
2019-2020 Grad Club Board of Directors Director's Reports

President's Report

The 2019-2020 year has been a year of many challenges and the most recent months have resulted in something of an annus horribilis. As with almost everything in our lives, the COVID-19 pandemic has profoundly impacted The Grad Club's ability to operate over the last eight months. We closed our doors on March 16th, 2020 and due to a myriad of challenges were unable to open at the same time as most other establishments in the city. Our official reopening date is October 5th, 2020, the day before the AGM, and hopefully by the time this is read, it has been a success. The staff are owed a huge debt of gratitude for all their patience and for the work they've done revamping the Grad Club to make it operational in according with COVID-19 guidelines and the further restrictions required by Queen's University. I also want to thank this year's Board of Directors as they have faced a much longer term than anticipated with the postponement of the Annual General Meeting from April 5th to October 6th, 2020. COVID-19 has dwarfed the activities of earlier in 2019-2020, however there is still much to report. Despite setbacks, we are so very pleased that we can finally welcome you all back to The Grad Club!

The start of the last year's term for the Board of Directors coincided quite closely with the announcement by the provincial government that many student fees would become "opt-in". There was concern that this would might strongly impact our fees and the ability for The Grad Club to operate. In response, we launched a membership campaign, which was highly successful and we had the highest number of members we've ever had. Along with these changes we introduced a successful new stickering system for student ID cards in order to easily identify members (this system will most-likely be paused and/or reformulated for the duration of the COVID-19 restrictions). We do not yet have the numbers for this year's numbers, however with the current pandemic we are projecting that we will likely have a smaller student membership this year as such, we will work on a campaign for social membership.

One of the largest on-going projects of the Board of Director are the renovations of The Grad Club which are needed due to old infrastructure and lack of accessibility. As those who have recently walked by 162 Barrie probably noticed, construction has started on the accessible ramp! This is a project that we have been desperate to get completed for the last couple years since our old ramp was removed from use because it was no longer structurally sound. Negotiations with Queen's University, the Kingston Heritage Committee and the architect slowed down the process but we are happy that we will finally have a ramp that is up to AODA standards. Samantha Twietmeyer, our director of operation has been our stalwart advocate for this work and we owe her our upmost thanks to continue to push the project forward and towards completion even at the most challenging points. Further renovations will be needed in order to make the entire club accessible, and to improve current issues in the building (for example the continual bursting of pipes). As part of the ramp construction and plans for overall renovations, plans for larger

renovations of the house were drawn up, however there will need to be considerable fundraising efforts needed and approval from Queen's. With both cuts from the provincial government as well as the continuing pandemic, the timeline for such a project will probably be longer than initially projected and will need to be undertaken by the next Board.

Last year at the Annual General Meeting we announced we were able to implement a new health and wellness policy for our full-time staff in order to partially make up for no longer being part of the SPGS Health and Dental plan, from which we were removed in 2017-2018. Unfortunately, since it is not an insurance policy, the taxation is different and the program would have cost the employees more. We are currently exploring different ways to reinstate Health and Dental coverage for our full-time staff within our financial means and it should remain a top priority of the incoming board.

Another ongoing challenge this year were negotiations with Queen's around their implementation of a new alcohol policy. Virginia Clark, the General Manager, and myself represented The Grad Club in the consultations to the Queen's Alcohol Working Group who were creating the new Policy. Overall, we were frustrated by the process, the lack of tangible input we were allowed to have on the policy and the paternalistic nature of the Working Group who seemed more concerned over the University's liability than actually providing safe environments for Queen's community. Through solidarity with AMS's TAPS, SGPS and Eng-Soc we were able to push back against a number of portions of the policy to which we were strongly opposed. The policy was quietly passed May 26, 2020 without any of the express consent with The Grad Club nor any of the aforementioned groups.

Throughout the year, we saw the continuation of Ideas on Tap, our monthly lecture series by members of the Queen's and Kingston Community, which continue to prove to be popular. Our last Ideas on Tap event of the semester was forced to go online due to our closure in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Any programming that we do for the foreseeable future will require being held virtually. Staff are currently putting together a program for our membership in order to still have some of the same types of community events that would normally be held. Our resourceful staff, through the wonderful suggestion of Dinah Jansen from CFRC, were able to move our regular Grad Club Trivia nights onto the radio in order to allow people to do socially distanced trivia from their own homes. We even had people playing as far away as Nepal through the magic of the internet! For a great number of people we know that this helped provide some continued sense of community and we want to thank everyone involved in making it happen!

In response to the Black Lives Matter protests taking place the Board released a statement in support of the actions. We discussed the Grad Club's complicity through silence at the heinous acts of racism that continue to occur on Queen's campus. We outlined our plans going forward in order to ensure that The Grad Club is an anti-racist space. Statements of support at this point have never meant less and the incoming Board will need to make it a priority to guarantee that there is the implementation of policy and procedures to create a safe, equitable space for our members and

employees. The current statement is up on the website and we encourage the membership to hold the Board of Directors to its goals.

There is one unequivocal success to point out from this year, The Grad Club website's website. A big thank you to Julian Ball, who made us an absolutely stunning website! As so much more of our communications will be digital this year, it is especially great that we have it.

Finally, I would like to again thank both The Grad Club staff and this year's Board. In the face of all of the obstacles posed by COVID-19 -- especially the delays in reopening due to negotiations with Queen's with further postponement while waiting for insurance and in organising for reopening-- the staff have been incredible. They are the lifeblood of The Grad Club and I thank them all profusely. I would specifically like thank Tim, our long-time cleaner, who is leaving us but has been instrumental behind the scenes in keeping the Grad Club running. The board this year was smaller than in the past but we had a great team and I thank them all, especially those who will not be returning. Additional special thanks are needed to Samantha Twietmeyer who has served on the board for many years and who went above and beyond in her role as Director of Operations and worked tirelessly for The Grad Club and her departure will be a huge loss to the Board. To the new Board, it will undoubtedly be an eventful year and we wish you the best of luck.

Thank you,

Astrid Hobill
President

VP and Long Term Strategic Planning Report 2020/2021

Introduction

Last year's board was able to achieve a great number of the goals that they set out in the long-term strategy plans last year. This year's board has profited from the strategies set for last year and have continued to develop their initiatives in order to insure the sustainability of the Grad Club, a non-profit organisation, as a safe and inclusive cultural hub with diverse programming and spaces.

As we are now living in a unique time with the arrival of COVID-19 and associated restrictions and disruption of all our personal and professional lives, the 2020 long-term strategy meeting was primarily consumed with exploring ways to return to business and keep the Grad Club alive. We have achieved much during the last year: initiating the building of a new ramp, the construction of which will begin soon, the launch of the new website, exploring ways to sustain our many social engagement programs through online delivery such as Trivia (which is keeping alive thanks to our dedicated and innovative staff).

However, we now face the same challenges that COVID virus has posed to all businesses, which for most, means reduced physical presence on and in the premises...and as with most businesses, this will mean more engagement through online delivery of these programs and optimizing the talents and vision of our staff that have made these programs such a success.

On the matter of staff: as a Board Member I would like to extend my sincere thanks and admiration to all staff and my fellow members, guided and supported by Virginia Clark, for their dedication, determination, ingenuity and passion to keep the Grad Club alive. We are incredibly lucky to have a team that works collaboratively and supportively to sustain our common passion and belief that the Grad Club is an invaluable and unique institution which engages communities of all types together.

Accessibility of the Grad Club

The Grad Club prides itself on being a safe and inclusive space. Beyond the rebuilding of ramp, the Grad Club is in active discussions with Queen's University to ensure that the entire house becomes more accessible, which may include some renovations to the house. As developments occur, the board will ensure that there will be consultation with stakeholders and Grad Club patrons.

Health and Dental for Full-Time Staff

The Grad Club wants to ensure that the safe and inclusive space extends to its employees. As we continue to explore ways to help ensure the well-being of our staff, we are hoping to ensure the continuity of the 2019 coverage for health, dental, vision and wellness. This plan will stay in place until a more comprehensive long-term solution is found. However now, with the increasing COVID-19 numbers, that challenge has become more complex, particularly in light of the rising numbers in our community. We continue to make this a priority as we move through 2020 and into 2021

Website and Bookings

The launch of the new website this year has been a game-changer, with huge thanks to Julian Ball we now not only have a slick, attractive and functional website: with the integration of TripleSeat, groups can now use it to book, can pay the room fee, if applicable, and can also order food in advance. The streamlining of booking opens many opportunities for engaging other community groups and increasing awareness in the community of the great food, elegant and funky surroundings as a value-added to our revenue stream. In the past year, for example, we've had great success with groups such as the Organization of Kingston Women Artists, who, were it not for COVID would be continuing to book monthly talks in the Henderson Room.

Signage for the Grad Club

We continue to explore ways to visually distinguish and promote the grad club through the use of signage.

Events and Marketing

The Grad Club purchased a business subscription to the app “Untapped” in March 2019 which has successfully been engaging craft beer enthusiasts to track the different beers they have tried. We hope to use this to promote various events, as well as attract new clients who may be unaware of the rotating selection of craft beer that the Grad Club has on tap. Even if our physical numbers are limited, this feature is a valuable tool for monitoring market trends and sustaining awareness of our suppliers’ products.

The Ideas on Tap speaker series continued to be a huge success, with speakers from both Queen’s and the broader Kingston community. We now turn our energy and resource to exploring a way to tape and record these events.

In terms of online delivery of our programs, the weekly Grad Club Trivia, currently hosted by Kyle and Mariah, continues every Thursday. Even online, this event has excellent turn out and provides a great virtual space for graduate students across different disciplines to come together. Although we can’t gather people physically, we will do everything within our ability to continue to engage them virtually.

Relationship with Other Organizations

The Grad Club continues to be a cultural hub on Queen’s campus and we want to continue to foster strong relationships with various organisations on campus and in the broader community.

The board continues to work to have a strong working relationship with Queen’s University, Queen’s Community Housing, and the Society of Professional and Graduate Students (SGPS), amongst others. The board continues to engage with the SGPS and build a mutually respectful and rewarding collaboration that benefits us all.

We are exploring possible means of having more independent control over our ability to meet customer demands and ability to provide ongoing service. It is a challenge to any bar or pub to ensure the safety of their staff and patrons and we count ourselves lucky that we have had very few if any liquor consumption related issues with any of our patrons. Our clientele are consistently responsible, respectful and accommodating and we thank them.

The Grad Club Board

As a social member and not a graduate student, I joined the board of the Grad Club because it has been a pivotal part of my social inclusion and introduction to the Kingston community. I have been meeting existing and making new friends around the grad club tables for 37 years and was thrilled to have been asked to run as the social member for the board. I have been on other boards in other capacities, but never been as humbled and impressed by the intelligence, ingenuity, passion and vision I’ve witnessed around that old wooden table around which we meet.

Particularly in this time that presents unprecedented challenges to a small organization, we need more bodies: there has been an inordinate amount of work done by very few people and we are looking for input and vision from all disciplines in the Queen's community. The monthly meetings continue to be held remotely (yes, Zoom is now ubiquitous ...not merely a part of a campaign pitch by a well-known car manufacturer).

If you're a Grad Club fan and are interested, or know someone who might be interested in joining the board and keeping our collective dream for a safe place that delivers great food, ongoing live music, community engagement or even just cozy place to gather around a table with friends, please consider joining our team. The Grad Club board meetings are open to the membership upon request, and we would invite anyone who is interested is welcome to attend.

Until we can all meet together safely and although virtual engagement doesn't have the same appeal, please keep the faith, support each other and be kind.

Thank-you,

Phileen Dickinson
Vice-President

Director of Operations Report

Serving as the Grad Club Director of Operations for the past three years has been a rollercoaster of updates, changes, and challenges. But the opportunity to work with the management and staff of the Grad Club and endeavouring to improve delivery of services to our membership and the wider Kingston community has at all times been my absolute privilege.

The 2019-2020 term has been, for obvious reasons, one of the more eventful years. Going into the summer and fall of 2019, the Grad Club was operating successfully, riding off the new operational flow supported by our integrated media and technology upgrades including Untapped and TripleSeat. We also added an employment position at the Club, bringing Steph Nijhuis on to a salaried position which monitored and delivered creative content through our social media and communications platform. She took control of the bookings system and assisted Virginia in managing our events and advertising portfolios.

Finally, after many years of lofty promises, I am extremely proud to announce that the Grad Club officially launched its new website (www.thegradclub.ca) in April 2020. Special thanks and the biggest of props to Julian Ball, who volunteered both his time and advanced skills to provide us with our own beautiful website, tailored to our needs as a unique combination social space, event venue, and pub. The COVID-19 situation has increased the need for the Grad Club to communicate virtually with its membership. You can keep up to date with the Grad Club events

and promotions through the website, via our Instagram and Facebook feeds, and more recently through our Newsletter, which you can sign up for on our website. Although we are happy to announce that the Grad Club has successfully re-opened operations at the house, we still hope to make the newsletter a consistent feature so that our membership, current and alumni, are always aware of what new and exciting changes are going on with the Grad Club.

On that note, many members and past members will be aware that the Grad Club has been in the process of replacing our accessibility ramp for the past few years. Those of you who reside in Kingston will likely already be aware that there is a large construction site on our front lawn, and you may also note the absence of two of our trees. Though sad to lose our lovely trees, we are very excited that the construction plans have been approved and we are waiting on a city permit which will begin about 6 weeks of construction and we hope to have a fully operational accessibility ramp by the end of the fall 2020 semester. Of course, the Grad Club remains an aging building which requires a major investment in its future in order to ensure that the two houses, which have stood for over 130 years (built in 1889), will stand for 130 more. We continue to be in discussions with Queen's in approaching this need for sustainable structural and mechanical renovations.

Most importantly, I would like to address our COVID-19 operations and re-open. In response to the Ontario shut-down, the Grad Club made the decision to remain closed after our temporary shut-down over March break. This of course led to a closure period of just over six months. Our staff were laid off so that they were eligible for EI, which of course later became the CERB benefit. We undertook measures in July to be re-opened in mid-August, but due to unforeseen delays in getting approval from Queen's University we did not receive permission to re-open until mid-September and officially announced our re-opening just this week! It was extremely important to us that we open as soon as possible not only for our financial survival but also to ensure our staff were re-employed before the end of the CERB period.

The new operations involve a series of key updates to ensure COVID safety precautions including, but not limited to:

- A New POS System which more easily services 'pay-at-the-table' service so that our patrons are not moving around indoors too much
- A COVID Safety Staff-Member whose job is to monitor staff and patrons to ensure compliance with the safety protocols of the House
- Mandatory food-with-drink service and a two-hour seating limit, per our negotiations with Queen's University to resume operations.
- Temporary adjustment to a minimalist menu while we adapt to the new requirements of our operations, including reduced-capacity and food safety.

Moving forward, the Board will be needing to monitor continued adjustments to COVID operations, including the possibility of opening the second floor when our patio can no longer remain open, as well as the possibility of a future shut-down. We sincerely hope that we will not

return to the circumstances of this past summer and that our new COVID precautions will allow us to remain operational throughout the 2020-2021 year.

In addition, in 2019-2020, the University introduced the new Alcohol Policy. Despite a widespread campaign to address serious concerns about the restrictions of the policy throughout the winter, the University officially passed the policy in May 2020. This policy works in tandem with the Management Agreement, which manages the alcohol license of the Grad Club and associated management requirements. With the new alcohol policy in place, the Management Agreement takes several liberties with its control over the Grad Club operations and the new Board will be engaged in negotiations to achieve an equitable arrangement which secures requisite rights and protections for the Grad Club.

Finally, one of my major objectives as Operations Director over the past few years has been to address the environmental and health concerns of our staff, who are the single most valuable asset to the Grad Club. An ongoing concern for our staff is the continued lack of Health and Dental since we were removed from the SGPS Plan four years ago. We have made efforts to replace this plan but we are restricted financially in our ability to provide a similar or even basic coverage. This is an ongoing concern which I hope will be at the forefront of the new Board's objectives. In addition, over the past year the Board has begun the important work of improve our operational atmosphere in terms of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion. Though the Grad Club prides itself in offering a safe and inclusive environment, there has historically been very little concrete policy which reflects these endeavours. Some of our efforts include the introduction of mandatory Safe Space training for our staff and engagement with the VP Indigenous and Four Directions to arrange a Land Acknowledgement installation. Over the summer, the Board drafted an official Anti-Racism Statement, which we are presenting to the membership at this year's AGM. This statement lays out a promise to become more pro-actively anti-racist in our operations as a pub and event venue and as a Membership-owned Club on Queen's University Campus.

Over the past three months, several members of the staff have stepped into very new and challenging roles and have dedicated a significant amount of time and energy into getting the Grad Club ready to open in a COVID-safe environment. I have always had nothing but admiration for the dedication and love that the staff have for the Grad Club and in return it is my hope that we can address any and all significant issues that make their work more difficult or challenging.

It has been my privilege and pleasure to serve the Grad Club and its membership over the past 5 years and I sincerely wish the new board the best of luck in their future endeavours.

Thankyou,

Samantha Twietmeyer
Director of Operations

Treasurer's Report

As treasurer, I have learned a lot during my 2019-2020 term at the Grad Club. It has been an interesting time for all of us as we adapted to the novel situation forced upon us by the necessary Public Health measures. We succeeded in posting a strong profit in the 2019 calendar year and as a result were in strong financial standing at the start of 2020. The seizure of operations starting in March 2020 lasting until September 2020 has impacted our revenue and ultimately skewed our expectations of the 2020 calendar year. Regardless, we were able to pay off a longstanding loan that was taken on in 2018 to replace our bar top and replace draft lines.

In the fall of 2019, due to diminishing margins, we decided to increase beer prices by 3%, and to raise our "Grad Hour" drink price to \$6.50. In addition, more thoughtful ordering of food succeeded in further boosting our margins. We provided a substantial discount on food to our membership, totalling approximately \$10,500 for the year of 2019, even with 27% of students opting out of the membership fee. Overall, we had a successful 2019 calendar year at the Grad Club.

When 2020 hit, the Grad Club was in a promising financial standing. Unfortunately, the shutdown instigated by the global pandemic required us to adapt to ensure future success for the Grad Club. Firstly, we took out an interest-free loan (Canadian Emergency Business Account, CEBA) from the Canadian Government to meet our obligations for 2020 while in a state of zero-revenue. Moreover, we continue to benefit from the Canadian Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS) as we restart our operations this fall. Our new POS system will provide an improved customer experience with payment possible at the table to limit movements within the Grad Club. Moreover, the implementation of takeout food and alcohol will add another revenue stream and accommodate those who are uncomfortable with indoor/outdoor dining during these unique times.

The good news is that we are currently operating and no longer in stasis awaiting regulatory approval. We can look forward to the possibility of a safe opening of more of the Grad Club's indoor space to patrons to maintain high sales volumes as we begin the next phase of the adventure that has been 2020. I want to thank Virginia Clark, Shirley Kwakkenbos, the other board members, and the staff for their support this past year. I hope everyone stays healthy and safe during these unprecedented times.

Thankyou,

Connor Sanders

Treasurer