



Meeting Minutes

Graduate Students Association Council Meeting  
 Tuesday, December 17, 2013, 6:00 p.m.  
 GSA Office, East Tower Refectory



Present: Frances Lasowski (GSA President), Stephen Hanson (VP Administration), Talena Rambarran (VP External), Ivana Postic (VP Internal), Aaron Maxwell (VP Services), Maryam Ghasemaghahi (FRC Business), Adhithya Ravichandran (FRC Engineering), Jennifer Nicholl (FRC Health Sciences), Sarah Kanji (FRC Health Sciences), Zack Batist (FRC Social Science), Murray Wilson (BoG Representative), Majid Taghavi (Senate Rep), Vi Dang (International Student Rep), Ashley Ravenscroft (Executive Systems Administrator), Margaret Jackel (Office Assistant), Olga Perkovic

Regrets: Megan Murphy (FRC Business), Carla Abarca (FRC Engineering), Jeffrey Wyngaarden (FRC Humanities), Stephanie Jones (FRC Science), Priscilla Medeiros (FRC Social Science), Ahmed El Ganzouri (Senate Rep), Spencer Savoie (Senate Rep), Marion Jamard (International Student Rep)

Absent: Ashley Marshall (FRC Humanities), Rostyslav Zvanych (FRC Science), D'Andra Parker (Senate Rep), Cassel Busse (Senate Rep), Stephanie Marciniak (Senate Rep), Geoff Callaghan (CRO),

Item	Motion		
1.	Call to Order	6:00 pm	
2.	Acceptance of the Agenda	The motion to accept the agenda was accepted by Adhithiya Ravichandran and seconded by Aaron Maxwell. Motion Carried.	Motion Carried
3.	Approval of the Minutes from meetings of November 27, 2013	Talena Rambarran indicated some edits that had not been removed on the final page of the meeting minutes of the November 27 <sup>th</sup> , 2013 meeting.  Jennifer Nicholl also indicated an error in the spelling of her name.  The minutes were approved on a motion by Aaron Maxwell and seconded by Adhithiya Ravichandran.	Motion Carried
4.	Olga Perkovic, McMaster Library: Open Access Policies	Olga Perkovic indicated she had met with Ivana Postic in regards to the University Repository Advisory Council previously and offered to attend council to provide more information regarding Open Access.  Ms. Perkovic continued to indicate that they are working to open connections with all faculties and provide them with training and workshops. They are interested in the students' interests being researchers themselves. The interest as a librarian is to help students develop their research. Currently business students have two dedicated librarians and health sciences have a good embedded library program that they	

		<p>are work on and offering workshops. On Tuesday, September 3<sup>rd</sup> at the breakfast, they passed out a survey to see what people wanted and received 300 responses. It can be difficult to address everyone’s research needs, and they hoped to use the feedback to know what is wanted from the libraries. Ms. Perkovic invited members to email her (perkovi@mcmaster.ca) as well with feedback.</p> <p>Ms. Perkovic provided us with a brief history of the repository, how it originated in October 2006. Ms. Perkovic has been working on it over the last two years and is working to move faculty materials to it. All graduate students are now mandated to submit their theses into the repository where it will be posted live. We use Press from San Francisco currently, and materials posted will be searchable via Google and other search engines. There has been a global trend to mandate open archive standards, and the government is seeking feedback as of last Friday regarding this. McMaster has gained a lot of information through the university office. It will be inevitable that a lot more information will be made more public. This is due to a change in mindset by faculty and researchers not only in the science fields, but also humanities.</p> <p>Ms. Perkovic indicated that there are currently two types of repositories, disciplinary, and institutional. McMaster currently has a institutional one. The future will be interesting to see if these policies come into place.</p> <p>Maryam Ghasemaghahi inquired as to how long will theses be available for with open access? Ms. Perkovic indicated that materials will be preserved, and that it will be hosted on a stable URL that will never change, so one will never lose their thesis. Information will be hosted by multiple servers, and backed up quarterly. You will also have an option to put an embargo on your thesis, with options for three months, six months, up to a year. Afterwards, you would need approval from the dean to further the embargo.</p> <p>Ms. Perkovic indicated that old theses are being scanned in to the repository currently, and that McMaster has completed scanning all theses in Mills Library and are currently working Thode Library. The Librarian team is willing to accommodate individuals if they feel that images won’t scan or other reasons on a case by case basis.</p> <p>Adhithiya Ravichandran indicated that all electrical and computer engineers publish in IEEE. All copyrights then</p>	
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		<p>belong to IEEE and indicated that authors are free to publish on their own servers, but not on digital commons. How would Open Access affect this? Ms. Perkovic indicated that a lot of publishers allow for preprints and post prints to be shared. The librarians are advising faculty to read contracts and the fine print in detail to confirm this. It is likely that moving forward, these rules will soften. The most strict publisher currently is Elsevier is the strictest that they deal with, however, they still allow for some formats to be published. Moving forward, any grant funded research will be mandated to put it in within a year.</p> <p>Aaron Maxwell indicated that he doesn't see how forcing authors and publishers to use Open Access will be good. Attempts have been made for years; some journals won't accept .pdf, and what about peer review? Ms. Perkovic indicated that when all the rules come in place, they will be in a better position to respond as everything is currently in the draft and discussion stage. Open Access is moving beyond the sciences though. As a result of the cost of subscriptions going up 400%, there is a backlash and reputable faculty are refusing to pay. While it is free for the user, there are still fees associated due to storage fees and reviewers have to be paid. They are looking to set up author funds, trying to see how they can get the funds to the students in order to get their articles where they need to be. Ms. Perkovic once again invited individuals to email her at perkovi@mcmaster.ca for thoughts and comments.</p>	
5.	<p>Reports from Board a. President's Report</p>	<p>Frances Lasowski forwarded thanks to members for their work and efforts this year. There have been some big changes to occur. Our organization have gotten compliments from as high up as the president of the university, that we have transformed into a more coherent and professional group. We have been able to stay relevant and improve on the graduate student experience. Ms. Lasowski indicated that the executive group will be transitioning and welcomed those who would be interested in the positions could shadow the current executives to see how the role is like.</p> <p>Ms. Lasowski continued to indicate that the Strategic Mandate Agreement deadline was on December 20<sup>th</sup>. We will unlikely see a draft of what the university will submit. The university was only provided a two week period to provide a five year plan. Ms. Lasowski noted that the administration did very good job consulting students beforehand, and this was not an effort that was made to other universities. Dr. Patrick Deane feels confident however, that McMaster is moving into the proper direction.</p>	

	b. Senate Report	Majid Taghavi provided us the numbers of the total headcount of graduate students being 4,264 as well as a breakdown by department.	
	c. Board of Governor's Report	Representative was not available to report.	
	d. Fees Committee Report	Ivana Postic indicated that the committee has not met.	
6.	Committee Reports a. Finance Committee (VP Admin)	<p>Stephen Hanson the committee has not done anything yet. Student fees are out to be released. The GSA has been utilizing their reserves in the meantime.</p> <p>Frances Lasowski indicated that this year's audit cost was higher than normal given the work that went into it, but this fact has been discussed during prior meetings. Due to transitioning staff, some details were harder to obtain.</p>	
	b. Phoenix Executive Committee (VP Admin)	<p>Stephen Hanson indicated that we received an award from the City of Hamilton Urban Design and Architecture. The PEC is advertising our image as a whole outside of the university.</p> <p>Mr. Hanson updated the council regarding the \$60,000 loan that was requested in relation to the outstanding payment to Morton's. We were able to negotiate the outstanding balance to \$52,000 and the account is settled.</p> <p>Mr. Hanson indicated that the PEC committee would be meeting tomorrow, and thus, he did not have financials provide and will have numbers to present to the council in January. Mr. Hanson continued to indicate that topline revenue numbers are in line with what we were expecting. The PEC is working on designing a plan on how the \$52,000 will be reimbursed from the Phoenix to the GSA. In other news, the PEC will also be finalizing a new menu that will be implemented in January.</p> <p>Ivana Postic inquired on the status of the loan in relation to the move to the new location. Mr. Hanson indicated that this number changes depending on the auditor and the value of the intercompany records value constantly changes with money going in both directions. The likely net is that the Phoenix will owe the GSA funds. We will eventually have all of the assets on it, and it will grow.</p> <p>Frances Lasowski indicated that the current priority is to have the Phoenix as an asset that generates revenue. In order to do that, we need to have a much better business plan together to see what is feasible and what is not. There</p>	

		<p>will be some tough decisions to be made moving forward unless graduate students are willing to subsidize the Phoenix.</p> <p>Jennifer Nicholl inquired who actually oversees the Phoenix. Ms. Lasowski indicated that there is a general manager who is advised by the Phoenix Executive Committee. Mr. Hanson chairs this committee currently.</p>	
	c. Events and Trips Planning Committee (VP External)	<p>Talena Rambarran indicated that the December trip was a trip to the Art Gallery of Hamilton. Attendees took city public transportation to get to and from the location. The event went well, and was not costly for the GSA. The January event has not yet been planned.</p> <p>Vi Dang recommended doing an ice wine event for January.</p>	
	d. Student Issues Action Committee (VP External)	<p>Talena Rambarran indicated this committee only meets thrice a year. There has been no meeting.</p>	
	e. Academic Affairs Committee (VP Internal)	<p>Ivana Postic indicated that the next round of travel awards will be in January with submissions beginning on January 1<sup>st</sup> for the January to April period. The deadline for the grants will be on January 31<sup>st</sup>.</p> <p>Ms. Postic also indicated that the FRC's will be meeting independently moving forward.</p> <p>Adhithiya Ravichandran indicated that the most recent FRC meeting, not all FRCs were able to attend, but they discussed what they were doing. The Engineers are making progress regarding their own council.</p> <p>Zachary Batist indicated that for Social Sciences Priscila Medeiros is looking into finding people from the sociology society and other pre-existing groups and plan on having a meeting with them. Mr. Batist continued to state that Social Sciences are organizing a graduate student conference on March 27<sup>th</sup> where they will be highlighting graduate work. Graduate students from all faculties are invited to present their research and indicate what makes it interesting, useful, profound, or relevant to the social world. The intent is to get people to see what else is out there and network in different perspectives on similar things. The event is currently modeled after one held at York University as they have some strong conferences there. Social Sciences is currently looking for people to promote this in their faculties across campus as well as model abstracts for other people to use.</p>	

		<p>Ms. Postic elaborated that they want individuals to indicate what is important about their research, and why, and show how it is significant to society. We hope to have this to be an annual thing, and are looking to potentially expanding beyond McMaster moving forward.</p> <p>Aaron Maxwell asked if the goal was not so much scientific results. Mr. Batist responded that it was more why the research should be done. Mr. Maxwell continued to ask what the submission process would be. Mr. Batist indicated that a call for papers would be sent out in the next GSA email, and would also be sent out by SGS. There would also be promotions advertised on the on campus televisions. The abstracts will be around 500 words and will be submitted via email to the email specified and a website would also be available to promote it. Ms. Postic indicated that there would be sessions with different themes. Mr. Batist indicated that topics will be more focused in future years and they will be matching people.</p> <p>Sarah Kanji indicated they are looking to collect information from new graduate students regarding their awareness to what services they have access to in order and use the feedback received to increase awareness. Frances Lasowski indicated that we have some information available regarding this from the strategic plan done by consultants. The plan indicates what services they thought they had and the ones that they enjoy having. This report may not be as comprehensive in regards to other areas in the university that may be lacking from the questionnaire.</p> <p>On another note, Ivana indicated that the final numbers for the Graduate Welcome Week are known and we were under budget.</p>	
	<p>f. International Student Representative Report (International Reps)</p>	<p>Vi Dang indicated that there have been no events since the previous one. They are working on planning a TA event with CUPE International in the new year.</p> <p>Ivana Postic inquired who would be funding the event. Ms. Dang indicated the details hadn't been discussed yet, but would likely be split half and half between IGSA and SGS.</p> <p>Frances Lasowski asked if it was possible to have it open to the entire graduate membership, as not all international students are under CUPE. Talena Rambarran included that if it is a co-sponsored event the GSA cannot exclude people if costs are shared.</p>	
	<p>g. By-laws</p>	<p>Frances Lasowski indicated that the biggest focus for the by-</p>	

	<p>Committee (President)</p>	<p>laws would be on the board of directors and welcomed suggestions for other areas to update.</p> <p>Ms. Lasowski indicated that updates would be structured similar to last year, by indicating how it was previously and how it will be moving forward.</p> <p>Ivana Postic requested that the section regarding FRC's to change, as they are gaps currently. Ms. Postic requests that there be indication as to what the responsibilities are and disciplinary actions outlined if these responsibilities are not met.</p> <p>Ms. Lasowski indicated that responsibilities and the disciplinary actions in relation to them are clear for executives, but not for FRC's. The GSA tries to be flexible, but no feedback is received from some. We wish to determine if they're not interested, but keep it flexible for those who are interested but are unable to attend the council meetings. Ms. Lasowski welcomed ideas on how to differentiate to be forwarded to herself.</p>	
	<p>h. GSA Summer Leagues(VP Services)</p>	<p>Aaron Maxwell indicated that there was nothing to report,</p>	
	<p>i. Graduate Student Services Review(VP Services)</p>	<p>Frances Lasowski met with Allison Sekuler and Sean Van Koughnett, the new Dean of Students. We are trying to put together a new agreement as it was last revised 1997. Graduate students currently underpay for a lot of services and we don't have many specialized services for a lot of departments. There is interest to improve this, and motions actions were taken last year to start for a proposal for a new agreement. However problems were encountered regarding how that fee would be divided and where it would go. The discussions regarding the proposal were tabled as the previous dean of students, Phil Wood, would be leaving and didn't want to tie Sean's hand. Mr. Van Koughnett is willing to meet with us, but progress is unlikely to be made, as the new proposal will have to be out in February, and there is no full-fledged agreement in place. We wish to address mental health. Mr. Van Koughnett put an addendum to the fee and now a certain amount of student wellness will go to serve graduate students. We are speaking with a counsellor who worked for graduate students that is available for the summer as well for continuity of services. He is from Waterloo, and they have a very different system there. We are working on improving our program as it is lacking and hope to obtain matching funds for the university to finance these increases in cost. Ms. Sekuler is looking to put</p>	

		<p>together pilot funding.</p> <p>Ms. Lasowski indicated we are also looking to improve career and professional development, and create comprehensive packages for universities, where resources could be shared from one university to another. Pilot to see if this works for students or not work.</p> <p>Ms. Lasowski hopes that next year that this will be a more comprehensive agreement, and is looking to improve this on an interim basis to get things started.</p> <p>Adhithya Ravichandran asked for elaboration for the pooling resources with other universities. Aaron Maxwell stated that the idea is that universities would share costs and resources across universities. For example, one university would have a specialist in biology with contacts who could indicate what you could do with that degree, but someone from another university could utilize their services. The intent is that a lot can be done online, and that it doesn't have to be done on a personal basis, though the option is still available so as to not exclude individuals based on what university they're at.</p> <p>Ms. Lasowski indicated that our university would fund one person, but have access to others across the board, not just for careers, but also for wellness. More collaborate efforts are happening, as universities are realizing that graduate departments are lacking and are working together to improve it.</p> <p>Ms. Lasowski indicated that collective voices are important here. If you are aware that one faculty has something, push it for others. Unless faculties are willing to give funds back, it is difficult for her position to universal programming. This is up to the students to say that they want what other programs have. Students can give information as to what they want to either herself or Ms. Sekuler.</p>	
	<p>j. Health &amp; Dental Committee (VP Services)</p>	<p>Aaron Maxwell indicated that there were concerns raised with how the cap would work for those who are not on biologics but require more funds. Mr. Maxwell indicated he would speak with our service provider would say on the matter with the scenario he was provided.</p> <p>Frances Lasowski indicated that our representative has experience regarding what other universities do with a cap and we will use what we think works best for our school.</p>	
<p>6.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New Business</li> <li>• Election</li> </ul>	<p>Geoff Callaghan forwarded prices for the new election server and reminded council that UTS was ceasing its services. His</p>	

	Update	<p>research showed that most services were more costly than Simply Voting, but he was still looking into Survey Monkey to see if we couldn't revise their system as it is substantially cheaper. Mr. Callaghan is still reviewing privacy issues with utilizing Survey Monkey as well as address concerns regarding validation and is trying to contact representatives from Survey Monkey.</p> <p>Murray Wilson indicated that Lime Survey is the Canadian version of Survey Monkey if we wished to look into that service.</p> <p>Frances Lasowski indicated that a decision needed to be made in January or February.</p>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council Meeting Dates 2014</li> </ul>	<p>Frances Lasowski indicated that in the past, council would meet and then the FRCs and Executives would meet separately and is looking into bringing this back and to use council meetings mostly as information sharing. Ms. Lasowski suggested that council would meet every other month and alternate with FRCs and executive meetings. The council meetings would be for common information sharing and to approve items. Ms. Lasowski suggested that we pilot it in February to April to see if we liked it. For FRC meetings, an individual could be elected to chair the meetings.</p> <p>Adhithya Ravichandran asked if there would be executives at these FRC meetings. Ms. Lasowski indicated no unless they required information from one of them. Mr. Ravichandran continued that most of the FRCs didn't possess a lot of knowledge about the organization and wasn't certain how this would play out.</p> <p>Ms. Lasowski indicated that items aren't necessarily addressed at meetings currently to formalize them. Our current council is the most active and populated than it has been previously. Ms. Lasowski indicated that she wanted to ensure that the FRCs had enough opportunity.</p> <p>Jennifer Nicholl inquired what the difference would be; would council receive email blasts with information? Ms. Lasowski provided an example of the social events committee would present their reports on a two month basis vs. the currently monthly update. The intention is to get individuals more involved, and not just have it as an information session.</p> <p>Aaron Maxwell indicated that Ms. Lasowski wishes to streamline how the GSA governs the organization. Currently</p>	

		<p>the majority of FRCs are just provided information on a monthly basis. Ideally FRCs would come to committees and not provide updates, but present decisions instead to give committees more weight.</p> <p>Ms. Lasowski indicated that committees need to run a bit better and to have more of a voice. For the alternating meetings FRCs would lead the meetings and the Executives could attend as resources, this way the FRCs would be leading the meetings.</p> <p>Murray Wilson requested to table this topic in order to properly conceptualize this idea.</p> <p>Ms. Lasowski indicated that she wished to try to create ways to engage people to take more active leadership roles and take on more responsibilities.</p> <p>Ms. Nicholl recommended a survey. Ms. Lasowski agreed and indicated that a survey would be created by herself and Ivana Postic for FRCs would be created to see what would work indicating what options are available and the time requirements required.</p>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AGM date</li> </ul>	<p>Frances Lasowski indicated that she wished to pick a date for the upcoming AGM and advertise early.</p> <p>Ivana Postic recommended a short description to be included to describe what the meeting is about and that it is more detailed. Ms. Lasowski said that this was feasible.</p> <p>Ms. Lasowski continued to indicate that it the AGM would be held in March as the GSA has to ratify the election results. The AGM would be better at the end of the month as they have to be after the election results are acquired, so sometime after March 17<sup>th</sup>.</p> <p>A consensus was reached to hold the AGM on Tuesday, March 25<sup>th</sup> at 9:30 AM.</p>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• FRC pages</li> </ul>	<p>Talena Rambarran indicated that there are pages available and for FRCs to speak with her if they wished to receive a log in to advertise faculty events etc.</p>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• GSA food drive</li> </ul>	<p>The GSA is currently running a food drive in conjunction with Hamilton Food Shares, where for every two items you donate, a \$1 voucher will be received for Phoenix purchases above \$10. The GSA will also match donations and the request was made to spread the word.</p>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rudy Heinzl</li> </ul>	<p>Talena Rambarran indicated that the MSU has requested for a graduate representative for this award which recognizes</p>	

	Award for Excellence	the achievements of an individual over a one year period, further details would be given out later. Sarah Kanji volunteered to be the representative.	
		<p>Frances Lasowski stated that the GSA Summit was hosted last week were discussions were held regarding best practices in comparison to other Ontario Universities. Our organization is currently undergoing a lot of issues that other schools may have addressed previously such as the Phoenix and hiring a general manager for the GSA etc.</p> <p>The current executives are working extra and not being compensated. Executives at other schools are given up to \$30,000. As the executives do go over time etc. ideally they would receive compensation to balance this. Ms. Lasowski proposed that this be implemented when the governance is redone, but for the meantime, she would like to put forth a motion to have a \$3,000 fund to distribute to the executives as compensation for their efforts so that some may receive a bonus for their efforts. The amount of time being put in by some executives cannot be sustained for four more months, decisions are being made without proper consultation or they are deferred to staff, or executives have to decline to participate in some events and the time commitment will be costly over time. Moving forward using the figures from other universities, she would like to change what is expected of executives in terms of time commitment and compensate them in line with others.</p> <p>Ivana Postic requested further clarification to what was being stated and proposed.</p> <p>Aaron Maxwell indicated that the value of the honorarium he receives equates to approximately 15 hours per month, but he inputs more hours than that.</p> <p>Ms. Postic suggested that rather than having a fund, to have a person review the compensation.</p> <p>Ashley Ravenscroft indicated that FRCs and a staff member could review what the executives or individual is doing to determine what the funds are there for, and that the executives could petition for funds.</p> <p>A suggestion was made to move it to the survey along with the meetings, and to decide if the funds are available, what the amount is, and what it goes through and how it is assigned and for the executives to be impartial to this process.</p>	

		<p>Murray Wilson suggested that executives could present a letter to a committee indicating what steps have been taken during their role in that position, and what has been done over and above what was expected of that role referencing past experiences. There will be times that executives are required to go far above expectations. Present a comparison to a committee of what happened in the roles historically vs. presently as they've changed.</p> <p>Jennifer Nicholl inquired if we had the funds for this to which Ms. Lasowski indicated that we did through our reserves.</p> <p>Ms. Nicholl inquired as to how would they determine what is fair and if we did not have any awards within the council and if there is not something currently for executives to go through.</p> <p>Ms. Lasowski indicated that SGS had previously looked into inaugurate an award for our past president Jessica Merolli but this fell through as people were unable to follow through with it.</p> <p>Mr. Wilson suggested that a committee be created to decide if the GSA was capable of financing this cost, and to decide those eligible to receive this.</p> <p>Sarah Kanji recommended that there be guidelines for this special grant and the need of special grants given circumstances.</p> <p>Ms. Nicholl inquired if we would be able to reach out to other committees regarding this. Ms. Lasowski indicated that SGS may not be able to be a part of this.</p> <p>Stephen Hanson recommended that it be expanded beyond just the executives to include FRCs who have gone above and beyond their roles.</p> <p>Adhithiya Ravichandran inquired if FRCs were added to this, who would decide. Mr. Wilson indicated that they would ensure no conflict of interest would be involved, executives could not vote, but those who also applied for compensation would be unable to sit on the deciding committee.</p> <p>Mr. Wilson motioned that a committee be struck divorced from the executives, to investigate the GSAs capacity to pay</p>	
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		<p>for additional compensation and to review letters of proposal from different executives or other council members who have gone above and beyond their role. Eight members were in favour. None opposed. None abstained. Motion carried.</p> <p>Ms. Lasowski requested that Murray Wilson chair the committee and he accepted this role.</p>	
8.	Adjournment	Motion to adjourn meeting was accepted by Murray Wilson, and seconded by Talena Rambarran at 8:02 PM. None opposed. None abstained. Motion carried.	

Person	Action Item	Due Date



**Talena Rambaraan**  
VP External

01/28/2014

Date



**Margaret Jackel**  
Office Assistant

January 28, 2014

Date