

Meeting Minutes

Graduate Students Association Council Meeting
 Tuesday, March 26, 2014, 6:00 p.m.
 GSA Office, East Tower Refectory



Present: Talena Rambarran (VP External), Aaron Maxwell (VP Services), Megan Murphy (FRC Business), Carla Abarca (FRC Engineering), Adhithya Ravichandran (FRC Engineering), Sarah Kanji (FRC Health Sciences), Jeffrey Wyngaarden (FRC Humanities), Spencer Savoie (Senate Rep), Marion Jamard (International Student Rep), Vi Dang (International Student Rep), Margaret Jackel (Office Assistant)

Regrets: Frances Lasowski (GSA President), Stephen Hanson (VP Administration), Priscilla Medeiros (FRC Social Science), Murray Wilson (BoG Representative),

Absent: Maryam Ghasemaghaei (FRC Business), Jennifer Nicholl (FRC Health Sciences), Ashley Marshall (FRC Humanities), Stephanie Jones (FRC Science), Rostyslav Zvanych (FRC Science), Zack Batist (FRC Social Science), Majid Taghavi (Senate Rep), Ahmed El Ganzouri (Senate Rep), D’Andra Parker (Senate Rep), Cassel Busse (Senate Rep), Stephanie Marciniak (Senate Rep), Geoff Callaghan (CRO),

Item	Motion		
1.	Call to Order	6:06 PM	
2.	Acceptance of the Agenda	The motion to accept the agenda was accepted by Aaron Maxwell and seconded by Jeffrey Wyngaarden.	Motion Carried
3.	Approval of the Minutes from meetings of January & February, 2014	The minutes of the January 28, 2014 meeting were approved on a motion by Jeffrey Wyngaarden. None opposed. None abstained. Motion carried.	Motion Carried
		The minutes of the February 24, 2014 meeting were approved on a motion by Adhithya Ravichandran and seconded by Megan Murphy. None opposed. One abstained. Motion carried.	Motion Carried
4.	Reports from Board a. President’s Report	Thank you to everyone who was able to attend the AGM. We certainly appreciated council member’s attendance, especially as it reverted to a council meeting. Moving forward, we will continue to examine ways to have greater attendance, so any suggestions are welcome and appreciated. There were some good suggestions that were put forth by the membership, and we will work to incorporate them moving forward. Congratulations to the newly elected representatives. We thank you for your interest and committing to help improve the graduate experience at McMaster! Again, thank you to everyone who has participated over the past year. We hope you remain active in some capacity moving forward!	

	b. Senate Report	Spencer Savoie reported that the most recent senate meeting had been cancelled due to the weather, thus there is nothing to report.	
	c. Board of Governor's Report	Representative was not available to report.	
	d. Fees Committee Report	<p>Aaron Maxwell indicated that the MSU has renegotiated their HSR contract for full year coverage, increased from the eight months of a calendar year at a small increase over their current fee. We are currently paying 20% more than the undergrads do with this new contract. The undergrads are also getting increased service. We are currently trying to contact the HSR to negotiate our own contract moving forward, but have not had success so far.</p> <p>Carla Abarca asked for more details regarding the fees committee. Mr. Maxwell said that the new VP Internal will be facilitating it; this is a university wide committee where one graduate student representative would attend.</p>	
5.	Committee Reports		
	a. Finance Committee (VP Admin)	Talena Rambarran stated that the annual budget was discussed at length yesterday at the AGM. There were questions about the increased staff and honorarium spending, but people were satisfied that it's necessary as part of the growing organization for more accountability.	
	b. Phoenix Executive Committee (VP Admin)	Talena Rambarran indicated that the next scheduled meeting would be on Friday, thus did not have an update yet.	
	c. Events and Trips Planning Committee (VP External)	Talena Rambarran indicated that the GSA had a ski trip on last Friday. It was very popular and sold out very quickly. There were six last minute cancellations, and 90 people who attended. The GSA swallowed a lot of the costs for the buses. The committee is planning something low key for April, perhaps a planetarium, and looking into an aquarium event for May.	
	d. Student Issues Action Committee (VP External)	Talena Rambarran indicated that the next scheduled meeting would be next week, thus did not have an update yet.	
	e. Academic Affairs Committee (VP Internal)	Margaret Jackel spoke on Priscilla Medeiros' behalf inviting council to attend the colloquium on March 27 th . The event is from 9:30 AM – 3:00 PM in the Institute of Applied Health Sciences on campus. Drop-ins are welcome and refreshments will be served. A full schedule of the event is available under the Social Sciences tab of the GSA webpage.	
	f. International Student	Vi Dang indicated that there was no update to provide.	

	<p>Representative Report (International Reps)</p>	<p>Talena Rambarran indicated that she had attended a meeting for international matters. A representative from SGS, CUPE and an international student of an unknown affiliation attended. The main topic was how to build an inclusive community for international students. Currently the tuition for domestic students is capped, but not for international students. We would like to see more scholarships available for international students, particularly in the social sciences and humanities as they do not have many. One big concern was given as an example. A student makes \$1k per year, and his scholarship decreased as time went on. One thing that was suggested was in addition to the letter of admission, have a reality statement on the bottom indicating that the tuition fee has increased over the past five years, and that funding is not guaranteed to promote knowledge.</p> <p>Aaron Maxwell stated we need to remember, depending on where you are coming from, university may be free, and you may not realize that there is a tuition fee. There is no guarantee how much people will make as we cannot control tuition or funding.</p> <p>Ms. Rambarran indicated that we have told CUPE and the other organizations that we'd be willing to assist them with the communications campaign to resolve this situation.</p> <p>Ms. Dang asked if there was a way to assist students financially rather than getting more information. McMaster's costs are low as it is, and has a very good science program.</p> <p>Adhithya Ravichandran inquired if there are ways to waive tuition like the Americans do, and what they pay on top is what you get. The student doesn't even know or care about tuition.</p> <p>Ms. Rambarran indicated that a suggestion was made to contact international student alumni to donate scholarship to students.</p> <p>Ms. Dang indicated that the current scholarships are very specific to nationality and to program, which is difficult.</p> <p>Ms. Rambarran indicated that currently these are just ideas, there are meetings being held, but no solution currently.</p> <p>Ms. Abarca inquired how to find out information about the</p>	
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	g. By-laws Committee (President)	<p>We completed our changes in governance structure and reflected them in the by-laws, which was passed yesterday. The major change is the structure of our Board. While it was currently structured as the 5 Executives, past President, 6 Senate Reps and 1 BOG rep, only the 5 Executives had a vote. Also, since the Senate and BOG reps are not officially part of the GSA, it can be difficult to have their participation in these meetings, as they can be more frequent and require an in-depth understanding of the GSA business that they may not have. We therefore changed it to a larger board, consisting still of the 5 Executives and past President, but adding 3 directors at Large (from the student population) and 3 community directors. The community directors will be 2 year position, and the rest will be a 1 year role. We hope that this will improve some continuity and that the community directors will be able to bring some specific expertise to the organization. The Council will ultimately be responsible for the appointment of these directors at large and community directors. Now that this has been approved, we will begin trying to fill these roles as soon as possible.</p> <p>We will be reviewing a new section of the by-laws next year. The sections to be reviewed will be selected at the next meeting. Anyone interested in this is invited to join the committee.</p>	
	h. GSA Summer Leagues(VP Services)	<p>Aaron Maxwell stated that he, Stephen Hanson and Ashley Ravenscroft met with TJ Kelly and the new director of Athletics and Recreation, Mark Alfano. Mr. Kelly had no ability to tell us one way or another as to where the GSA</p>	

		<p>stood with A&R. However, they really see the GSA as a partner in both leagues. The primary concern is regarding liability, the university self wants to ensure that the GSA has enough insurance coverage and that we do not open them up to any liability. However, the university has no reason to take over the leagues. A&R also wishes to gain earnings from the GSA and put work into the fields. A&R will collect full compensation from those who use the fields on the weekends. The GSA will partner with A&R on capital build projects, benches and re-leveling the fields. We want to operate as it has been before, and are negotiating the points to continue having the leagues.</p> <p>Adhithya Ravichandran asked for more clarification regarding how A&R will be charging to use the fields after the GSA times. Mr. Maxwell responded that the GSA has claim on the fields during the weekdays and no one uses them. On Saturday and Sunday, A&R has two non-university leagues using the fields. The GSA maintains the fields better than any other place in the city and they are the premier fields to use. A&R collects that money, since the university owns the grounds. We want to ensure the partnership will continue as it is long after the current administration is gone. This is important down the road. Any student can go down during the day, but from 5-11, the fields are reserved for the leagues and the equipment belongs to the GSA.</p> <p>Carla Abarca inquired as to how to register for the leagues. Mr. Maxwell indicated that information would be posted online shortly.</p> <p>Spencer Savoie inquired regarding liability, and if we would be wearing helmets this year. Mr. Maxwell indicated that if someone were to twist an ankle, we would be covered under our insurance. The umpires have insurance as well. What we didn't have, was insurance for maintenance. There is a slight increase in insurance, as we didn't have insurance for those who dragged the fields. Other liabilities were that historically we never used helmets. Now, batters and runners will have to wear helmets, and there will be a zero tolerance policy.</p>	
	<p>i. Graduate Student Services Review(VP Services)</p>	<p>Aaron Maxwell spoke regarding this. The university wants us to pay more for services, but we are not required to pay more due to a contract that is government mandated. We are in a position to bargain. The current AVP is very open to improvement graduate student services. This project will take 2-3 years. Currently the university is in the red, and there is more pressure for them to get the quick fix, and</p>	

		have us pay now, but they won't provide services. Ultimately it is up to them to dictate what the money goes to.	
	j. Health & Dental Committee (VP Services)	<p>Aaron Maxwell stated that as per our bylaws, we did a comprehensive review of our health and dental broker, comparing our current one with two others (Student VIP and Campus Trust –NPO) When you compare the three, there is no difference to prices in terms of premiums, and the competitors cannot offer better services. There is no reason to leave our current provider as all three are willing to work with us. Mr. Maxwell requested that council extend our contract with StudentCare.Net/Works for the next five years.</p> <p>Sarah Kanji inquired what the contract would mean. Mr. Maxwell indicated that they will be our broker for the next five years. They do not set the rates; they negotiate for the best rates for us. The competitors don't offer better services, as they couldn't compete with what we have currently.</p> <p>Spencer Savoie inquired regarding if a cap had been set regarding biologics. Mr. Maxwell indicated that this would happen next week. Our broker will be providing us a presentation on how it will look at various stages.</p> <p>Aaron Maxwell put forth the motion to renew our contract with StudentCare.Net/Works. The motion was accepted by Jeffrey Wyngaarden and seconded by Adhithya Ravichandran. None opposed. One abstained. Motion carried.</p>	Motion Carried
6.	• New Business	<p>Sarah Kanji stated that due to the initiative for the mini-councils, she and Jennifer Nicholl met with the Health Science graduate association and the feedback that they were given is that the way the GSA advertises is inadequate.</p> <p>Talena Rambarran indicated that this came up during the AGM. She and Carla Abarca discussed this and are looking to start a new committee for communication to get information out better as emails are ineffective.</p> <p>Aaron Maxwell indicated that under the NPO the GSA needs to have access to our membership. Currently we have to contact SGS to get out information and there is a delay when doing such.</p> <p>Adhithya Ravichandran suggested that perhaps the GSA could convey the importance. The MSU advertised the number of people they needed to attend their meeting, and</p>	

	<p>perhaps the GSA could do this.</p> <p>Ms. Rambarran suggested that perhaps the human strategy may be good where people go from room to room to promote information.</p> <p>Marion Jamard stated that the format of the emails is boring. Ms. Rambarran stated that the problem with that is the graduate student mailing system can't use formatting. Moving forward, we may have the FRC representatives go in person to announce events.</p> <p>Ms. Kanji indicated that the HSGS want to be a club. They consider themselves a club, but they don't have club stats and can't plan events as they don't have an EOHSS pin. How can they obtain club status? Ms. Rambarran indicated that we haven't figured this out yet. The GSA is looking to work towards that, but we don't have the same structure as the MSU. Aaron Maxwell indicated that the GSA has no way of reviewing and taking on that liability for their events. The MSU has clubs status and people who administer the clubs and reviews all the forms. We could look to go through the MSU, provide them with the funds and they can take that off our hands and the grad students would apply as undergraduate clubs do.</p> <p>Mr. Maxwell indicated that the university is reinforcing safety more stringently due to current litigations and are restricting the liability they take on.</p> <p>Ms. Abarca inquired if there was any way for the GSA to take this on? Mr. Maxwell stated that there is no way a single person could do this. The MSU has a set protocol and has a paid position to administer clubs.</p> <p>Ms. Kanji inquired how groups could request funds for a career night. Mr. Maxwell recommended she speak with the dean. Ms. Rambarran indicated that funding shouldn't be a problem. If there is a protocol.</p> <p>Ms. Abarca indicated that she is unable to hold events in the Chemistry lounge, as they are no asking for the EOHSS forms. Ms. Rambarran indicated that this would be an action item for Mr. Maxwell as it is not clear what the protocol is for graduate students.</p> <p>Ms. Rambarran indicated that club funding is available. We</p>	
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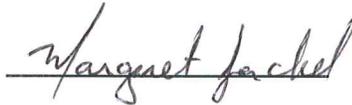
		are within budget, there are 2,400 for FRCs to run events, \$400 for each faculty to run events.	
		Carla Abarca indicated that there are no longer specials for graduate students. Adhithya Ravichandran confirmed that the graduate lunch deals, the one express lunch and the \$1 pop are no longer offered. Talena Rambarran indicated that she would bring these items up at the PEC meeting.	
7.	Adjournment	Motion to adjourn the meeting was accepted by Jeffrey Wyngaarden and seconded by Spencer Savoie at 7:07 PM.	Motion Carried



Talena Rambarran
VP External

April 27, 14

Date



Margaret Jackel
Office Assistant

Apr 27, 2014

Date