

COUNCIL UPDATE



GSS Council met on November 26 2012 and December 10 2012 for its regular monthly meetings. President Andrew Petter and Dr. Wade Parkhouse, Dean of Graduate Studies, joined Council at the beginning of the November meeting to answer questions and concerns from students. Council was followed by introductions of the nominees for the Coordinator elections.

Major decisions made at Council:

- Council approved additional compensation for the former Interim OFO, Haida Antolick, for excess hours worked during her term. The Interim OFO's transition report was circulated to Council before the meeting.
- The Hiring Committee is pleased to announce Amina Rai as the successful candidate for the GSS Executive Director Position. Council ratified employing Amina Rai in the position of Executive Director.
- Council voted to rescind the videoconferencing motion that was originally passed at the August 20th 2012 Council meeting. This means that videoconferencing at Council will be ceased however the option remains open of revisiting the concept in the future. Council expressed appreciation for the great work of the Videoconferencing Working Group.
- The Benefit Plan Contingency fund was created in June 2012 to help offset potential costs when the 2-year guaranteed rate from Desjardins Financial Security for the GSS Benefit Plan will expire. Council adopted the Benefit Plan Contingency Fund Regulation that outlines the purpose and administration of this plan.
- The by-laws passed at the Special General Meeting on October 24 2012, made increases to the working hours for Coordinators from 20 to range of 30-40 hours per month. Council amended the existing regulations to increase Coordinator stipends from \$500 per month to \$875 per month in order to reflect the change in hours.
- Because the by-law changes increased the range of hours for Coordinators and Officers, however, motions passed prior to the SGM that approved additional hours for the Grad Services Coordinator (GSC) and the Professional Development Coordinator (PDC), it was unclear as to how the by-law changes would affect current Executive Committee members. Council approved to make the by-law changes effective immediately for the Financial Coordinator, the MCRO, the AIRO, and the CERO and secondly, to grandfather the existing motions for the GSC and the PDC.
- Given the flat hierarchical structure of the GSS Executive Committee, some interpersonal and work-related challenges can be difficult to address proactively and

satisfactorily. Council approved the "Conflict Resolution Contract" for the Executive Committee which governs the working relationships among the Executive Committee. Council approved this document as presented. Thank you to Tyler Fox (SIAT Councillor) for helping in the creation of this contract!

- Council approved the regulation for Committees that outlines the standards regarding the composition, status of members, and frequency of meetings for Committees of the GSS.
- The TSSU's external seat status on the GSS Council was reaffirmed. Council directed the governance committee to revisit the purpose of external seats on Council. This will be presented no later than the April 2013 Council meeting.
- Council approved an official acknowledgement of the Indigenous territories that SFU is located on.

Discussions held at Council:

- Council members raised concerns to President Petter and Dean Parkhouse regarding International graduate student fees, supporting growth at SFU Surrey and Vancouver, and proactivity in connecting with industrial research.
- Council discussed as a Committee of the Whole item the Capital Levy in relation to the GSS' current financial situation, the current deficit budget, and suggestions regarding how to use the Capital Levy to offset operational costs. Committee of the Whole discussions do not involve passing official motions, but will guide future proposals that will return to Council for approval.
- Council discussed as a Committee of the Whole the future of the ThinkAgain! Interdisciplinary conference. Council expressed interest in continuing this initiative and made suggestions and recommendations.

Upcoming dates:

- **Next Council Meeting** - To Be Decided
- The GSS Offices will be closed from Dec.22- January 2nd inclusive.
- Caucus grants are due January 2nd 2013.