

**Attendance at FGSR Council – April 22, 2020**
**Department/Unit Faculty Representatives**

Agricultural, Food & Nutritional Science	Rene Jacobs
Anthropology	Marko Zivkovic
Art & Design	Lisa Claypool
Biochemistry	David Stuart
Biological Sciences	James Stafford
Business (non-departmentalized) - MBA	Michael Maier
Business (non-departmentalized) - PhD	Trish Reay
Cell Biology	Richard Wozniak
Chemicals & Materials Engineering	Vinay Prasad
Chemistry	Anita Weiler
Civil & Environmental Engineering	Selma Guigard
Communication Sciences & Disorders	Jacqueline Cummine
Computing Science	Janelle Harms
Dentistry (Medical Sciences)	Carlos Flores Mir
Digital Humanities	Jonathan Cohn
Drama	Piet Defraeye
Drama	Stefano Muneroni
Earth & Atmospheric Sciences	Murray Gingras
East Asian Studies	Tsuyoshi Ono
Economics	Heather Eckert
Educational Policy Studies	Jorge Sousa
Educational Psychology	Veronica Smith
Electrical & Computer Engineering	Marek Reformat
Elementary Education	Jennifer Branch-Mueller
English and Film Studies	Mark Simpson
Extension (non-departmentalized) (MACT, MACE)	Gordon Gow
Faculte Saint-Jean (non-departmentalized)	Samira El Atia
History & Classics	Adam Kemezis
Human Ecology	Rachel McQueen
Internetworking (MINT)	Michael MacGregor
Kinesiology, Sport, and Recreation (non-departmentalized)	Elisha Krochak
Laboratory Medicine & Pathology	Monika Keelan
Law (non-departmentalized)	Linda Reif
Linguistics	Johanne Paradis
Mathematical & Statistical Science	Jochen Kuttler
Mechanical Engineering	Morris Flynn
Medical Genetics (Medical Sciences)	Rachel Wevrick
Medical Microbiology & Immunology	Edan Foley
Medicine	Nadia Jahroudi
Modern Languages & Cultural Studies	Micah True
Music	Maryam Moshaver
Native Studies (non-departmentalized)	Adam Gaudry

Nursing	Dianne Tapp
Obstetrics & Gynecology (Medical Sciences)	Denise Hemmings
Occupational Therapy	Shaniff Esmail
Oncology	Alan Underhill
Pediatrics (Medical Sciences)	Sujata Persad
Pharmacology	Frances Plane
Pharmacy & Pharmaceutical Sciences (non-departmentalized)	Arno Siraki
Philosophy	Ingo Brigandt
Physics	Craig Heinke
Political Science	Siobhan Byrne
Psychiatry	Allen Chan
Psychology	Chris Westbury
Rehabilitation Medicine - Rehabilitation Sciences	Patricia Manns
Religious Studies	Jocelyn Hendrickson
Resource Economics & Environmental Sociology	Henry An
School of Public Health (non-departmentalized)	Ruth Wolfe
Secondary Education	Bonnie Watt
Sociology	Amy Kaler
Women's and Gender Studies	Felice Lifshitz

**Associate Deans (Graduate) Representatives for Departmentalized Faculties**

Agricultural, Life and Environmental Sciences (ALES)	Leluo Guan
Arts	Tom Spalding
Education	Elaine Simmt
Medicine & Dentistry	Hanne Ostergaard

**Ex-Officio Representatives**

FGSR Dean & Vice-Provost (FGSR Council Chair)	Brooke Milne
FGSR Vice-Dean	Bryan Hogeveen
FGSR Associate Dean	Victoria Ruétalo
FGSR Associate Dean	Tracy Raivio
FGSR Associate Dean	Janice Causgrove Dunn
FGSR Associate Dean	Ali Shiri
Vice-Provost and University Registrar (or Delegate)	Carlo Dimailig
Vice-Provost and Chief Librarian (or Delegate)	Dale Askey
Chair, FGSR Academic Appeals Committee*	Andie Palmer

**Graduate Program Administrators Committee (GPAC) Representatives**

Faculty of Extension	Eileen Crookes
Department of Mechanical Engineering	Gail Dowler

**Graduate Student Association (GSA) Directly Elected Officials Representatives**

GSA President	Fahed Elian
VP Labour (Incoming)	Umesh Nimmathi
VP Academic (Outgoing)	Dylan Ashley
VP Academic (Incoming)	Sachiketha Reddy

**Graduate Student Association (GSA) Council Representatives**

Mechanical Engineering, PhD	Fatemeh Razavi
Surgery, PhD	Hayden Danyluk
Human Ecology, MSc	Jon Lai
Biomedical Engineering, PhD	Kevin Solar
East Asian Studies, MA	Mei Nan
Neuroscience, MSc	Nicole Dittman
Rehabilitation Medicine, PhD	Peter Jun
Mechanical Engineering, MSc	Ramin Fathian
Medicine, MSc	Reed Sutton
Mechanical Engineering, PhD	Samira Doostie
Pharmacology, MSc	Zoë Dworsky-Fried
Civil and Environmental Engineering, PhD	Adekunle Mofolasayo

**Observers – Non-Voting\***

FGSR HR & Operations Coordinator (Council Secretary)*	Medha Samarasinghe
Associate Dean, Student Services - Dean of Students Administration*	Helen Vallianatos
FGSR Awards Supervisor*	Amanda Brown
FGSR Director, Professional Development*	Renee Polziehn
FGSR EA to the Associate Deans*	Dena Giroux
FGSR Executive Coordinator*	Andrea Riewe
FGSR Governance Coordinator*	Maria Chia
FGSR Senior Lead, Educational Curriculum Developer, Graduate Teaching and Learningcharter*	Deanna Davis
FGSR Program Services & Admissions Supervisor*	Joyce Anderson
Graduate Ombudsperson Intern*	Bhuva Narayanan
Graduate Ombudsperson*	Brent Epperson
FGSR Communications Coordinator*	Rob Desjardins
Director, Professional Learning Faculty of Education - Deans Office *	Scott Key

\*Non-Voting

## FGSR Council April 22, 2020

### 1.0 Call to Order at 2:07 PM

Vice-Dean Bryan Hogeveen called the meeting to order and reminded Council members about the process of using Zoom. This is FGSR Council's first ever virtual meeting.

### 2.0 Approval of Agenda for April 22, 2020

**Moved / Seconded:** Alan Underhill / Ali Shiri

Approved by general consent.

*Announcement:* "Note that the meeting will be recorded to assist us with record keeping, but once the minutes are approved, we will delete the recording. No one else should be recording. Note that Andrea Riewe will access the recording of the meeting; however, Bryan Hogeveen and Brent Epperson appear as co-hosts because they are presenting during the meeting."

Vice-Dean Hogeveen noted that the item on GSC Membership had been removed from the agenda. The Chair of the committee will be canvassing for more volunteers and will bring this item back next month. The Chair is in the process of reaching out to Associate Chairs of Departments lacking representation on the GSC to request their assistance in identifying new members. Please reach out to Associate Dean Tracy Raivio if you have any questions.

### 3.0 Approval of Minutes of March 2020

**Moved / Seconded:** Samira El Atia / Jennifer Branch-Mueller

Approved by electronic vote.

The last FGSR Council meeting was cancelled, and the voting items were moved to an electronic vote conducted remotely via email. The votes were included in the package for the current meeting, as were the questions and answers that were emailed about the items.

#### **4.0 Matters Arising from the Minutes**

A member noted that in the phrase *Études interdisciplinaires canadiennes*, all three words should end with an 's'.

The Minutes were approved by a show of hands.

#### **5.0 Approve New Graduate Scholarship Committee (GSC) Members**

[Removed from the agenda; see note above]

#### **6.0 Annual Report on Graduate Enrolment**

The FGSR is both an academic and administrative faculty and it has a pan-institutional view of, and accountability for, graduate education across campus. Our purpose is to provide the campus with timely, accurate and consistent service to students and administrators, and to partner with departments and disciplinary faculties to support program quality. One of the ways we do this is by relying on relevant and accurate data for decision making. This report is a snapshot of the most recent year's data as well as trends over time.

Two interesting points from Canadian Graduate and Professional Students Survey (CGPSS) are as follows: (1) 30% of our graduate students said that they worked on average of 20 or more paid hours every week, doing work that had little or no connection to their studies or research. (2) 46% of students said the primary reason for enrolling in their programs was to equip them to start or advance in a career outside of academia. 20% said it was to satisfy an interest in the field, regardless of career prospects.

Graduate students at the UofA make up 20% of our total student population. Vice-Dean Hogeveen noted that graduate enrolment has increased over the past couple of years. Certificates and Course-based Master's are up the most and the latter exceeds PhDs for the second year in a row. Indigenous enrolments are small but continue on an upward trend in all degree programs; the highest of these is in professional course-based master's programs. Almost 40% of all graduate students enrolled at the UofA are international. This is the highest percentage yet, and is led by the Faculties of Engineering, Pharmacy, Science and ALES.

Looking at the graph of applications and enrolments saw an upward bump in 2017-18; this is likely due to the fact that GSMS has allowed us to do a better job of tracking incoming applications. The application process remains competitive, as we are admitting about 25% of the students who apply to our programs. Unlike undergraduate students, 30% of our students do not start in the Fall term, so these

numbers for the most recent year do not include the students who start in Spring and Summer. There appears to be a decrease in domestic applications; FGSR will keep an eye on this. The number of international applications remains high but this has not translated into a larger number of offers or enrolments. This year the Admission GPA was 3.6, which is the highest it has been in a decade across all three program categories.

This year we also had the highest number of convocants ever in all three major program categories.

Vice-Dean Hogeveen noted that FGSR continues to fine-tune the methodology for calculating completion times. International students consistently complete their degrees in less time than domestic students. The average time to completion, however, has risen for both international and domestic students.

FGSR continues to work towards enhancing graduate student success. Increasing the quality of supervision and supporting the enhancement of the Indigenous student experience are two such initiatives.

***Questions and Discussion:***

- A Council member asked if there were data on completion rates as well as completion times. He inquired about how we compare to the other U15 institutions. Vice-Dean Hogeveen noted that while we do not have access to other U15 data, from informally speaking with various counterparts at CAGS and other meetings he knows that our rates are consistent with others.
- A Council member noted that a few years ago the government changed rules around qualifying for permanent residency. The changes to how these points are calculated may play a role in the changes to time to completion for international students. Vice-Dean Hogeveen noted that a better understanding of the increased times to completion also means that we can find better ways to support students to finish in a reasonable time.
- Vice-Dean Hogeveen suggested the data will help inform how FGSR can best support programs and students. As we do faculty-wide strategic planning, these data can help us prioritize areas of concern and increased focus. We hope the data will also be useful for graduate programs and faculties.
- In response to a question, Vice-Dean Hogeveen acknowledged that next year's data will have to take into consideration the impacts of COVID-19.
- He also noted that the information about 30% of students working outside of their program is from the CGPSS data and this is for students in all programs. We can look into this more; the CGPSS survey is done every 3 years and we may consider adjusting the questions to capture more details.
- We do not yet know what enrolment targets the UCP government will set for graduate students. In addition, the data in this report do not speak to the quality of the programs, but we do have other ways to collect that information. For example, the quality assurance process initiated by the Provost Office and supported by FGSR will allow us to get a sense of the quality of programs.

## 7.0 Office of the Student Ombuds Presentation

Vice-Dean Hogeveen introduced Dr. Brent Epperson, the Graduate Ombuds, and Ms. Bhuvan Narayanan, the current Graduate Ombuds Intern.

Dr. Epperson outlined the services offered by the Ombuds Office. In addition to offering advice and support on academic and disciplinary issues to students, they act as an impartial third party for disputes between students and the University. Their services are confidential and free, and they are independent from the faculty and student associations. They are accessible to all students (undergraduate or graduate), post-doctoral fellows, and medical residents, and are available in person and by remote consultation for individuals worried about privacy.

The Graduate Ombuds staff specifically provide support to graduate students, postdoctoral fellows, medical residents, faculty, staff, and applicants on university policies and procedures, and on informal and formal conflicts. The Graduate Ombuds intern advises graduate students and graduate program applicants through academic, discipline, interpersonal, or financial issues that arise during their programs.

In 2019, of the 1314 visitors to the Office Of Student Ombuds, 307 were graduate students. Dr. Epperson emphasized that they see a disproportionate number of international students. In general, the graduate student cases are more complicated, have multiple issues, and take more time to resolve. In the last year, 73 cases involved supervisory issues. Other supervisory issues include differences in work style and communication styles, as well as less severe issues in which students want to improve relationships. In some cases of harassment, there are issues related to bullying and sexual harassment. In these situations some of the cases do not proceed to formal complaints; others are sent to various other offices in order to pursue next steps, and in other cases students switch supervisors as a way to resolve the issue. Other reasons for conflict include issues related to TA/RAs, Authorship, and interpersonal problems.

### **Questions and Comments:**

- A Council member noted that the University of Alberta Charter of Student Rights and Responsibilities has recently been approved by GFC and this may be a useful resource for the Office of Student Ombuds. He also asked if the office has been involved with the development of the FGSR supervisory tools. Dr. Epperson replied that he has worked closely with the FGSR for a number of years and knows their office has informed the need for such tools.
- A Council Member inquired about the number of harassment cases that go forward and the barriers that students face in moving forward with formal complaints. Dr. Epperson suggested that the process for moving complaints through a formalized process is not very good, it takes too long, and these timelines for resolution are not ideal for grad students as some take between 6 months to 2 years. Students are often discouraged from pursuing formal complaints -  
- sometimes by their departments.

Vice- Dean Hogeveen thanked Ms. Narayanan and Dr. Epperson for their continued support of graduate students.

## **8.0 GSA Monthly Report**

GSA President Fahed Elian presented the monthly report. He noted that the majority of the last few weeks has been spent dealing with COVID-19 issues. The GSA has been busy ensuring that there is accurate information on their website for graduate students about resources for information and financial support. A recent announcement by the federal government states that international students who were previously restricted to work only 20 hours off campus can now work more than 20 hours in jobs deemed “essential”. Mr. Elian is in close communication with Andrew Sharman, who is coordinating the UofA’s response to the challenges presented by COVID-19. The GSA has transferred \$100K to support for graduate students in need during this time. The eligibility for the bursaries is flexible so as to support students sooner.

He also mentioned the vodcast that he, Vice-Provost and Dean Brooke Milne, and GSA VP Academic Dylan Ashley did a few weeks ago. This vodcast answers many questions from graduate students and contains a lot of valuable information.

Mr. Elian also noted that the University of Alberta Charter of Student Rights and Responsibilities was approved by GFC. This makes the UofA only the second U15 to have such a document. This is a big achievement for the Student’s Union and the GSA.

He gave a final thanks to Council, Dean Milne, and the FGSR for their efforts on behalf of graduate students.

Mr. Ashley also thanked Council and FGSR for their thoughtful and critical work on supporting graduate students.

### ***Questions and Comments:***

- A Council member asked if there were more details about the federal funding opportunities for graduate students who may not be able to work over the summer months.
  - Mr. Elian noted that they are working to find out more information about the process and eligibility and will circulate it as it becomes available.

Vice-Dean Hogeveen thanked Mr. Elian and all of the outgoing GSA Elected Officials for their hard work, dedication to graduate students, many contributions to the FGSR Council, and for their collegiality as we worked together on graduate issues and initiatives over the past year.

- President: Fahed Elian
- Vice-President Academic: Dylan Ashley
- Vice-President External: Marc Waddingham
- Vice-President Labour: Mohammad Shanawaz

- Vice-President Student Services: Chantal Labonté

He also took a moment to welcome the new GSA Elected Officials:

- President: Marc Waddingham
- Vice-President Academic: Sachiketha Reddy
- Vice-President External: Anas Fassih
- Vice-President Labour: Umesh Nimmathi
- Vice-President Student Services: Sridhar Parasharamatham

## **9.0 Report from the Dean**

Dean Brooke Milne greeted Council Members and extended her apologies for missing the first half of the meeting due to an unavoidable scheduling conflict with the Provost's Office. She also echoed Vice-Dean Hogeveen's thanks to the outgoing GSA Elected Officials.

Dean Milne then moved into the next item so as to provide ample time for questions.

## **10.0 COVID-19: Discussion of Administrative Implications**

Dean Milne noted that FGSR had solicited questions in advance of the meeting so that the team could look into them ahead of time. After answering those questions first the floor would be open to take other questions.

### **Q: Will we know whether or not newly admitted students can begin their program in Fall 2020?**

A: Dean Milne explained that the most straightforward answer to this is that students who have been offered admission to a program at the UofA will be able to begin their program. No one is planning to delay or cancel the Fall 2020 term. We are working closely with UAI to sort out the details related to immigration and travel. International graduate students can begin their programs, taking classes remotely without physically having to be present, and they are able to take up to 50% of their program remotely. [Note, May 15: For current information regarding international students, immigration and the Fall 2020 term, see [this page](#).]

She noted that incoming students can also choose to defer their admissions. However, students should be encouraged to begin their programs as they had planned because we will have a curriculum that will be delivered remotely if we do not open campus by September. [Note, May 14: For information regarding Fall 2020 delivery, see [this page](#).]

International students who do not currently have a study permit and are planning to begin their program remotely should still apply for their permits so that they are prepared for when campus opens and they are able to travel to Edmonton.



Current students are also able to use existing leave regulations if, for whatever reason, they aren't able to progress in their program.

**Q: Will students arriving from international locations be required to quarantine?**

A: Dean Milne clarified that if there were still directives in place from provincial and federal chief medical officers of health, then our students would need to follow them.

There is no set date by which the UofA has to determine next steps; this is a fluid situation and we expect to know more in the coming weeks. All universities across Canada are in the process of planning for a variety of scenarios. It is likely that the UofA will consider a hybrid approach and have a small number of limited capacity face-to-face classes while others are delivered on-line. It is much easier to shut down campus operations than it is to start them back up. [Note, May 14: For information regarding Fall 2020 delivery, see [this page](#).]

In planning for these scenarios, the UofA is prioritizing health and safety and remaining in compliance with the health directives from the government.

Dean Milne noted that the University is not planning to defer the start of Fall 2020. The institutional expectation is to honor the offers of admission that have already been extended to incoming students for Fall 2020.

If departments are considering reopening their admissions in order to recruit additional domestic students in case there are restrictions for international students, Dean Milne cautioned against this plan. It is too early to tell how the fall will look and departments could find themselves with too many accepted offers and a larger than expected cohort. This larger than expected group may become difficult for departments to support.

**Q: Is it possible for students to acquire social insurance numbers in order to be paid as a TA or RA in Canada without crossing the actual border?**

A: UAI has clarified that students must have an actual study permit in order to apply for a SIN. They are unable to get the study permit (and the subsequent SIN) until they land at their first port of entry upon arrival to Canada. This means that newly admitted students will not be able to hold RA or TAs until they are physically in Canada. Immigration refugee and citizenship Canada have confirmed that due to COVID-19 students having to start their programs online will not be penalized when being assessed for their eligibility to work. [Note, May 15: The most up-to-date information regarding international students, employment and the Fall 2020 term is available on [this page](#) and [this page](#).]

**Q: When will the decision be made as to whether or not in person classes will be held in the fall?**



A: The university has several working groups that are trying to do contingency planning on three specific scenarios. The first of these is that we resume normal operations as of September and everything returns to the way that it has always been. The second scenario is that we have a hybrid delivery of programs in the fall, whereby students might start in a remote capacity and then see a gradual ramping up to face-to-face instruction on campus, beginning with some smaller seminar-type classes. The third scenario is the worst case scenario, wherein nothing is settled and we are in this liminal state for a protracted period of time, possibly not coming to a gradual resumption of normal operations until January 2021. Most universities are anticipating that scenario two, the hybrid model, is the most likely. The campus community will have a decisive answer by the middle of May. [Note, May 14: For information regarding Fall 2020 delivery, see [this page](#).]

**Q: What steps would be involved in a gradual reopening of the campus so that students can access libraries and computer labs?**

A: There is a University committee that is focusing specifically on contingency planning for research. For community research as well they are taking into consideration the health and safety of everyone and also making sure that we're in compliance with existing directives. [Note, May 15: For information on the gradual, phased resumption of research on campus, please see [this page](#).]

**Q: Can you let us know how and by whom our graduate education interests are being represented at those bodies?**

A: Dean Milne is sitting on the Public Health Response Team Committee Subcommittee on Academic Impacts. There are various subcommittees that are planning the Fall 2020 term. There is one Action Team specific to graduate students which is co-chaired by Dean Milne and Vice-Dean Hogeveen. The FGSR Associate Deans sit on this action team (or one of the others teams that have been established, ensuring that the graduate student perspective and graduate programs perspective are heard. Finally, several disciplinary faculty Associate Deans (Grad) sit on the graduate studies committee to provide perspectives and insights.

**Q: Can students take advantage of or complete the PD requirements, while they are on leave?**

A: No, students may not take any PD courses or meet PD requirements while they are on leave. This is because students need to be actively registered to participate in anything on campus. If they are drawing on university academic resources, the expectation is that they're registered and working on their program. Students are not to be working on their programs while they are on an approved leave of absence.

**Q: Will students who are close to completing but have had to stop working on writing their thesis, because they are doing childcare or looking after elder family members, have to pay tuition if they want to continue to be registered?**

A: The University is not able to waive tuition, but we are taking other steps to support students. For the Spring/Summer 2020 terms, the University is not charging Athletics and Recreation or PAW Centre fees. In addition, due to COVID-19 and the cancellation of transit fares, U-Pass fees will not be included in the Spring and Summer term assessments at this time. When transit resumes normal service levels and fares, the University will re-evaluate the U-Pass fee.

The UofA has emergency funding support in place already that students can access quickly to mitigate immediate short-term difficulties with loss of income. The Registrar's Office has a web page that lists the various sources of funding, how to apply, the criteria for eligibility; and they also provide a link to the GSA emergency bursaries fund.

There are a few administrative options to help students in these situations. First, graduate students who were waiting to complete final oral exams for Master's and PhD studies as their last final program requirement in Winter 2020 but who have been delayed because of the COVID-19 situation can request a tuition waiver. This assumes that they have no other requirements to meet and that they will not be drawing on any further academic resources. They can apply for a tuition waiver by having the department send a memo outlining the details to FGSR.

Students who find themselves in the position of being stalled in their program due to restrictions or issues related to COVID-19 would be eligible to apply for a Leave of Absence if they chose to do so.

Students who may face the demands of child care, are looking after family members, are having outside COVID-related employment in the health care sector, and so forth, would be eligible to apply to switch to part-time status if they feel it was unsustainable to continue with their studies full time. Students and their supervisor should carefully consider this option and the implications of switching to part-time status; notably, there may be impacts to eligibility for most scholarships and awards.

**Q: What will happen to courses with clinical components?**

A: The Subcommittee is focussed on addressing this issue. They have to ensure they comply with government directives, and Dean Milne assured council members that recommendations going forward will prioritize the best interest of students and will enable them to start or continue with their programs while maintaining safety.

**Q: Are you suggesting that all students who are unable to progress should go on a leave?**

A: Dean Milne clarified that no one is mandating any leaves. Students must consider their particular situations and implications to funding, time in program, and where they are in their research to determine what is best for them. They should work with their supervisor and department to make the best decision for their current situation.

**Q: How will the move to CR/NR in the Winter 2020 term impact students who are currently on probation?**

A: The FGSR with input from GEFAC has put together a table with some helpful guidelines around how best to navigate situations when the CR/NC may impact students. Being close to going on probation, currently being on probation, and meeting admissions conditions with certain GPAs are some of the scenarios we have considered. In these situations we're going to be treating students with as much consideration and empathy as we possibly can. These issues will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis, as the number of students currently on probation is very small.

**Q: What happens if international students aren't able to get study permits?**

A: We haven't instituted a policy related to this. It is advisable to communicate with students about the implications and have them be prepared should we reopen and should it make sense for them to be in Canada as quickly as possible. They can take remote classes and enrol even if their study permit is delayed. We have administrative levers to address complications should they arise in those instances when students are unable to get their study permits. It is important to honor the offers that we've already made and proceed as though we were anticipating things going back to normal sooner rather than later.

Dean Milne asked members of Council to send along any additional questions and to keep an eye out for the email messages to administrators that FGSR has been sending out with important information and relevant updates.

She noted that the next Council meeting, the last of the year, will be on May 27th.

Finally, this is 3MT season and Dean Milne was pleased to note that the FGSR team has made the move to a completely remote competition. There are 15 students who are competing to be the UA finalist and there have already been over 1000 votes for the People's Choice award. Please do take some time to watch the videos and vote for your favorite.

Dean Milne thanked members of Council for their participation and their patience in this virtual medium. She encouraged members to stay healthy and safe.

**11.0 Question Period**

See item 9.0

**12.0 Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 4:30 PM.