



Graduate Students' Union Executive Reports to General Council September 2016

Andrea Constantino
Academics and Funding Commissioner, Divisions 3&4
May 2nd to September 16 2016

A) Executive Committee and General Council Meetings

- I attended and participated and chaired in the Executive Committee meeting on Wednesday May 4th
- I attended and participated and chaired in the Executive Committee meeting on Tuesday May 10th
- I attended and participated in the Executive Committee meeting on Tuesday May 24th
- I attended and participated in the Executive Visioning and Anti-Oppression training on Tuesday May 31st
- I attended and participated in the Executive Committee meeting on Tuesday June 14th
- I was unable to attend the executive committee meeting on Tuesday June 21st
- I attended and participated in the Executive Committee meeting on Tuesday June 28th
- I attended and participated in the Executive Committee meeting on July 5th
- I attended and participated in the Executive Committee meeting on July 19th
- I attended and participated in Council Meeting July 19th
- I attended and participated in an Executive meeting on Tuesday August 9th.
- I attended and participated in an Executive meeting on Tuesday August 16th.
- I attended and participated and chaired in the Executive Committee meeting on Tuesday August 23rd
- I attended and participated in an Executive meeting on Tuesday August 30th.
- I was absent for academic purposes during the Executive meeting on Tuesday Sept 6th
- I attended and participated in an Executive meeting on Wednesday September 14th

B) Other UTGSU Committee, Levy Group, and Caucus Meeting Highlights

I. Funding Committee Meeting with Faculty of Law Thursday June 2nd

I met with students from the Faculty of Law that are frustrated that their funding package is only for 3 years- despite it being University Policy to fund doctoral degrees for 4 years. We discussed strategies the students could use when discussing this with their department, and I will write a letter to VP Graduate Research inquiring about funding.

II. Funding Committee Student Advocacy Wednesday June 8th

I was recently made aware of an international student who was being forced to work for free to make up for a financial mistake that had been made by the department. The student had come to me after going to her department and finance appeals body. I wrote a letter to the VP Graduate Research, who forwarded this letter to the Vice Dean of Graduate Programs. I met with the Vice Dean to further voice my concerns about the student's condition. The Vice Dean listened, and within the hour, the situation was resolved to the student's satisfaction.

C) University of Toronto Governing Body and Other Meeting Highlights

I. HDI Meeting with CUPE3902 Monday May 16th

The HDI administrator and I met with CUPE3902's Internal Liaison Officer (ILO) to discuss marketing strategies for our health care plans. We discussed easy-to-read infographics, as well as possible website designs to facilitate claims. The GSU will work collaboratively with CUPE3902 to ensure that students are informed about both health care plans and know how to submit claims for both. We are planning a claims submission 'blitz' for May 26th so that students can come and have one-on-one assistance from both the CUPE and GSU HDI administrators to submit their claims.

II. HDI GSU/CUPE3902 Claims Submission Blitz Wednesday June 1st

We had a great turn out of over 30 people to learn how to submit their claims and coordinate their GSU and CUPE3902 benefit plans. We received 95% positive feedback from participants. Furthermore, this event gave GSU and CUPE3902 a chance to meet and discuss marketing strategies for the coming year. At this meeting we decided on a singular submission claims form that both the GSU and CUPE3902 will use to minimize confusion amongst our membership.

III. Pride Picnic

I attended the Apus Pride Picnic on Wednesday July 29th. There was a great turn out and the DJ did a really good job. Our External executive had brought great supplies and had made a nice interactive chalkboard display. Over all it was a great event.

IV. HRS Orientation Assistant Interviews July 18th

I participated in the reading of resumes which were submitted for the position of Orientation assistant. The External Executive and I conducted 6 interviews of the most qualified candidates. The successful candidate was selected through secondary interview with orientation committee.

V. Meeting with Vice Provost Students Wednesday August 10th

I participated in a meeting with Vice Provost Students to discuss the Sexual Violence Prevention Policy and student consultations. The meeting was led by the Finance and

University Governance Executive. The Vice Provost Students agreed to financially support our efforts to host student-led consultations.

D) Other Meetings, Issues, Significant Events and information Highlights

I. Executive Training

Thursday May 5th

I attended an Executive training. The training centered on the Union, The Executive, The University, and Governance Documents such as the UTGSU bylaw, policy, and collective agreement.

II. Meeting with Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Studies

Wed. May 4th

Academic and Funding Commissioner 1&2, External Commissioner and I met with the Vice Provost, Locke Rowe. Significant gains have been made in our efforts to improve the funding situation for graduate students. An official limit of \$1500 of RA work is the maximum amount of employment income that can contribute to the funding package (after TA hours are complete) in the Faculty of Arts and Science. This is the first time there has been ANY policy limiting the amount of employment income that can contribute to the funding package, and the current practice is to include well above \$3000 of RAships. Furthermore, students in the Faculty of Social work will have to work 105 FEWER hours in their second and third years to receive their stipends, effectively receiving an additional \$3000 in University of Toronto Fellowship that was never offered before. Students in Civil Engineering have also received an increase in stipend- with a \$3000 increase being given specifically to second year Masters' students. We are working with the Faculty of Engineering to raise stipends for all students. Vice-Provost Rowe is working on assembling the funding value and composition data and has promised to have it published on the SGS website. This data is now available for students in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences. More data is expected to be released over the summer.

III. Web Support

I have been overseeing work of our temporary staff in conjunction with our External Executive.

IV. Graduate Professional Development

June 22

I met with a contact at Telus to see if we can arrange a presentation session for PhD candidates looking for employment in industry. The idea here would be for Telus to bring a data analysis exercise that is representative of the work they are looking to hire someone to do. In this way, students will get an idea of what kind of work is available, and Telus is connected with potential future employees.

V. Meeting with Vice Provost Graduate Research

July 8th

I met with the VP Graduate Research to talk about funding issues across departments, as well as discuss the student complaint center protocol. Furthermore, I received updates on the funding data and it is now available online for all departments.