

1. Call to order

Clea Moray called the meeting to order at 4:16 p.m.

2. Appointment of the chair

MOVED to appoint Julia Smith as the Chair of this meeting.
(Moved: David Potter / Seconded: Cris Costa)
CARRIED

3. Appointment of the secretary

MOVED to appoint Graham Lyons as the Secretary of this meeting.
(David Potter / Andreas Steimel)
CARRIED

The Chair asked that it be noted that this meeting was called according to the Society's by-laws.

4. Verification of quorum

The Chair stated that approximately 90 people are present, and that a quorum is present for all business except the consideration of special resolutions. The chair asked attendees to wait while the sign-up was completed for those still in line.

The Chair declared that we have achieved quorum.

5. Approval of the agenda

MOVED to approve the agenda, with the addition of the Approval of past minutes.
(David Potter/Cheryl Schroeder)
CARRIED

6. Approval of meeting rules

The Chair informed attendees that the meeting rules are contained in the meeting agenda.

MOVED to adopt the proposed rules.
(David Potter/Cheryl Schroeder)
CARRIED

7. Approval of Minutes

MOVED to approve the minutes of the 2008 Annual General Meeting of The Graduate Student Society at Simon Fraser University, held on February 21, 2008.
(David Potter/Cheryl Schroeder)

CARRIED

8. By-law amendment: By-law VII – Officers (special resolution)

MOVED that section 9 of By-law VII – Officers be amended to read:
“The Officers shall receive a stipend that shall be paid in installments no less frequently than every month, and the amount of which shall be determined by the Society through regulation but which shall in no case be greater than \$2000 for each month served.”

(David Potter/ Cris Costa)

David Potter motivated, explaining that this motion represents an increase to the theoretical maximum Officers are paid; in fact, power to decide how large a stipend Officers receive is vested in Graduate Council. Potter explained that the logic behind this proposed change is to reflect the large amount of work and responsibility the Officers consistently deal with in making sure the Society runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis. Potter also mentioned that the Executive Committee has passed a motion to recommend to Council that the Officer’s stipend be increased to \$1750 per month, and confirmed that this increase would fit within the current Society budget.

Jen Sunday asked what the responsibilities of the Officers might entail, in comparison to TAing. Moray responded that the Officers are the only elected people that are in the office everyday drafting regulation, having discussions, planning meetings, keeping the staff happy and paid, making sure reps are properly informed of what’s going on. In sum,

Sherry Leung asked:

- 1) do we know how much the UBC Officers are being paid
- 2) do they receive their regular stipends from the university
- 3) how many hours are the Officers expected to work

Moray responded that she did not know how much the UBC Officers are paid; Moray also suggested that while the UVic officers are paid less, they also work fewer hours (at least in theory); Moray reported that, to the best of her knowledge, the current Officers are not receiving any other financial support, and that they are working approximately 15-20 hours per week.

[Secretary’s correction: Graham Lyons, GSS Secretary, worked as a TA and was receiving federal scholarship while holding the Officer position in the Spring 2009 semester]

Sherry Leung asked how we might justify paying more for our elected representatives in a climate of financial crisis. Moray answered.

Camilla Speller spoke on behalf of the motion. Sears asserted that Officers put a lot of work into running the Society; spoke to the general apathy of Members of the Society, and suggested that Officers are what keep the Society running

Marj Velot asked whether the stipend was hourly or a flat fee per month. Moray responded that the pay is a flat stipend, but that the by-laws state 15 hours per week. She explained that, on an hourly basis, Officers would get paid about as much as a Teaching Assistant, under the current Collective Agreement.

Sherry Leung asked why we wouldn't use a percentage rather than a flat number like \$2000. David Potter responded that Grad Council is responsible for deciding the exact amount; this increase merely increases the theoretical limit.

The Chair asked for a show of hands, reminding the meeting that a three-quarters majority was required for this motion to pass.

Estimated Count: In Favour—94; Opposed—8; Abstain—5

Main motion **CARRIED**

9. By-law amendment: By-law X – Regulations and Amendments (special resolution)

MOVED that section 2 of the By-law X – Regulations and Amendments be amended to read:

“Amendments to the Society’s By-laws may be made by:

- a. special resolution approved by a general meeting of the Society,
- b. special resolution approved by indirect voting through a referendum of the Society according to the By-laws, or
- c. such other methods as allowed by the Society Act.

Further MOVED that By-law X – Regulations and Amendments be amended to include the following section:

“Amendments by referendum:

- a. A special resolution to amend these By-laws be considered by the Society through indirect voting by means of a referendum conducted according to By-law XI – Elections and Referenda.
- b. No such special resolution shall pass unless at least the majority given in the Society Act to pass such a resolution shall vote in favour of it, and then only if all the other applicable conditions in By-law XI – Elections and Referenda are met.
- c. Members of the Society may propose a special resolution to amend the By-laws by presenting to the Society a petition:
 - i. stating the text of the special resolution to be voted on, and
 - ii. bearing the names and signatures of at least one-hundred-and-fifty (150) members of the Society in good standing.

- d. If the Society receives a petition as given in subsection c., then the Executive Committee must determine if the proposed special resolution is in order, and if it is found to be in order, then it must call a referendum to decide that resolution which shall occur no later than the time of the elections of Officers held in accordance with section 1 (b) of By-law VII – Officers which shall occur in the calendar year after the petition was presented.”

(Clea Moray/Nicole Tunbridge)

Moray motivated, pointing out that this resolution would allow more people to vote, especially students who attend on other campuses or outside of the GVRD. Moray acknowledged that this might reduce the amount of direct debate about by-law changes, but that is outweighed by the greater enfranchisement.

Jasmine Korcok asked how the number 150 in section 5.c.ii (the number of signatures required to bring forward a special resolution for an AGM) compared to the kind of amendments people could propose at a quorate general meeting. Moray admitted that she wasn't sure where that precise number came from, but that it was unchanged from the already-approved number in the by-laws.

Main motion **CARRIED**

10. Receiving the financial statements for the fiscal year ending August 31, 2008.

The Chair introduced Kathy McKay, GSS Treasurer. McKay explained that the financial statements were produced based on the information provided to Margaret Newton and Co., and on their review of our books. McKay also explained that they have been reviewed extensively by our Audit Committee, our Executive Committee, and have been approved by the Graduate Council. McKay pointed out where attendees can find the statements, and asked for any questions.

MOVED to receive the financial statements for the Society's financial year ending August 31, 2008 as circulated.

(McKay/Boydell)

CARRIED

11. Report from the Auditor

The Chair stated that students may ask questions of the Auditor after her report.

The Auditor stated that, after looking at the Society's records, her firm did not detect any problems with the financial status of the Society. The Auditor asked for any questions.

12. Appointment of the Auditor

MOVED to appoint Margaret Newton and Co. as the Society's auditor for the 2008-2009 fiscal year.

(Kathy McKay/Cheryl Schroeder)
CARRIED

13. Report from the Officers

Moray encouraged response and questions about the work of the Officers.

Moray informed everyone that the Officers have only worked for one semester of the past fiscal year.

Moray reported that from May 2008 to August 2008, there was a lot of administrative work, she chaired Grad Council, met with the Dean of Grad Studies, pursued project work of various sorts. The full President's report is attached.

Lyons explained that he held the position of Secretary for only a few months of the past fiscal year—from July 11th onwards. His work involved mostly office administration and the maintenance of minutes for Executive and Council meetings, but he also pursued project work (including participating in the development of the conceptual design for the proposed Student Union Building). The full Secretary's report is attached.

GSS Treasurer Kathy McKay reported that the Society first received money directly from the university on May 1, 2008, so she spent much of the summer setting up the files and financial processes for the Society. The full Treasurer's report is attached.

14. Report of the Executive Committee

Moray reported that the Executive Committee did a lot of work in the 2007-8 fiscal year, especially in the first eight months, before the Officers came on board. Moray highlighted the important contributions of the former chair of the Executive Committee, Ursula Arndt, whose tireless, unpaid work was instrumental in making the GSS functional once it became a 'full' Society. The full report of the Executive Committee is attached.

15. Report of the Graduate Council

Moray reported that Council is made up of a representative from each department. For the first few months, most of what Council did was pass regulations and set up the running of the Society. Once the Officers were on board, Council began to have a chance to talk about larger graduate student issues (such as funding, advocacy, etc.). The full report of the Graduate Council is attached.

16. Conclusion

The Chair declared the meeting concluded at 4:52pm.

6 Attachments:

1. Financial Statements
2. President's Report

3. Secretary's Report
4. Treasurer's Report
5. Report from the Executive Committee
6. Report from the Graduate Council

Approved:

Julia Smith, Chair

Graham Lyons, Secretary

Date Approved

Reports of the Officers

Sept 1, 2007 – August 31, 2008

President's Report

The President's role is the most loosely defined of the three Officer positions: the President organizes and chairs GSS Council and Executive Committee meetings and represents the GSS to the SFU and external groups.

When I started the job of President in May 2008, I was already quite familiar with the GSS, having volunteered a lot of time to assist with setting up the GSS in the previous year. This was fortunate, because the GSS became the sole student society for grads on the same day that I started as President – immediately, caucuses and grad students began to send a large number of questions and requests to our new office. Many necessary administrative systems, especially around caucus interactions, were not fully in place yet, so the Treasurer and I worked together to triage and respond to requests and questions, and got things under control within the first month or so. I'd like to thank grad students, especially the caucus execs for being patient and understanding these first few weeks; and also the staff of the SFSS – especially the Organizer Office, General Office, and Finance Office staff – for having offered so much help and support.

Throughout the summer I met monthly with the Dean of Grad Studies and discussed issues such as the university's budget problems and effects of this on grad students, problems with downtown students getting their recreation passes, and issues related to the release of American student loans. I represented the GSS for a short period on the Student Union Building Planning Committee, met with Translink about the UPass program at SFU, and met with the incoming Vice President Academic of SFU about grad student issues.

I also took on some specific project work over the summer: negotiating GSS membership in The Company Car (car sharing co-op), assisting with planning for SFU's orientation for new grad students, writing committee terms of reference and regulations; negotiating sharing of student clubs with the SFSS; maintaining the GSS website; creating a job description for the Interim Executive Director position and discussing the creation of this position with CUPE 5396; and working with SFSS in support of the creation of their student advocate position, and to arrange that grad student would have access to this service in the absence of the Ombudsperson.

The position of Secretary was vacant for most of the summer, during which time the Treasurer and I shared the duties of this portfolio. For my part, I took on much of the general administration and record-keeping, and as well as ensuring that the GSS was fulfilling its statutory responsibilities.

Secretary's Report

The position of GSS Secretary was held by two individuals—Kyll Glennie and me, Graham Lyons—in its first four months of existence. Kyll was acclaimed in the March 2008 election of Officers, then resigned on May 9th to accept a position with another organization. I was elected as Secretary in the subsequent by-election, and began my term as Secretary on July 11, 2008. As such, in this report I will speak to the position generally over the period of May to August 2008, in addition to specifically speaking to my role as Secretary in the final two months of the fiscal year.

Reports of the OfficersSept 1, 2007 – August 31, 2008

The Secretary's role is to oversee the administration of the Society. This involves the day-to-day maintenance of minutes for meetings of Graduate Council and the Executive Committee, correspondence with caucus executives regarding election procedures and caucus administration, proper filing of paperwork with the province and the university, updates to Society regulations and procedures, and a range of other office administration such as filing and signing cheques. More generally, the Secretary also ensures that the Society's by-laws and regulations are upheld as the business of the GSS is conducted and serves as privacy officer for the organization as a whole.

As outlined in the Council report, the first few months of full operation for the GSS required the institution of a number of regulations and procedures, each of which is important for the smooth running of the office. In consultation with the President and Treasurer, I assisted and/or initiated each of these activities: the establishment of signing authorities and spending regulations, and of security and key control protocols, research and preparation for the budget, and organization of the office fileshare—which holds all caucus minutes, contract and agreement documents, and minutes of Society meetings.

Beyond the day-to-day activities in the office, I also participated in a range of project work, including sitting on the Benefit Plan Temporary Project Worker Hiring Committee, the Grants Allocation Committee, and the Clubs Recommendation Committee. I also participated in the on-going Student Union Building project by chairing the SUB-Committee and attending meetings with university administrators and SFSS representatives—leading to the conceptual design process that will likely wrap up in the Spring 2009 semester.

Treasurer's Report

At May 1st when I assumed the role of Treasurer the major portion of my activities concerned the day-to-day finances of the Society. As the Society did not have general office employees at the time, I maintained the books, as well as carried out the oversight duties of the Treasurer.

I was responsible for requesting funds from the University, banking these funds as well as funds raised by various caucuses, producing payroll for the Society's employees and stipends for the Officers, Executive and Council Representatives, and the processing of cheque requests from GSS members. The latter required setting up accounts to trace the amount of funds allocated to each caucus and recording requests. I maintained separate books for the Society's main operations and its Benefit Plan, in order to maintain the system of keeping separate books for the Plan that was established when it was run by the SFSS. I also worked to produce budgets for the upcoming year for both the GSS and the Benefit Plan.

For a time, I served as the Staff Liaison Officer, which is the formal management representative to the Society's unionized staff. Clea Moray assumed this position later in the semester.

I chaired the Grants Allocation Committee, the body that reviews grant requests from the caucuses.

Executive Committee – Report

Sept 1, 2007 – August 31, 2008

The Executive Committee of the GSS is responsible for implementing the instructions given by Council, oversight of the day-to-day management of the GSS, and for giving direction to the President, Secretary, and Treasurer. The Executive Committee normally consists of five members elected by and from the Graduate Council members, plus the President, Secretary, and Treasurer.

During the 2007-8 year, the Executive Committee usually met about three times per month.

Until the first GSS President, Secretary, and Treasurer started their terms in May 2008, members of the Executive Committee performed the work that would normally be performed by those positions. Since May 2008, the Members of the Executive Committee have assisted the Officers as necessary, taken on special projects, and are active on GSS committees.

Specific tasks taken on by Executive Committee members this year include: drafting the GSS budget; opening bank accounts for the GSS; liaising with SFU administration about the new GSS to ensure continued representation for graduate students within the university; acting as signing authorities; organizing the GSS Annual General Meeting; drafting regulations and committee terms of reference; negotiating and drafting contracts and agreements; discussions with CUPE 5396 about union successorship for Benefit Plan staff; communicating with Benefit Plan staff about transfer of plan from SFSS to GSS; general outreach to membership; setting up office space including arranging for phone lines and mail service; meeting with candidates for the position of Dean of Graduate Studies at SFU; Participating in hiring of new SFU Ombudsperson.

Executive Committee Members

The members on the Executive Committee during the 2007-8 financial year were:

- **Ursula Arndt** (August 2007 to December 31, 2008; Executive Committee Chair August 2007-April 30, 2008)
- **Joel Blok** (incorporation to September 17, 2007)
- **Carroll Boydell** (August 2007 to present)
- **Valerie Duquette** (Jan 1, 2008 to April 22, 2008)
- **Liane Fransblow** (Jan 1, 2008 to May 1, 2008)
- **Kyall Glennie** (May 1, 2008 to May 11, 2008 as Secretary)
- **David Jones** (May 10, 2008 to Dec 31, 2008)
- **Graham Lyons** (Jan 1, 2008 to present; (as Secretary starting July 11, 2008)
- **Kathy McKay** (May 1, 2008 to present as Treasurer)
- **Clea Moray** (incorporation to September 21, 2007; May 1, 2008 to present (as President and Executive Committee Chair starting May 1, 2008))
- **David Potter** (August 14, 2008 to present)
- **Doug Ross** (incorporation to December 31, 2007)
- **Cheryl Schroeder** (May 10, 2008 to present)

This report was prepared by Clea Moray, President and Chair of the Executive Committee from May 1, 2008

Graduate Council – Report

Sept 1, 2007 – August 31, 2008

Introduction

Council is the highest governing body of the GSS, so this report will give a general overview of the Society's actions and activities during the past year.

The Graduate Student Society at SFU was incorporated on July 26, 2007, and has been the sole student society for SFU graduate students since May 1, 2008 (this year!). The GSS is funded exclusively through membership fees collected by SFU as part of the student activity fee, as authorized by grad student referendum. All graduate students at SFU are automatically members of the GSS; in the Fall semester of 2007, this comprised approximately 4200 people.

The purposes of the GSS are defined in our constitution: representing and advocating for the interests of graduate students at SFU; supporting and promoting grad student activities; working with other groups on campus to promote the interests of the SFU student body as a whole; providing services to promote the interests of SFU grads.

What is Council?

The Graduate Council ("Council") is the highest governing body of the GSS, approving all large contracts, determining the specific priorities of the Society, and overseeing our overall operations. In corporate terms, it is the "board of directors" of the GSS. Council normally meets monthly.

Under the GSS, grad students are organized at program/department/faculty level into "graduate caucuses". All grad students in a department have one representative on Council that is elected by the students in that department caucus. Grad students in non-departmentalized faculties (*i.e.* Business Administration, Education, and Health Sciences) get from one to three reps, depending on the number of grads in the faculty.

Council has a number of committees that report to it and do the between-meeting work and planning. Most committees are composed of a mixture of Council members and grad students from the general membership. The following standing committees were active during the 2007-8 year: Executive Committee, Benefit Plan Committee, Grant Allocation Committee, Electoral Committee, Social Committee, and Society Relations Committee. Only the Electoral Committee and the Executive Committee can take action independently of Council (the latter meets weekly and has specific responsibility for oversight of the day-to-day management of the GSS, and for giving direction to the President, Secretary, and Treasurer) but they must report all their actions back to Council; all other committees meet as needed and make recommendations that are then voted on by Council.

Council Composition & Participation 2007-8

In the absence of a President, Council appointed Computer Science Council Representative Michael Letourneau as its Chair from Sept 1, 2007 to April 30, 2008. The first GSS President, Clea Moray, took over as Council Chair on May 1, 2008.

During the 2007-8 year Council ranged in size from 22 to 27 voting members (caucus representatives plus 1 representative from the Teaching & Support Staff Union). Council currently has 30 voting members (Feb 1, 2009), and 8 department/units without representatives.

Advocacy and Representation for Graduate Student Interests

Prior to May 1, 2008, student society advocacy and representation for grads mainly operated through the Graduate Issues Committee ("GIC") of the Simon Fraser Student Society ("SFSS") instead of through the GSS. This report only deals with activities of the GSS.

Graduate Council – ReportSept 1, 2007 – August 31, 2008

The GSS communicates with SFU's administration about graduate student issues directly through regular meetings between the GSS President and the Dean of Graduate Studies, and through meetings with other University administrators as needed. The impact of provincial underfunding of universities on the quality of graduate student education at SFU and on SFU's budget was a significant new area of concern this year. Ongoing issues include student-supervisor relationships and graduate student funding. Council receives updates on these topics to pass on and discuss with their grad caucuses.

In addition, the GSS appoints graduate student representatives to university committees. This year, in addition to the usual permanent committees, the GSS appointed grad students to a number of search committees for critical positions including the Dean of Graduate Studies and several Faculty Deans.

This year also saw the first External Review of the Office of the Dean of Graduate Studies; the GSS presented a comprehensive written report to the reviewers based on consultations with numerous graduate students from across the university, and also met with the reviewers in person.

The GSS engaged in some advocacy work on issues extending beyond SFU this year, both alone, but more often in conjunction with GIC, the SFSS, the TSSU, and/or BC student coalitions. This included:

- supporting calls for moving towards free tuition to bring Canada into compliance with Article 13 of the United Nations International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights;
- supporting striking teaching assistants at McGill University;
- working to roll back cuts to the Teaching Assistant budget in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences and raise awareness of the likelihood of imminent TA budget cuts in other Faculties;
- raising awareness amongst students of the provincial underfunding of postsecondary education and its impact on students.

Service Provision & Support for Grad Student Activities

Prior to May 1, 2008, student society services for grads were mainly operated through the SFSS instead through of the GSS. This report deals specifically with activities of the GSS.

Graduate Benefit Plan

The GSS took over from the SFSS its contract with the benefit plan insurance broker, StudentCares, on May 1, 2008, and later renewed this contract for a term of September 1, 2008 to August 31, 2009. The yearly fee charged to graduate students increased to \$332.88 starting September 1, 2008 in order to increase dental benefits. All assets associated with the benefit plan that had been under possession of the SFSS (including substantial cash assets) were transferred to the GSS around May 1, 2008. Moving ownership of the plan from the SFSS to the GSS went smoothly with no disruption of service to graduate students. Administration of the plan is approximately the same as before, the main change being that the plan is increasingly being overseen by a permanent committee (the Benefit Plan Committee) and its Chair, instead of by the main elected graduate student representative (the Graduate Issues Officer of the SFSS). Work in ongoing to clarify, simplify, and improve administrative practices relating to financial reconciliation, appeals, and complaints associated with the plan.

Socials

The responsibility for running grad socials at Burnaby campus was transferred from the GIC Socials Working Group to the GSS Social Committee on May 1, 2008. Between May and August 2008 a single social was held by the GSS (co-sponsored by the TSSU), on July 4, 2008. Socials have continued since then in the same manner as under the SFSS, with the only change being the happy abandonment of pizza in favour of other foods that are slightly more expensive but greatly more pleasing to the palate.

Legal Clinic

The free legal clinic operated by the SFSS remains open to grad students under the GSS. This arrangement is laid out in a contract with the SFSS whereby the GSS pays a portion of the operating costs in exchange for continued

Graduate Council – ReportSept 1, 2007 – August 31, 2008

access. The SFSS performs all administration associated with this service. The legal clinic takes place every Thursday, year-round.

Ombudsperson

The role of the Ombudsperson is to ensure that all members of the university community receive fair and equitable treatment on campus. The Ombudsperson is a neutral party who can assist students who are experiencing difficulties or disputes with the University, their Department or members of their supervisory committee. This position was funded exclusively by the SFSS until May 1, 2008 when a contract came into effect that shared the costs between the SFSS and the GSS. David Evans resigned from this position shortly thereafter, and the position was empty for the remainder of the financial year. In the meantime, the Ombuds Office was moving over to a new model, whereby it would be funded jointly by students and the university (this change was pursued on the advice of the Ombudsperson), and overseen by a joint committee, the "Ombuds Advisory Committee". The GSS entered a joint funding agreement with SFU and the SFSS that took effect on September 1, 2008. The GSS has a representative on the Ombuds Advisory Committee, who participated in the hiring of a new person to the jointly funded position. Subsequent to the end of the financial year, Jay Solman was hired to the Ombudsperson position in November 2008.

Graduate Student Advocacy Group

Since late summer 2008, the GSS has been working to set up the Graduate Student Advocacy Group, which will help students experiencing difficulty with their supervisors, departments, or with the University administration to present their case and ensure that they get the education they deserve. The Advocacy Group differs from the Ombudsperson in that the latter operates as a neutral party, whereas the Advocacy Group will advocate specifically on the side of graduate students.

UPass

Prior to May 1, 2008, the UPass was available to graduate students under a contract between the SFSS, SFU, and Translink. The GSS was added as a party to this contract, effective May 1, 2008. No disruption in the UPass program occurred, and the GSS now has representation on all joint committees related to the UPass.

Women's Centre

The Women's Centre is a resource centre operated by the SFSS, but is open to all members of the university community (including graduate students). "The Lounge Area includes a meeting place, study space, notice boards for community and campus events, jobs and advocacy, resource information, a free phone, a full kitchen and microwave... The Resource Office provides campus and crisis referrals as well as community resource information. The Centre's Library has over 3500 feminist books, magazines/zines, newsletters and videos."¹ Starting May 1, 2008, the GSS pays a portion of the operating costs for the Women's Centre.

Out on Campus

Out on Campus is a resource centre for lesbian, gay, transgendered and bisexual people and their allies and is operated by the SFSS, but is open to all members of the university community (including graduate students). The centre "offer[s] a wide range of events and activities, ranging from socials to workshops to discussion groups. [They] also offer references to counselling and support for students, staff and faculty of Simon Fraser... a lounge, a library, a kitchen, and an office area with two computers and a free phone."² Starting May 1, 2008, the GSS pays a portion of the operating costs for Out on Campus.

International Students Group (ISG)

The ISG is comprised of international students at SFU who work to foster social and practical support for international students, and to protect their interests on campus. "SFU has a very geographically diverse international student population that face a number of challenges at the University. ... International students often

¹ From their website (<http://www.sfu.ca/womenscentre/>), retrieved Feb 1, 2009.

² From their website (<http://www.sfu.ca/out-on-campus/>), retrieved Feb 1, 2009.

Graduate Council – ReportSept 1, 2007 – August 31, 2008

face problems finding accommodations when they arrive in Canada [and may] encounter many additional bureaucratic obstacles, such as difficulty in receiving medical services, applying for and renewing work or study visas, and filing income tax returns."³ Starting May 1, 2008, the GSS pays a portion of the operating costs for ISG.

Students United for Disability Services (SUDS)

SUDS is comprised of SFU students who self-identify as having a disability. SUDS works to "promote the integration of students with disabilities into the greater community in Simon Fraser University (SFU) and their mission is to provide support, a form of representation, equal opportunities and an advocacy site for students with disabilities."⁴ SUDS is administered by the SFSS, but is open to all SFU graduate and undergraduate students. Starting May 1, 2008, the GSS pays a portion of the operating costs for SUDS.

Clubs

As members of the SFSS until May 1, 2008, graduate students had the same access to campus clubs as undergrads. After that date, graduate students could still join clubs, but their membership did not count towards club base funding awarded by the SFSS nor minimum membership requirements, and clubs were required to have at least two undergraduate students on a club's executive. The GSS did not have any involvement in the SFSS club system, nor did the GSS have a clubs infrastructure of its own. Based on feedback from graduate students, the GSS began investigating options for a grad student club system in the summer of 2008. Since the end of the financial year, a new system has been put in place whereby graduate students have full, equal status to undergraduates in SFSS clubs (i.e., they now count towards club base funding and minimum membership requirements, and the requirement for undergrads on club executives has been removed). The SFSS continues to perform all administration associated with clubs, and the GSS will pay the SFSS the portion of club base funding that relates to graduate student membership.

The Company Car

Over the summer 2008 the GSS investigated joining The Company Car (operated by the Co-operative Auto Network), so that graduate students could join for a \$50 administrative fee. The GSS joined The Company Car following the end of the financial year.

Grad Student Social Space

The space in the Maggie Benston Centre that the GSS currently occupies is sufficient for administration and small-scale social activities, but not large enough to allow any future expansion. Additionally, SFU lacks a graduate student pub; on most university campuses a grad pub serves as a key place for grad students to exchange ideas in a relaxed setting after work. Since its inception, the GSS has been involved in discussions about student space with SFU and the SFSS.

Planning for a possible future Student Union Building (SUB) at SFU has been an ongoing project of the SFSS for a few years, and the GSS has been participating in this process since incorporation (note: no commitment has been made to be involved in construction of a SUB building). The GSS was originally represented in SUB discussions by Council Chair Mike Letourneau, and in July 2008 Council created a permanent committee to discuss and plan for possible GSS involvement in a SUB. That committee's mandate has since been expanded to include GSS space in general, and the committee is looking into other options for expanding GSS social space and potential grad pub locations, as well as working with business consultants to ensure that no commitment is made to such projects unless they are likely to be financially viable.

In the shorter term, the GSS is working to improve the usefulness of the Laurine Harrison Graduate Student Lounge as a social space for graduate students.

³ From the SFSS website (<http://www.sfss.ca/Constituencies.html>), retrieved Feb 1, 2008.

⁴ From the SFSS website (http://www.sfss.ca/Accessibility_Fund.html), retrieved Feb 1, 2009.

Graduate Council – ReportSept 1, 2007 – August 31, 2008

Laurine Harrison Grad Student Lounge

The lounge is a comfy area with couches, located in Maggie Benston Centre room 2212. The lounge passed from the jurisdiction of the SFSS Graduate Issues Committee to the GSS on May 1, 2008.

In a dedication ceremony in July 2008, the lounge and adjoining meeting room were renamed in honour of longtime SFSS Ombudsperson Laurine Harrison, who passed away in 2007. The GSS also made a \$500 donation to the Laurine Harrison Endowment Fund (funds a student bursary) at that time.

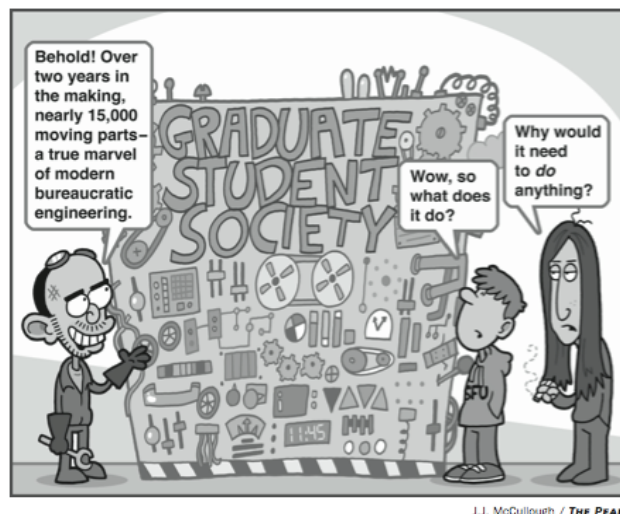
The GSS started to provide wireless internet access to the lounge starting in early summer 2008. Over the summer tentative planning began to make more use of the lounge for activities such as film nights and interdisciplinary seminar series, activities which began in January 2009. Since the end of the financial year, plans have been approved to install audiovisual equipment in the lounge and expand its use to caucus-run activities.

Caucus funding

Council approved caucus funding committee recommendations in September 2007 to implement a core/travel/grant caucus funding model based to that of the SFSS, adjusting the amounts of core funding in accordance with the By-laws to provide a more even per-member funding amount, keeping travel funding the same, and with a reduced grant fund (offset by increases in core funding). This system took effect in May, 2008. The Grant Allocation Committee ("GAC") was created in April 2008, with the job of reviewing grant requests and recommending to Council whether to approve or reject such requests. Over the summer of 2008 it became apparent that the funding model for travel grants would not work (i.e., not enough money), and travel grants started to be declined by the GSS main office about halfway through the semester because all funding had been exhausted. Council established a new committee to review options for changing the travel grant system. In Fall 2008, on the advice of this committee, travel grants were eliminated and the budget for travel grants was combined with caucus core funding, caucuses having the option to grant travel awards from core funds at their own discretion. Overall, the caucus funding system seems to be stable and functioning adequately now.

Internal Administration

As a new student society, it's not surprising that Council spent a large amount of time this year setting up internal bureaucracy. And then spent a large amount of time trying to simplify it and fix the inevitable problems. Thankfully some of our members are amazingly good at admin and also some even seem to enjoy it:



Here is a very summary summary of major administrative events during the past year:

Graduate Council – ReportSept 1, 2007 – August 31, 2008

Regulations & Committees

Council approved a large number of regulations, and some have since been revised several times. This includes things like privacy policies, financial control regulations, and regulation that set the amount of stipends. Council also created a number of permanent and temporary committees. All regulations & committee terms of reference are available on the GSS website (<http://www.sfgradsociety.ca/>).

Contracts

A number of contracts were entered into, including the following major ones:

- Sublease agreement with the SFSS to provide the GSS' current office space (rooms 2201, 2203, 2205, 2009, 2211, and 2212 in the Maggie Benston Centre)
- Retained Pivot LLP as the Society's general legal counsel
- Agreement with SFU and the SFSS to jointly fund the Ombuds Office as of September 1, 2008
- Agreement with SFU, the SFSS, and TransLink to continue to provide the U-Pass to graduate students
- Contract with the Quebec Student Health Alliance ("StudentCare.Networks") to act as broker for the benefit plan from September 1, 2008 to August 31, 2009
- Agreement with the SFSS to provide access to the Ombuds Office, Legal Clinic, Out-on-Campus, Women's Centre, Students United for Disability Support, and International Students Group, in return for a proportional share of their funding
- Student Union Building Concept Plan Letter of Agreement with Simon Fraser University (to pay a share towards the cost of hiring Bing Thom Architects to develop a Concept Plan for a possible Student Union Building)

Union employer status & transfer of Benefit Plan staff

Working with CUPE 5396 (the union representing the staff working for the grad benefit plan), the GSS applied to the BC Labour Relations Board and was granted standing as the successor employer for these staff (who now comprise a separate bargaining unit within CUPE 5396). We worked with the union to approve a letter of agreement that would allow the application of the existing Collective Agreement between CUPE 5396 and the SFSS to the GSS' structure. Job descriptions were created, and arrangements were made to provide employee benefits and comply with other provisions of the Collective Agreement. The Benefit Plan Coordinator, Kathy Brackley, accepted the GSS' offer of to transfer her employment to the GSS as of May 1, 2008, and did an excellent job of ensuring that there was no disruption to the benefit plan during its transfer to the GSS.

Creation of Executive Director Position

Just before the end of the financial year, the GSS began investigating the possibility of creating a fulltime Executive Director position. Michael Letourneau was hired as Interim Executive Director in September 2008.

Referenda, Elections & General Meeting:

The GSS Electoral Committee oversees referenda and elections. There were two elections and two referenda in the 2007-8 year.

- October 2007: Referendum to set all initial membership fees of the GSS, including general membership fee, benefit plan levy, U-Pass levy, capital fund levy, Peak fee, SFPIRG fee, CJSF fee, World University Service of Canada (WUSC) Student Refugee Program fee, and First Nations Student Association fee. Council endorsed a "yes" vote for all of these fees. Polling occurred online on October 29th and 30th. Between 584 and 591 votes were cast for each referendum question and all referendum questions passed.
- Feb 2008: Referendum to increase the maximum amount of the benefit plan levy from \$300 to \$340 per year in order to increase the dental benefits. Polling occurred online from Mar 10th to 12th and the referendum question passed with a large margin in favor. However, turnout was low (below 10%), and therefore Council was required to decide whether to validate the results (Council voted in favour of validating the results). A concurrent election of Officers of the GSS for the term beginning May 1, 2008 ended with all nominees being acclaimed (President: Clea Moray; Secretary: Kyall Glennie; Treasurer: Kathy McKay).

Graduate Council – Report

Sept 1, 2007 – August 31, 2008

- June 2008: A by-election was held to fill the position of Secretary following the resignation of Kyall Glennie. Polling was conducted online on July 8th and 9th, and Graham Lyons was elected to the position.

Last year's Annual General Meeting was held in February 2007. About 50 people attended, not enough to vote on the proposed bylaw changes. (Maybe this year...?)

Conclusion & Plans for the Future

This year was particularly administration-heavy because it was our first year of full operation and so we had to figure out how to do everything and then write it all down, as well as set up a large number of contracts and agreements. Now more time is available to move forward new service projects (such as the Grad Student Advocacy Group and investigating the potential for a Grad Pub), and expand efforts in advocacy and representation within and beyond the University. The upcoming year will also see the hiring of a permanent Executive Director.

We'd like to end this report by thanking SFU grad students for their patience and support during this first year!

Over the 2007-8 year,

GSS Council was: Ursula Arndt, Andi Steimel, Usana Al-Atar, Becky Scott, Mike Letourneau, Marcus Liang, Shirin Karimifar, Graham Lyons, Cyrille Medard de Chardon, Kathy McKay, Valérie Duquette, David Potter, Paul Vrbik, Cheryl Schroeder, Brent Smith, Carroll Boydell, Tyson Doust, Dave Kent, Clea Moray, Doug Ross, Joel Blok, Derek Turner, David Jones, Liane Fransblow, Kyle Jackson, Kyle Vincent, Billy Collins, Camilla Sears, Andrew Mitchell, Kyall Glennie, Jasmine Korcok, Simon Bonner, Tony Clark, Camilla Speller, Julia Smith, Sara Sadeghi, Alison Hurlbert, Mike Campo, Marta Iniewska, Luis Moncayo, Milena Droumeva, Sara Grimes.

GSS Committees were: Brian LaBore, Karen Kelly, Emily Meuser, Lindsay Zibrik, Dan Haas, Kathy Brackley, Caroline Soo, Aviv Etya, Anthony Kupferschmidt (plus a bunch of people from Council)

This report was prepared by Clea Moray, President and Chair of Council from May 1, 2008