

Meeting Minutes

Graduate Students Association Council Meeting  
 Wednesday, November 27, 2013, 6:00 p.m.  
 GSA Office, East Tower Refectory



Present: 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), Jeffrey Wyngaarden (FRC Humanities), Stephanie Jones (FRC Science), Murray Wilson (BoG Representative), Ahmed El Ganzouri (Senate Rep), Spencer Savoie (Senate Rep), Ashely Ravenscroft (Executive Systems Administrator), Margaret Jackel (Office Assistant)

Regrets: Frances Lasowski (GSA President), Megan Murphy (FRC Business), Carla Abarca (FRC Engineering), Priscilla Medeiros (FRC Social Science), Stephanie Marciniak (Senate Rep)

Absent: Ashley Marshall (FRC Humanities), Rostyslav Zvanych (FRC Science), Zack Batist (FRC Social Science), Majid Taghavi (Senate Rep), D'Andra Parker (Senate Rep), Cassel Busse (Senate Rep), Geoff Callaghan (CRO), Vi Dang (International Student Rep), Marion Jamard (International Student Rep)

Item	Motion		
1.	Call to Order	6:02 PM	
2.	Acceptance of the Agenda	Stephen Hanson amended the agenda to discuss PEC matters first. The amendment was approved on a motion by Jeffrey Wyngaarden and seconded by Adhithya Ravichandran.	Motion Carried.
3.	Committee Reports <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Phoenix Executive Committee (VP Admin)</li> </ul>	<p>Stephen Hanson indicated that PEC has come up with committee mandate for the Phoenix to maintain a graduate student atmosphere as it is the GSA's asset. The PEC monitor's the financials of the bar, the menu in terms of the variety of selection presented and overall pricing. The PEC also plays a role in promotions. In terms of capital expenditures, the management Phoenix can spend \$3,000, but beyond that value, it must be approved by the PEC.</p> <p>Mr. Hanson proceeded to provide a brief review of the Phoenix financials. The Phoenix loss \$1,900 for September, and turned over a profit of approximately \$3,000 in October. This is a sign of improvement, though it is lower than what we would like for the Phoenix to return to the GSA. The new manager has had to manage many pre-existing issues during his tenure. Labour costs have gone down significantly, and the accounts payable account is much better. We have switched our main supplier from Morton's to another sometime in July or August to a more economical vendor. However, as we are no longer providing Morton's with</p>	

		<p>business, they wish to settle their accounts with the Phoenix. We currently have approximately \$58,000 outstanding. The Phoenix is currently trying to negotiate the cost due. As there is no division between the GSA and the Phoenix and we are a single entity, Mr. Hanson requested that the GSA loan funds to the Phoenix to settle this account in return for receiving post-dated cheques for repayment of this loan. Mr. Hanson also opened the floor to suggestions for alternatives as he had not to date thought of another option.</p> <p>Ivana Postic requested that the Phoenix provide detailed reports, with the rationale being that the GSA should not provide funds without detailed documentation as to why.</p> <p>Jennifer Nicholl inquired if the Phoenix had a line of credit to utilize rather than transferring funds in between the two fronts. Mr. Hanson indicated that the Phoenix has an overdraft available of \$25,000 at CIBC. Ashley Ravenscroft indicated that CIBC was the only bank that permits this, however the debt would still be tied to the GSA, and a review would have to be conducted.</p> <p>Sarah Kanji inquired if it would affect any other services, or take away from operations? Mr. Hanson indicated that it would not affect operations, as the GSA's portion of finances is in good health, and we had yet to receive our fees from the University. Ms. Kanji continued to inquire if the Phoenix has any projections yet regarding the repayment of this advance? Mr. Hanson proposed 6 months, which is very aggressive from the Phoenix's point of view. Ms. Ravenscroft indicated that the GSA could also put conditions on the loan if the Phoenix is unable to meet the prerequisite. Ms. Postic addressed concerns that there are currently no consequences to deter the Phoenix from asking the GSA for financial assistance. Mr. Hanson indicated that the Phoenix is now currently under different management. Aaron Maxwell stated that technically as the GSA owns the Phoenix, we are the ultimate management. Mr. Hanson indicated that this is the GSA's punishment, and we accept the credit risk for allowing this to happen. Projections are currently that the Phoenix will take a loss in December, and break even in January as that is how it has been historically. Ms. Nicholl inquired what the Phoenix and GSA has done to ensure this doesn't occur again. Mr. Hanson indicated that now at each PEC meeting, an income statement as well as the balance sheet are provided to evaluate the current situation. Ms. Nicholl asked if these reports reduced future</p>	
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		<p>occurrences. Mr. Hanson confirmed this, and indicated that the bookkeeper also has to initial these reports. Adhithya Ravichandran inquired if this was a new practice to review these reports every month. Mr. Hanson indicated that the review of reports was not a new practice, though they are now of a greater detail, also having an aging summary. Murray Wilson stated that an oversight of management is complicated when you are being deceived, as you require some reliability and autonomy and there is a limit to the oversight. Ms. Nichol inquired if the approval of the loan lied with the executive. Talena Rambarran indicated that it was being presented to the council as a whole to vote upon and that the meeting minutes will be posted online. Ms. Nichol indicated concerns of relying on others to read the minutes. It was stated that unfortunately there is no one medium that would be best to convey information to graduate students.</p> <p>Aaron Maxwell put forth the motion for the GSA to loan the Phoenix up to \$60,000 to cover the debt due to Morton's Wholesale Foods. The Phoenix will be required to pay back the loan within one year.</p> <p>Murray Wilson amended the motion to defer the loan terms to the PEC and to be up to five years with an interest rate not exceeding 10% and are to provide continuous updates.</p> <p>Ahmed El Ganzouri indicated that these reports should also indicate the payment method for accountability.</p> <p>Ms. Nicholl amended the motion so that the PEC should provide the GSA detailed reports to track how the repayment process is proceeding to ensure financial transparency. The amended motion was seconded by Jeffrey Wyngaarden. Eleven in favour. None opposed. None abstained. Motion carried.</p>	Motion Carried.
4.	Approval of the Minutes from meetings of October 29, 2013	The minutes of the October 29, 2013 meeting were approved on a motion by Adhithya Ravichandran and seconded by Aaron Maxwell. None opposed. Two abstained. Motion carried.	Motion Carried.
5.	Reports from Board <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. President's Report             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Committee Scheduling</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Talena Rambarran reported on Frances Lasowski's behalf. Ms. Rambarran indicated that she and Ms. Lasowski recently attended a CAGS conference. They met with other schools which are facing many similar issues with the primary concerns being mental health and funding. In comparison to other graduate groups, our GSA seems to be in the middle in terms of involvement and is on the lower end regarding compensation and engagement. NSERC has begun their review of CGS programs and are also considering increasing	

		<p>the postdoc scholarship amount to account for inflation. They will also be lifting the one application rule, and are reviewing the process. CIRC a health granting agency want to try to get results back to people earlier this year, and expect them sometime in January.</p> <p>Heard from the tri council on the harmonization for applications on the master's level. Students will be allowed to apply up to five universities, and offers will be made and accepted online. For the doctoral level, the competitions will be kept on a national level and there will be only one application for all of the granting agencies. Formulas for calculation quotas are being reviewed; currently they are basing them on how the school did in the past year.</p> <p>Aaron Maxwell provided clarification in that McMaster has proportion. Ms. Rambarran indicated that McMaster won forty scholarships, and will try to receive forty again. They are looking to tweak the formula for those who did not get any previously.</p> <p>Ms. Rambarran continued to indicate that there were many talks on the future of graduate education and its role, in particular the importance of skills training. There currently isn't much consensus on the direction to take, except that universities should not simply focus on the skills and that there are many transferable skills graduate students possess that need to be better articulated.</p> <p>Ms. Rambarran indicated that for the National Three minute thesis competition this year that we're partnering with SGS and indicated more details would be provided in the external report.</p> <p>Ms. Rambarran also indicated that we would be hosting a summit again this year on December 11th with schools from Ontario and Alberta.</p> <p>Ms. Rambarran updated regarding the University strategic mandate agreement. She attended an open forum discussion regarding what the strategic mandate agreement is. There currently isn't much of a consensus as to what it is about. This made it difficult to highlight any points given it is unclear what it is for. However, the President has received indications from the ministry that they like where McMaster is heading. There is a drive change currently in the education sector by the provincial government with the goal of articulating the differences between all of the different</p>	
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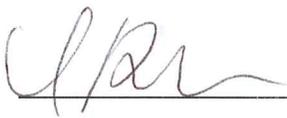
		<p>schools focusing on what each school is about and what they are doing well in and so forth. There will be eight sets of criteria examined and new program developments and approval may depend on what is determined to be McMaster's strategic mandate agreement. This will likely happen relatively quickly, within a matter of months, however there is still no date or format.</p> <p>Ms. Rambarran continued to indicate that the MSU will be having a referendum for getting full year bus passes for undergraduates for a small increase in their fees. If this is approved, the 51 University route will have increased runs and run until 3AM. This will not affect our agreement as graduate students.</p> <p>Ms. Rambarran indicated that there is a committee working on community engagement at the university level, so anyone who has any thoughts on how to improve these relationships are welcome to bring them forward to Frances Lasowski.</p> <p>Ms. Rambarran also requested that for committee scheduling to notify Margaret Jackel for them in order to put them into the calendar.</p>	
	<p>b. Senate Report</p>	<p>Spencer Savoie indicated he did not attend November's meeting, however summarized the minutes. The main news was regarding the graduate council meeting held on October 22<sup>nd</sup>, where five new scholarships were approved. Three were for the MBA program, one for business PhD and the final one for individuals in their masters or PhD s already holding a provincially funded scholarship.</p> <p>Ahmed El Ganzouri also indicated that they are reviewing how graduate students are approved for graduation as no one reads the entire list of names. They are looking to have it approved by department rather than by senate. Currently senate is expected to read the list of graduates. This is being re-evaluated as it has not changed for 50 years and may need an amendment.</p>	
	<p>c. Board of Governor's Report</p>	<p>Murray Wilson indicated that they have not met.</p> <p>Mr. Wilson recently attended the council of Ontario boards. Board members were invited from each university to Toronto for presentations. There were discussions ranging from limitation of neighbours, capping of tuition fee increases, and were we stood. Capping of government funding means limited opportunity for funding. However, were do we cut costs? They are currently trying to specilaize</p>	

		universities. There was a sense of autonomy previously. A good point was raised earlier in the President's report regarding skills training. Currently McMaster is at the forefront for being progressive. We are looking a way to integrate skills and education efficiently. There was also a lot of discussion regarding massive online courses, and there were two sides of agreement on this topic.	
	d. Fees Committee Report	Talena Rambarran spoke briefly on Ivana Postic's behalf. Ms. Rambarran indicated that student group fee proposals are due on January 31 <sup>st</sup> . There will not be any adjustments to the 1% fee deducted by the university as we had hoped to negotiate. Ms. Rambarran also indicated that there will be a new Certified Professional Accountant (CPA) program starting in the Business program.	
6.	Committee Reports a. Finance Committee (VP Admin) • 2012-2013 Audit Report	<p>Talena Rambarran spoke on Stephen Hanson's behalf. She indicated that the audit report needed council approval.</p> <p>Adhithya Ravichandran indicated that he felt he did not have the adequate knowledge to properly review the audited financials. Ashley Ravenscroft provided a brief overview as to how to review them.</p> <p>Murray Wilson recommended that the executive state that they are satisfied with the financials and the council will be apt to accept that, as not all individuals will have the knowledge necessary to review them.</p> <p>Talena Rambarran motioned for the acceptance of the audited financials. The motion was accepted by Aaron Maxwell and seconded by Jeffrey Wyngaarden. None opposed. Two abstained.</p>	Motion Carried.
	b. Events and Trips Planning Committee (VP External)	Talena Rambarran indicated that the November event, a planetarium showing, sold out very quickly within two weeks. Appetizers and drinks were provided at the Phoenix and Aaron Maxwell presented the show. December's event will be an art gallery tour at the Hamilton Art Gallery. Graduate students with their student ID cards will have free admission and accompanying guests can join for \$10.	
	c. Student Issues Action Committee (VP External)	Talena Rambarran indicated that the committee did not meet. They will be meeting in a couple of weeks and provided a brief overview of the committee and what it does.	
	d. Academic Affairs Committee (VP Internal)	Talena Rambarran spoke on Ivana Postic's behalf. There are two main items to discuss regarding the FRC committees, the 2 <sup>nd</sup> annual social science colloquium will be hosted soon. Adhithya Ravichandran spoke regarding the Faculty councils indicating that the intent is to establish communication	

		channels between the GSA and individual students the FRCs will be expected to facilitate this.	
	e. International Student Representative Report (International Reps)	Representative was not available to report.	
	f. By-laws Committee (President)	Talena Rambarran reported on behalf of Frances Lasowski. She indicated that we are working on restructuring the board. We have received a quote from an individual in Toronto who has worked on bylaws for non-for-profit organizations to assist us with our bylaws. We will be meeting with our lawyer in the new year to ensure we comply with the new governance laws for non-profit.	
	g. GSA Summer Leagues(VP Services)	Aaron Maxwell indicated that we have a tentative new memo of understanding to forward to Athletics & Recreation for softball once reviewed with the summer leagues committee.	
	h. Graduate Student Services Review(VP Services)	<p>Aaron Maxwell indicated that there have been some issues cropping up regarding our service fee. Graduate students currently pay \$115 versus the \$300 paid by undergraduates for fees. The old dean of students thought that this was inadequate and that graduate students should pay more. Last year SGS, Diana Glennie, and Frances Lasowski worked with Student Affairs to determine what the increase in fees would be applied to. This year it is too late to get it off the ground to determine what the increase would be applied to.</p> <p>Mr. Maxwell indicated that there are currently three options, to increase the fee over the course of three years. This would have to go to the AGM to raise funds. However, the issue is how do we control these funds? Currently the undergrads have to go through the MSU, which has a board with student affairs. The MSU currently does not have veto power. SGS and student affairs are unwilling to give graduate students veto power. Mr. Maxwell hopes to obtain knowledge with the help of the FRC committees how students may feel about this increase in fees.</p> <p>Mr. Maxwell also indicated that currently there is a new dean of students who may not share the same mentality as the previous dean. There is currently nothing confirmed for this, as it is still in the planning stage. Currently we are looking at either 3 or 4 years of incremental increases, and to split the funds to five areas. We would have approximately an extra \$200,000 to utilize towards these areas.</p>	

		<p>Mr. Maxwell also indicated that we could reject the proposal as the university cannot remove the standing contract; however the university could revise things to be specific to undergraduates excluding graduate students.</p> <p>Sarah Kanji inquired as to what our fees currently pay for. Mr. Maxwell indicated that the information was available on the SGS website.</p> <p>Murray Wilson indicated that for him to personally vote for a increase in fee, he would require a list of services we have now, and a list of proposed services to show what the money is going towards. Mr. Maxwell indicated that he unfortunately didn't have that information to present, but given that this is required some time commitment, he needed more assistance to get this off the ground for ideas.</p>	
	<p>i. Health &amp; Dental Committee (VP Services)</p>	<p>Aaron Maxwell spoke in regards to our drug plan, and how biologics despite making 1% of our claims, constitutes to 50% of the cost of our plan. We are looking to implement a drug withdraw cap, somewhere along the lines of \$3,000 and anything above and beyond that, will be out of pocket. Mr. Maxwell also indicated that there is a provincially funded program called Trillium for biologics, and files are based on income as well as financial situation. If we continue without a cap on our drug plan, we will bankrupt the health and dental committee. Mr. Maxwell also heavily encouraged members of the health and dental committee to attend and participate in meetings scheduled.</p>	
6.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New Business</li> <li>• Election Update</li> </ul>	<p>Representative was not available to report.</p>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Three Minute Thesis</li> </ul>	<p>Talena Rambarran spoke in more depth regarding the 3MT and her meeting with Vanessa Hayward from School of Graduate Studies. They are considering a new format this year, and would like to run heats at a faculty level. We would like for the FRC's to help with the 3MT support and perhaps set up a meeting between the FRCs and SGS to endorse and promote this event.</p> <p>Ms. Rambarran also indicated that SGS is also considering making a "how to" guide for the 3MT and post it online. It will be held on February 11 – 13, and the final will be held on the 14<sup>th</sup>. They are looking for strategies to get people to attend the final, and perhaps reach out to high school students.</p>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New Director</li> </ul>	Talena Rambarran indicated that resumes for this position have been coming in, and interviews will be commencing soon.	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>December Meeting</li> </ul>	Talena Rambarran reminded council that December's council meeting would also have a dinner, and that members are to send their RSVPs to Margaret Jackel.	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Future Council Meetings</li> </ul>	Talena Rambarran indicated that there was thought to having council meetings once every other month, and that FRC meetings would be held on the alternating ones. Something for council to consider.	
7.	Adjournment	Motion to adjourn the meeting was accepted by Aaron Maxwell and seconded by Jeffrey Wyngaarden at 7:46 PM.	Motion Carried.



**Talena Rambaraan**  
VP External

Dec 17, 13

Date



**Margaret Jackel**  
Office Assistant

Dec 17, 2013

Date