen's Centre. This would provide enough space for office and workspace expansion, as well as a new lounge for graduate and professional students.

**SGPS Office Swing Space**

At the insistence of the SGPS, the university has agreed to provide temporary space for the SGPS when renovations begin on the JDUC as part of the Queen's Centre project.

**SGSR Dean's Award to SGPS Executives**

Last summer the Dean of Graduate Studies notified the SGPS Executive of her intention to end the annual Dean's Award of \$8,000, which is divided among the SGPS Executive to defray the cost of their compensation packages. After consultation, she reversed herself, and has agreed to continue the program to help support services to students.

**SGPS Operations Budget**

We managed to introduce some new social events, including out of town excursions, build in a contingency fund, and greatly increase the amount of funding provided back to members in the form of grants for academic projects while still maintaining a small revenue surplus.

I would like to stress to Council and other SGPS members that most of this would not have been accomplished without active participation and lobbying by the SGPS Executive. This demonstrates the importance of continued active participation by members to defend and advance the interests of our membership.

Finally, I would like to thank our Executives, Commissioners, Coordinators, Staff members, Student Advisors, and committee members who have worked so hard this past year on behalf of all of us.

Respectfully submitted,  
Jeff Welsh  
President

This report summarizes major committee tasks I have participated as the Vice President Internal (Graduate) since my hiring in November 2008 and the committee tasks that I have started as committee coordinator (May-October 2008) and continued throughout my term as VPIG at SGPS.

### **SGSR Council**

From January to March 2009, the council had approved the following new graduate programs:

- Collaborative graduate program in biomedical engineering
- Collaborative graduate program in Cancer Research
- Part time master of industrial relations (PMIR) program

In addition, a doctoral degree (Ph.D.) program in law has started accepting applications for September, 2009. The proposed curriculum and the calendar description for this new program are approved by the council during March meeting.

### **TA Consultative Committee**

Former VPIG Sean Tucker submitted the SGPS TA/TF\* survey (responded by SGPS members who are TA or TF) to the committee in October 2008. SGSR also conducted a TA survey (responded by a department administrative personnel).

Data analyzed to date indicated that majority of the departments do not have documented TA policy. Both students and departments seem to welcome the idea of additional TA training. The majority of TA assignments across departments fall in the following three categories: by the request of the graduate students, by qualification or seniority, and by financial need (i.e. more internal or external funding typically translates into less TAship or as part of the funding package). Not surprisingly, the greatest challenges faced by departments in providing quality TA supports were lack of time and human resources followed by the lack of funding. A report with recommendations to Senate will be generated by the committee starting April 2009.

### **Student Advisor Program**

Based on the Advisors' Fall Term Report which were submitted to me in January, 2009, conflicts with a supervisor or faculty members and intellectual property and data ownership issues are major challenges that SGPS members are facing. Our president Jeff Welsh, myself and the student advisors have started communicating these concerns with SGSR and are currently looking into ways we can address these issues.

Two of the student advisors will be leaving us at the end of current academic year: Paul Quick will be leaving at the end of April 2009 and Patrick Egbunonu will be leaving at the end of August 2009. Performance evaluation of Lisa Binkley will be conducted shortly followed by the re-hiring interview. SGPS will be hiring two additional student advisors in September 2009.

### **Senate Internal Academic Review Committee**

No data can be reported due to confidentiality. The academic programs that are scheduled for review during 2008-2009 academic year includes the following:

- Department of Global Development Studies
- School of Environmental Studies
- Department of Geography and Geographic Information Science
- Department of Political Studies and Canadian Studies
- Department of Civil Engineering and Geoengineering
- Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering
- Department of Mechanical and Materials Engineering
- School of Urban and Regional Planning
- Department of Community Health and Epidemiology
- Department of Life Sciences and X-Ray Technology
- Faculty of Law

A report to Senate will be discussed in the April 2009 meeting. The final report will be published in June 2009 as supplement to the Queen's Gazette.

### **Nominating Committee**

Candidates for Senate Committees with terms of service starting September 2009 have been selected during the March meeting. The nominations are forwarded to Senate for approval. Due to confidentiality issue, no further data can be disclosed at this time.

### **Queen's Day Care Board**

Similarly, due to data confidentiality, no information can be disclosed. The 1 dollars optional fee for the Queen's Day Care was passed during SGPS February referendum. Thank you for your support.



Society of Graduate and Professional Students  
Report of the Vice President Internal  
Professional  
Annual General Meeting

For ease of reading, I have included in brief some of the activities I have been involved with this year in my capacity with the SGPS. The following report will contain general information, if you would like more clarity please consult my monthly reports or feel free to contact me.

#### Human Resources:

My portfolio in large part deals with human resources and the SGPS. Here are some of the developments that occurred this year.

- Hiring of Commissioners, followed by the hiring of the coordinators.
- Equity position was expanded with additional funding from the Dean of Student Affairs. This development was largely unsuccessful in part due to time constraints on the part of the candidates, but also because the positions were not clearly defined. In future more clarity should be put forth if an additional Equity Commissioner is to be maintained by the SGPS. The current SGPS Equity Commissioner is working on changes to the current structure of the Equity position.
- The Executive Director has been hired and has had two successful performance evaluations this year.
- A new grievance policy has been placed into the proposed Bylaws and Policies for employees of the SGPS.
- A policy of progressive discipline has also been included in the proposed changes to Bylaw and Policy.
- The Vice President Internal Graduate resigned and the Hiring Committee sought out and hired a replacement.

#### Education Students' Society

- The ESS student membership has seceded to the SGPS, this will incorporate a fairly large student body which will fall under the Vice President Internal Professional Portfolio.
- In order to facilitate representation to their unique program, the proposed changes to the Bylaws include an Education Coordinator.

#### Bylaw and Policy Standing Committee:

- I sat as part of this committee and the changes that have been made will, if passed, facilitate an easier format for the bylaws and some changes to

make our bylaws more logical and consistent. Please refer to the proposed amendments for further details.

#### The Professional Students' Standing Committee:

- This committee met several times this year. This committee was fairly animated about issues around residences, service and communication.
- One recommendation of this committee is to further raise concerns about spaces in residence for Professional students. I anticipate this concern will be heightened with the addition of Education students to the SGPS Professional membership.

#### Health and Dental Plan:

- The SGPS has struck a committee for review of the Health and Dental plan, particularly, the services provided by our broker. The Health and Dental Plan Review Committee will be discussing their findings at the AGM.

#### Recommendations for Future Years:

- Strike Bylaw and Policy Committee in September. If this committee is struck earlier there will be more time for input from Council. It may also be worthwhile for a second General Meeting to be held throughout the year so that changes to bylaws may occur more than once per year.
- Careful consideration of division in bylaw and policy. Some items in bylaw are far too specific and amendments are very tedious. It might be a good avenue for the committee to make considerations on cutting down bylaws to the bare bones and increasing details in policies so that our organization is more flexible.
- Human Resources files should be maintained with greater accuracy and care. Evaluations should occur regularly and be well-documented.
- Council should have more input on committees. I would particularly like to invite members of Council to sit more frequently on Hiring Committees in future.
- Council should determine what sort of relationship the SGPS should seek with the Grad Club Board. The VPIP sits ex officio on the Grad Club Board of Directors and the relationship between the GC and the SGPS is largely undefined, it might better serve our membership if Council would give particular direction on this issue.

Respectfully submitted,  
Jamie Kneen



Society of Graduate and Professional Students  
Report of the VP External  
Annual General Meeting

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**1) CFS Ontario Executive Meetings**

The executive of CFS Ontario, on which Queen's has one representative (me), meets every three months to discuss issues, campaigns, organization and services as well as to meet and to share information and contacts. The meetings are a useful way to learn about activities on other Ontario university campuses as well as to compare notes. Also, they provide a direct forum to organize provincial campaigns (such as the Drop Fees campaign and the Task Force on Campus Racism) and to evaluate services offered by the Federation.

**RECOMMENDATION:** I would encourage the VP external to continue to regularly attend the meetings of the Ontario executive and to remain active in their affairs. It is an important link between the CFS and the SGPS.

**2) CFS National AGM / Ontario AGM / Skills Meeting / National Graduate Caucus**

The National and Ontario AGMs provided an opportunity to discuss campaigns, services, organization and policy with locals from across Ontario and Canada. At both meetings, we discussed many of the broader issues facing all students, such as accessibility and sustainability on our campuses. We also discussed the status of some of the services the Federation offers including the ISIC service, Travel Cuts, free Ufile software and bulk purchasing opportunities through the Federation.

The Skills meeting was a very useful conference for new executive members. The conference is designed to impart skills for student union leaders that help them run their organization, services and advocacy. Sessions dealt with issues such as student unions legal structure, finances, best practices for services and transparency, and campaign organization and implementation.

The AGM of the National Graduate Caucus is an important meeting due to its focus on issues particular to graduate students. The meeting is also useful because of the opportunity to talk with representatives from graduate societies across Canada. Some of the issues discussed included an analysis and response to the Federal budget,

campaigns on intellectual property rights, copyright and whistleblower protection, the commercialization of research, student/worker solidarity and post-residency fees.

**RECOMMENDATION:** I highly encourage the VP External to attend the National and Ontario AGM's. They are important opportunities to network, evaluate and implement services and campaigns and to formulate direction for the work of the Federation. It is important that Queen's voice be heard in these discussions.

I think it is necessary that the VP External attend both the Skills meeting and the AGM of the National Graduate Caucus. The former is an excellent learning opportunity for the upcoming year and the latter is important in networking with students with similar concerns and issues. It also provides an opportunity to evaluate the services and campaigns of the Federation that target graduate students.

### **3) Elections**

I helped advertise an all-candidates forum organized by the AMS during the last federal election. I also helped distribute election material produced by the CFS to inform our members about the platforms of the various federal parties.

**RECOMMENDATION:** I'd encourage the VP External to partner with the AMS, QUFA, QUSA, OPIRG and other interested bodies in organizing campus debates on educational issues should another federal (always likely these days it seems) or provincial election be called. Organizing panel discussions on issues of relevance to students during the campaign would be useful as well. The continued distribution and advertisement of election materials provided by the CFS is also important in educating our members about the various candidates and parties vying for votes.

### **4) SONAD – Non Academic Conduct**

I sat on the SONAD committee this past year as a grad student representative in order to see how the recent changes to the code of non-academic conduct were being implemented. As a result of the work of the committee, some changes are being proposed to our bylaws in order to standardize the SGPS non-academic complaint process. Some of the issues discussed over the course of the year included reporting requirements for the student bodies charged with administering the code, complaints procedures, new terms of reference for the committee and committee composition. A student majority remains on this committee.

A report of any activity that the SGPS judicial committee engages in also should be submitted to the committee, which would summarize the work of the committee for the previous year. A template for submission can be found in the report I submitted this year.

**RECOMMENDATION:** The VP external need not sit on this committee, although it is a committee that deals with an issue that warrants continued attention from the executive. That said, a student-at-large could helpfully contribute to the work of the committee in the absence of an executive member.

### **5) Orientation**

I participated in the organizing and planning of some of the orientation activities this year. It is an important opportunity to contact our membership, especially incoming members. I helped out with the SGS fair held in the BioSci building, stuffing and handing out tote bags in Bews Gym and I participated in some of the social activities.

**RECOMMENDATION:** I strongly recommend the VP External take an active role in the planning and organization of orientation. Materials handed out in the tote bag are a great way to inform our membership of a variety of services, campaigns and general information. Tabling at Bews Gym is also helpful in being able to meet students face to face. Finally, I encourage the VP External to participate in the department talks and the TA day talk in order to inform students about any campaigns they may be organizing as well as to seek out interested students for the External Relations Standing Committee.

## **6) Housing Issues**

### *a) Queens City Improving relations Committee*

This committee provides an opportunity for the city to meet with representatives from Queen's (admin and the student societies, both graduate and undergraduate). The committee conducted a survey on what services students use, organized the distribution of blue, green and blue bins for students and it discussed a variety ways to help tailor city services to students and to ensure that they have adequate access to them. It is also a forum to voice concerns or complaints about city services directly with city staff. Finally, it is an institutional connection between the SGPS and the city that can be useful for a variety of issues.

Also, through this committee, pamphlets and informational leaflets on city services were procured free of charge for distribution in all of the tote bags that we provide for our members. A binder has also been developed that details all the city services tailored to the needs of students that will be available for consultation in the SGPS office.

**RECOMMENDATION:** I encourage the VP External to remain a part of this committee. It is a useful and important institutional connection to city staff. I also encourage the VP External to ensure that the informational leaflets on city services are included in the tote bags we provide to our members during orientation.

### *b) Queen's Working Group on Housing*

The work of this committee this year consisted mainly in formulating a position for Queen's on an anticipated proposal for the landlord licensing that the City is considering. The position that the committee ultimately adopted, opposing the introduction of a new licensing program, was consistent with the views of the SGPS. The committee is also continuing to consider issues around grad residence such as whether there will be one and what shape it will take. The future of graduate / professional student housing is also an ongoing topic addressed by the committee.

**RECOMMENDATION:** With the formulation of the position on licensing, the committee may wrap up. Either way, the future of grad res and graduate and professional student housing should be continually broached with the administration. This is a useful committee and an executive member, VP External or otherwise, ought to be part of their work.

### *c) Working Group on Retirement Residence*

This is an informal group at present that is looking at the possibility of developing a retirement village near Queen's for retirees from the University. The reason for the SGPS's involvement is that there is a hope to incorporate graduate student housing into the retirement village, along the lines of a number of other housing developments at Canadian and American universities.

**RECOMMENDATION:** An executive member, VP External or otherwise, ought to participate in the work of this committee. However, this committee has a long term focus and as such the ideal SGPS rep on this committee would be someone who could participate in its work on a multiyear, long term basis.

### **7) Integrity in Academic Research Committee**

This committee was charged with formulating new standards for integrity in research conduct at Queen's. I moved a number of amendments to the draft policy in order to improve its protections for graduate students. Some of these amendments were accepted, others not. The ones that were not accepted mainly had to do with the role of whistleblowers and the protection that students need in order to come forward without fear of reprisal or punishment. As a result of discussions held at this committee, Senate has created a committee to draft a 'Safe Disclosure' or whistleblower policy for the University.

**RECOMMENDATION:** I highly encourage the VP External, or other member of the exec, to actively participate in the work of the Safe Disclosure committee. The drafting of a strong safe disclosure policy is important for the protection of our members, maintaining integrity in research, as well as being the culmination of a longstanding campaign of the SGPS and CFS.

Also, I encourage the VP External or other member of the exec to work closely with the Student Advisors on this issue, as they have a deep knowledge of university policy and practice and frequently deal with whistleblower issues in their work as Advisors.

### **8) Queen's Journal Board of Directors**

I sat as the graduate representative on the Journal's Board of Directors this year. Part of the motivation for my participation here was due to a lack of open channels for dialogue between the Journal and the SGPS in the past. The issues dealt with at this body included the budget of the paper, it's advertising structure and ratio, it's integration with other AMS media services, a review of its purchasing and contract policies, a review of its hiring policies, discussion regarding changes to the Journal bylaws and its management and editorial structures.

**RECOMMENDATION:** I don't believe an executive member, never mind the VP external, should be required to sit in this position. It is an important position, especially for retaining proper links with the Journal (for instance in negotiating advertising rates or raising concerns about coverage of graduate and professional student affairs), but one that might best be filled either by the Communications Commissioner or a student-at-large who keeps in regular contact with the SGPS.

### **9) Queen's Inclusive Climate Working Group**

This committee met to deal with a number of racist incidents that occurred to students on city buses. From that initial meeting, meant to create a system to keep track of these incidents and to provide a reporting mechanism, the committee's work has shifted to dealing with issues of climate and racism on Queen's campus. The goal of the committee is to bring together a variety of different Queen's stakeholders (AMS, Student Affairs, faculty, outside organizations, etc) in order to help create a safe climate for all members of the Queen's community. As of late, the committee has met with a number of community leaders and organizations to partner with them in their work battling racism.

**RECOMMENDATION:** I would highly encourage either the VP External and/or the Equity commissioner to actively participate in the work of the committee. It provides a forum to meet and talk with many other campus actors and community members, all in the hope of moving towards the elimination of all forms of racism and discrimination at Queen's.

## **10) Campaigns**

I organized a number of campaigns at Queen's this year. They included the Drop Fees campaign, the Rally for Quality @ Queen's, the Task Force on Campus Racism, the Copyright Movie Night, and a response to the Federal Budget. Other campaigns that we supported but were less prominent included a campaign to institute post-residency fees at Queen's, to stop the commercialization of research, and to enact whistleblower protection. Many of these campaigns emerged from discussions at the CFS and were supported with advice, logistical support and organizational backing by the Ontario and National offices of the CFS. I would like to thank them for their help, support and contribution over the past year to our local campaigns at Queen's.

Whatever the campaign, local organization and participation is key. While I think that participation in larger actions is important, it cannot replace organizing at Queen's. Involvement of the External Relations Standing Committee, contacts through other committees and interested groups (such as OPIRG or the International Centre) and advertising to the membership are some of the ingredients for a successful campaign.

We have made a number of helpful media contacts over the course of the year. It would be good to retain these contacts (to institutionalize them) in order to ensure that our campaigns and the issues we champion receive the attention they deserve.

**RECOMMENDATION:** I would encourage the VP External to continue to pursue the campaigns that I organized this year, such as the Drop Fees campaign and the campaign to end campus racism. Central to the success of these campaigns are close coordination with the Ontario and National offices of the CFS, organizing with local groups on campus and involving and educating our membership about the campaign. Campaigns are the public manifestation of our policy positions and thus form an integral part of the advocacy work the SGPS does for its members.

## **11) Advocacy and Solidarity Work**

Advocacy and solidarity work for outside groups and individuals is an important component of the VP External's position. I wrote a number of letters to various federal and provincial politicians, university presidents, administrators and external organizations expressing our position on a number of issues as well as our solidarity with various student unions, groups and private individuals. Much of this advocacy and solidarity work is organized through the CFS. Writing a letter to express our support for a group or issue, and then distributing our communication to other CFS locals, is important both for the obvious principled reason as well as to encourage a discussion on the issue(s) and to encourage other member locals to do the same.

**RECOMMENDATION:** It is important for the VP External to communicate our solidarity with other student unions, groups and individuals on issues of common concern. I encourage the VP External to continue to show our solidarity, lend our support and to make Queen's voice heard.

## **12) Lobby Sessions**

I attended a Lobby Week, organized by the CFS, in Toronto in order to raise awareness amongst MPP's at Queen's Park about issues affecting students in Ontario's post-secondary education institutions. I met with MPP's from all three parties. Some of the issues discussed included tuition fees, student debt and accessibility, reinstating OHIP for international students, credit transfers between universities and colleges and environmental sustainability on campuses.

Obviously no promises were made at these meetings but they were useful in keeping the lines of dialogue open. Also, some of the issues, including OHIP for international students and the credit transfer proposal, were well received by MPP's for all parties.

I did not however meet this past year with our MPP John Gerretsen or with our MP Peter Milliken. It would have been good to meet with them in order to ensure that Queen's graduate and professional students concerns are brought to them.

**RECOMMENDATION:** I would highly encourage the VP External to participate in these lobby meetings at both the provincial and national level. They provide an opportunity to have our provincial and national concerns aired as well as an opportunity to air local concerns in a provincial and national forum. I'd also encourage the VP External to meet with the local MPP and MP at least once during their term.

## **13) External Relations Standing Committee**

The committee met twice during the first semester. Some of the issues discussed were planning for the drop fees campaign, planning for a copyright speaker series and issues stemming from homecoming.

Recruiting members for the committee proved difficult. When the committee did eventually form, I didn't provide it with the necessary direction and structure for it to be successful. However, I do want to thank the members of the committee for their commitment, time and input.

**RECOMMENDATION:** I encourage the VP External to try and form their committee as soon as possible in their term (perhaps advertising it as much as possible during orientation) and to consult with it regularly to help direct their activities and to organize campaigns and advocacy work.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone at the SGPS, my fellow exec members, Sean, front desk staff, all the commissioners and everyone on Council, who helped make this year an experience that was rewarding, challenging, worthwhile and fun.

Respectfully submitted,

Mark Rosner  
VP External



Society of Graduate and Professional Students  
Report of the Vice President Operations  
March 2009

My experience as the Vice President Operations has been an action-packed and rewarding opportunity. Everything from working closely with individual students on financial issues to interacting with the university administration to serve the needs of our membership has been enjoyable and intellectually stimulating. The SGPS Executives this year had a good team dynamic and the hard work of all staff from the Executive Director to individual coordinators has contributed to my thorough enjoyment of this term.

### **Responsibilities as the Vice President Operations**

My main duty has been to oversee the finance and operation of the Society. Throughout the year, I have worked closely with the Executive Director and members of the Operations and Financial Standing Committee. I have reviewed applications for SGPS financial programs, drafted and revised the SGPS annual budget, worked with University Registrar on tuition and activity fee issues, and dealt with individual students on their health or dental insurance issues. Individual member input and suggestions and feedback of executive members were taken into account whenever possible.

An important element in the VP Operations position is the health and dental plan. Jamie Kneen, our VP Internal Professional, has chaired the working group on health and dental plan search, struck at the Council earlier this term. The group has successfully received and reviewed proposals from other insurance providers. More information will be received when we meet our broker to discuss what Green Shield and the broker's office can offer to our membership next year. This information will come in handy when we finalize next year's health and dental plan.

I came into the office initially thinking that the VP Operations has very little to do with issues other than financial matters. Largely because of the fact that Queen's is currently going through many changes, my responsibilities this year had not been limited to the traditional portfolio of the VP Operations. I have attended meetings internal and external to Queen's and provided feedback on a diversity of issues ranging from Grad Residences to racism on campus. These have altogether been a truly eye-opening experience.

### **Serving the Financial Needs of Membership**

Financial aid has been given out to the membership via many different routes, from the project grants to dental bursaries. We have also been able to raise awareness in other sources of revenue for various student-run and student-oriented events and assisted many groups and individuals in achieving this via alternative routes such as the Student Initiative Fund and Dean's Excellence Awards. Last year's VP Operations had pointed out that a problem with SGPS financial programs is that there are no concrete guidelines and structures to them, and it is difficult to administer. I am pleased to inform you that the Operations and Financial Standing Committee has worked diligently on this issue and have come up with more refined structures for all programs. It was my intention to

bring this to the AGM, but given that they only require policy changes, we have decided to bring this to a regular Council meeting and facilitate the processing of issues that require direct membership input. These will be made available at the April Council meeting.

### **Financial Rights of the SGPS Membership**

By collecting mandatory and optional fees from the membership, SGPS contributes to many organizations and businesses from the AMS services and Grad Club to Kingston Transit. Throughout this year, I have come to learn that SGPS's contribution is quite substantial for these organizations, but as it stands now, SGPS does not have much control over how our contributions are handled. For most of these organizations, SGPS neither has a voting and/or adjudicating power nor is it recognized as a financial partner. Once I became more knowledgeable in this issue, I made an effort to draft service agreements with the bodies that the SGPS pays into, but given the short amount of time and the complexity of the issue, it has been largely unsuccessful. I strongly urge next year's Executive to take action on this issue and ensure that SGPS membership's input is put to practical use.

### **Operations and Financial Standing Committee**

There had been an exceptional number of applications this year which handled a variety of projects, many of which will continue into next year. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all members of the Operations and Financial Standing Committee for their hard work and their service to the SGPS. Sincere thanks go to Mohamed Al Guindy; Oladunni Barbasola; Jeffrey Burrows; Samuel Hetz; Mark Hoidas; Marie-Lise Peters; Gareth Stackhouse; Dhushan Thevarajah; and Peter West-Oram for their great work this year, and best of luck for the upcoming year.

### **Current Financial Standing**

Attached as an appendix item is the most recently updated SGPS financial statement. This shows where we stand financially as of this February. To facilitate your understanding, the original annual budget passed at Council in September has been attached.

1. I implemented quite a few structural changes in the annual budget this year. Some lines were merged, further divided or absolved to reflect the changed financial needs of the membership and the Society.
2. Other than the Grants line, you will notice that we have not gone over any budget item. In practice, some lines do not incur actual expenses until the very end of each fiscal year, but at this point the financial standing of the Society appears to be quite strong and again, other than Grants line, it seems unnecessary to move budget lines around.
3. We have already moved at the February Council to go over the budgeted amount in the Grants line due to an exceptionally high level of activity in this particular area. We have gotten the Council's approval to go over the line by \$3000, and this money will come from the Stipends and Honoraria funds. Stipends and Honoraria is a line that met a lower-than-expected level of activity due to some members of Council resigning their posts.

Those who actually read the March Council report may have wondered about my closing remark in that report. As it turns out, this is my 'real' last report to you as your Vice President Operations. The benefits I have received from this position are multifold and I hope next year's VP Ops will find this position as worthwhile and pleasant as I have. Best of luck with all your future endeavours, and I wish for continued success of the Society.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Victoria J. Bae  
Vice President Operations 2008-2009  
Society of Graduate and Professional Students

### **Bylaw and Policy Revisions Standing Committee**

This year was an integral year for the restructuring of the Bylaws and Policies. As part of my job, I organized and chaired the committee that made recommendations in the changes concerning the Bylaws and Policies. The committee made a decision early on, that due to time constraints that the primary focus would be the restructuring of the Bylaws due to their necessary approval at AGM. Because policy can be changed at any time, this was given secondary priority. It is my opinion that the changes recommended by the committee drastically improve the efficiency and readability on what was previously a rather tedious document to get through.

After the recent issues concerning the Athletics Fee, it has brought to light a possible conflict of interest that I would recommend that the next council make an attempt to resolve. Part of my job as Council Speaker is the interpretation of the Bylaws and Policies in the event of a dispute or conflict. This position is in direct conflict with my job as chair of the Bylaws and Policies committee. Although the speaker is titled as chair of the committee, he/she can make recommendations on changes to Bylaw and Policy that he/she may be required to interpret during that particular term. This is especially true should the speaker serve multiple terms. I see this as a potential conflict of interest for future council speakers, and I would recommend that council remove future speakers from the responsibility of chairing the Bylaws and Policies committee.

### **Council Orientation**

As part of my duties as speaker, it is my responsibility to bring new council members up to speed with the way in which SGPS functions. This is done primarily through the Council orientation package. Working in conjunction with the Communication Commissioner, we revised and built upon the previous package. While the Council orientation guide from the previous speaker was rather outstanding, much of the information was outdated. In addition, a large amount of information was found on the website, and could therefore be omitted.

### **Council Meetings**

During my term as council speaker, I was able to make several observations concerning the fluidity of council meetings and the assembling of the council package.

- 1) Throughout my term, there was not one single occasion where all reports and motions were received 'on time'. 'On time' meaning by 4pm on the first Tuesday of every month. I do understand that people are busy and place great importance on giving council members quality reports, but late reports are very problematic due to the very short window of time that the speaker has to assemble the package before it must be sent to council. In addition, motions submitted at meetings pose a serious issue in not giving council members ample time to review the motions and present good discussion. It is my recommendation to council that a more efficient system be installed in submitting council documents for meetings. It is also my recommendation that future speakers make attempts to avoid introducing motions at meetings. This will create smoother running meetings, better discussion, and avoid unwarranted disputes at council.

- 2) In general the submission of reports were decent during my term as well as attendance at meetings. I did notice that several positions from the Committee, Commissioner, Senator, and Board of Trustees routinely did not submit reports and did not attend meetings. While this was greatly discussed in the previous meeting, I would recommend that future speakers make attempts to resolve this. The submission of reports and the attendance at meetings is vital to the transmitting of information to council.
- 3) In order to create a more efficient meeting I took the liberty of proposing a change to order in the agenda, putting 'Other Business' before the main motions. This was due to motions being introduced during 'other business' where they should have been introduced before the 'main motions'

### **Transition**

I am currently in the process of preparing materials to more easily transition the next speaker into the position. I was fortunate to have been given excellent transition material by the previous speaker. It is my hope that a new speaker will be appointed at the April Council meeting or as soon as possible after that. I enjoyed serving in this position and I sincerely encourage all SGPS member to consider running for this position.

Thank you.

Seth Irwin  
[speaker@sgps.ca](mailto:speaker@sgps.ca)



Society of Graduate and Professional Students  
Report of the Social Commissioner  
March 2009

## Annual General Meeting Report

Hello Everyone,

This is the first time that the social commissioner has had the opportunity to work with a social team and I am fortunate to have had a solid group effort this year and I would like to thank Jordan Leitch, Audrey Hager and Melissa Pak for their hard work in planning our social events. We have had several successful events outside of orientation week that we will plan again in the upcoming academic year, these events include the following:

**-White Water Rafting, Oktoberfest, SGPS Presents Charity Cinemas, SGPS Day Ski Trip, Fundraiser Mixer with the Law Student Society and Medical Students.**

Presently, we are trying to find a more comfortable venue to hold monthly movie nights, if anyone has any suggestions please let us know at [social@sgps.ca](mailto:social@sgps.ca). Grad students would donate either canned food items to the Kingston Food Bank or monetary donations for a different charity every month as opposed to paying a fixed fee.

Improvements for next year include enhanced promotion and advertising of events to better inform our students of upcoming social activity, if you have any ideas as to how we can better inform you please e-mail me at [social@sgps.ca](mailto:social@sgps.ca).

For our upcoming spring event we are planning to organize a Speed Dating activity at the Grizzly Grill with food and drinks, once we have the fine points finalized I will give you further details in the next report.

Respectfully Submitted,

Diala Habib  
Social Commissioner

### Orientation Guide

- I think the number of information pages and advertisement pages was good this past year. I was able to generate enough revenue to pay for the printing and assembly of the orientation guides. I received positive feedback with respect to putting fee information in the book. The map of downtown Kingston is also a part of the book that many people comment positively on.

### Council Orientation Guide

- This year I shortened this guide by quite a few pages. I think we were able to maintain the quality of the book. It seems to be much easier to read now that some of the less important information has been removed or shortened. This book will continue to benefit from Council feedback.

### E-Newsletter

- This year we consistently saw more than 1/3 of our membership reading the E-Newsletter. I think this continues to be the most valuable method of disseminating information to our membership. There remains room for improvement in the newsletters. I would particularly like to see more SGPS member involvement (stories about students, departments, research, etc).

### SGPS Website

- The new look of the website has been well received across our membership. Members have indicated that information is easy to find. I have been constantly working on the back-end of the website to make it easy to update. This allows us to ensure the membership has access to relevant and up-to-date information. I have added a private section for Front Desk Staff, which helps them with their day-to-day tasks. I am in the process of adding a private section for staff transitions. This section should prove to be very useful as new staff and Executive members take over positions.

### Communications

- Buying our own colour laserjet printer turned out to be an extremely positive decision. We are now able to produce many items at our office. This has allowed us to improve the turnaround time for printing projects. It has also reduced the cost associated with printing jobs. Full colour pages can be printed in our office for as little as 10% of the cost of printing it from a copy centre.
- I have redone many of our informational brochures in a new book style format. This new format has been well received. I plan to continue to improve these booklets.

### Computer Network

- This year we were able to purchase 2 new servers (mail server and file server). As of this moment, we have the servers at the office and they are in the testing phase. In the near future we will be done testing and the servers will go live. The new mail server will allow us a lot more flexibility and offer several new features that will help with day-to-day use. The mail server replaces old hardware that is close to failure. The file server will allow staff and Executive to have secure access to their files from any computer in our office or any computer on the internet. The file server will also give us the opportunity to ensure we always have full backups of our important data.
- Before this year we did not have any full backups of our data. As of now, we have full backups of our important files. We have one on-site backup and one off-site backup.

Respectfully submitted,  
Sean Richards - info@sgps.ca

#### Past Efforts

- Endorsed a series of workshops/lectures held by Queen's Native Students Association for Aboriginal Awareness Week. Happy to report that the "Teach-in" was successful and enlightening.

#### Current Efforts

- Events
  - Organizing a "Forum on Accessibility" with the Social Issues Commission to give voice to students, particularly Graduate Students, facing accessibility issues on campus. The forum will be held on **Thursday, April 2 at 7pm in JDUC Rm. 351**. The point of this forum will be to collect the concerns of students regarding accessibility "on the ground" and transmit them to appropriate university committees and the administration. Some of the problems that we've been facing
  - Dr. Monia Mazigh a Canadian academic best known for her efforts to free her husband Maher Arar from a Syrian prison will be coming to Queen's. A resident of Ottawa, Ontario, she was the New Democratic Party candidate for the riding of Ottawa South, a traditionally Liberal riding, in the 2004 federal election. She was formerly employed as a professor of finance, at Thompson Rivers University in Kamloops, British Columbia. Her visit will take place on **March 24 with a short discussion at QUIC at 2.30pm** and then a talk about her new book, "Hope and Despair: My Struggle to Free My Husband Maher Arar" at **6.30pm in Ellis Auditorium**. SGPS is co-endorsing this event.
- Policy
  - Re: Queen's National Scholars fund
    - The program has two original goals: to make sure Queen's secures outstanding young scholars now and to improve the proportion of women, members of visible minority groups, aboriginal people, and people with disabilities among faculty members.
    - However, the QNS fund was recently put on a hiatus of two years and restructured to **remove the goal of increasing women, visible minority group, aboriginal, or people with disabilities representation**.
    - Senate Education Equity Committee (SEEC) will be asking the Principal to consider restoring the original intent of the QNS fund. Letters to the Principal would be appreciated.
  - Department of French Studies
    - Studies in the area of *Francophonie* (African, West Indian, Middle Eastern literature) in the Dept. of French Studies are threatened by the removal of the only *Francophonie* scholar at Queen's, Dr. Eugène Nshimiyimana.
    - The university has decided not to renew Dr. Nshimiyimana's contract nor replace him leaving nine students (1/3 of the French Studies Dept.) without an able supervisor.

- Furthermore, the Administration has forbidden the department from recruiting students in the area of *Francophonie*.
- This is a direct attack on both education equity in the curricula at Queen's and a loss of exceptional students/faculty who might be or currently are pursuing studies in this area.

#### Future Efforts

- Possible collaboration with OPIRG on a series of “free classes” open to the community (Free Queen's model) on social justice and equity taught by graduate students and/or faculty
- Talking with Social Issues Commission at the AMS on a possible collaboration with their zine, cultureSHOCK, which is an anti-racist publication.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Usman Mushtaq



Society of Graduate and Professional Students  
Report of the Chief Returning Officer  
March 2009

### Chief Retuning Officer Report

Five polling stations were open from 10am-4pm on both the 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> of February 2009 for the SGPS General Election. Voter turn out was quite poor at 6.8%, and not enough to reach quorum (10%).

Jeff Welsh was acclaimed to SGPS President. Joellen Lin was acclaimed to SGPS VP Internal (Graduate). Catherine Kahn was acclaimed to SGPS VP Internal (Professional). Queen's Daycare optional fee was passed. Four Directions Aboriginal Student Centre optional fee was passed. Athletics and Recreation (A&R) fee increase was denied. However, 23% of SGPS members signed the A&R petition over the past few weeks, demonstrating an interest in this issue.

Poll clerks were easily found by posting an advertisement in the SGPS newsletter. Positions are still available for the Speaker, Vice President External, and Vice President Operations. A bi-election will be taking place on March 31<sup>st</sup> and April 1<sup>st</sup> 2009.

Sam Hetz  
CRO 2009