

Graduate Students Association of McMaster University
Council Meeting

Tuesday, July 29, 2014
GSA Office, East Tower Refectory
6:00 p.m.



MINUTES

Attendees: Talena Rambarran (President), Lucia Lee (VP External), Jack Huang (VP Internal), Rachel Kelly (VP Services), Adhithya Ravichandran (FRC Engineering), Sarah Kanji (FRC Health Sciences), Neha Dewan (FRC Health Sciences), Igor Osowski (FRC Humanities), Ayush Ranawade (FRC Science), Anumeet Toor (FRC Social Sciences), Ashley Ravenscroft (Director of Operations) Rita Sigsworth (recorder)

Regrets: Megan Murphy (VP Administration), Ali Vaezi (FRC Business), Carla Abarca (FRC Engineering), Vi Dang (International Student Rep), Marlena Whinton (FRC Science)

Absent: Alireza Taibakhsh (FRC Business), Marion Jamard (International Student Rep), Zeeshan Ahmed (BoG), Majid Taghavi (Senate/Science), D'Andra Parker (Senate/Health Sciences), Cassel Busse (Senate/Humanities), Stephanie Marciniak (Senate/Social Sciences), Jeff Price (CRO), Charles Burke (BOD), Stephanie Butler (BOD), Hytham Afifi (BOD)

1. Call to Order

Talena Rambarran (President) called the meeting to order at 6 p.m. Quorum was established. Introductions were made around the table.

2. Acceptance of the Agenda

MOTION: To accept agenda, The GSA Council Meeting, July 29, 2014.

Moved by: Adhithya Ravichandran

Seconded by: Jack Huang

Carried unanimously

3. Approval of the Minutes from previous council meetings (June 26, 2014) and Approval of Minutes from AGM (July 21st 2014).

MOTION: To accept the GSA Council Meeting minutes of June 26, 2014

Moved by: Rachel Kelly

Seconded by: Jack Huang

1 Abstention

Carried

MOTION: To accept the GSA AGM Meeting minutes of July 21, 2014

Moved by: Rachel Kelly

Seconded by: Lucia Lee

3 Abstentions

Carried

4. Reports from Board

a. President's Report (President)

Talena reported that Margaret Jackel has stepped down from her position as the Office Assistant in early July to take a full time position elsewhere. The GSA posted the position for a new Office Assistant and held interviews in early July. Rita Sigsworth has been hired as our new Office Assistant. Rita was introduced and she gave a brief overview of her background in working in the admin field with non-profits and educational institutions. She is excited about contributing in this essential role.

Talena then thanked everyone who attended the AGM noting it was a great success. Talena announced that quorum was reached and thus the updated bylaws were passed. Talena encouraged everyone to look at the bylaws. They are really important and are what governs our organization. The next step will be to get our new Board of Directors up and running. At the AGM, 3 members at large were voted into the BOD, Charles Burke, Stephanie Butler and Hytham Afifi. We are happy we will be moving forward with our new board structure and are currently seeking the community members.

Talena reported that Marlena Whinton has stepped down as the FRC for Science as she has taken on an Internship for 6 months. Right now we have 3 vacant positions on council: 1) FRC Humanities, 2) FRC Social Sciences and 3) FRC for Science. Talena encouraged everyone to reach out to any students interested to contact Rita.

And finally, Talena reported that a communication has come from SGS regarding Mosaic (the University Accounting system). TA pay will be paid out bi-weekly during the periods in which work is performed while scholarship money will come out monthly in 1/12 increments. The total amount of money received per year will be the same, however, this new system of payment means that months in which students TA, students will receive more money, and other months less. SGS and the GSA are partnering on setting up budgeting workshops to help students plan for the changes.

b. Senate Report

No report presented

c. Board of Governor's Report

No report presented

5. Committee Reports

a. Finance Committee (VP Administration)

As Megan Murphy (VP Administration) was not in attendance, Talena stated that there was not much to report. In Megan's report to the council, there will be scheduling of a finance meeting in August after the audit is complete. KPMG is currently conducting the audit -- there is still concern about the reporting related to the Phoenix and we are investigating these issues.

b. Phoenix Executive Committee (VP Administration)

Talena reported that the GSA is continuing to see improvement from the Phoenix, but still hesitant to state that everything is on track. The GSA is waiting on financial information for June to make conclusions about the turnaround of the operations. There are still some issues, especially in terms of service quality.

The first Phoenix Executive Committee (PEC) meeting was held on July 10th, 2014. We are in the planning phase of determining what PEC/PO(Operational)C will look like and what their responsibilities will be. We want to ensure that we have the best advisory capabilities possible, while still maintaining a connection between the grad students, the GSA, the university, and the Phoenix.

i) Discussion/motion to buy the Phoenix's accounts receivable debt

Talena stated that The Phoenix has roughly 35k in accounts receivables owed. An option for resolution is that the GSA could potentially cut them a cheque for this amount and go after the money owed. The benefits of doing this is that the Phoenix needs the money to pay the HST, which is due soon. However, this option would leave the GSA liable if the money is not reclaimed. Since we are one organization, we face this problem regardless. Talena invited a discussion on the information presented.

Jack Huang asked what is the receivable process currently. Ashley Ravenscroft stated that as of July 28, The Phoenix will no longer accept payment through Mosaic but by cheque or credit card within 15 days. In the past receivables were placed through Mosaic (internal House account), however, the previous management did not collect money owed to the Phoenix in a timely manner.

A question was asked how badly do they need it specifically. When are the taxes due? Ashley stated that it is vitally important that the HST is paid. It is a condition and linked with our outstanding capital loan. The GSA will be considered in default on the capital loan if the HST is not paid. HST is due 90 days from year end.

Ashley also reported that she has been working on the collections through extra help being brought in at minimum wage to go through the receivables and doing due diligence (i.e. no duplicates, etc.) \$10,000 of the \$35,000 has already been recovered. Ashley has contacted 70% of the receivables list and the response has been positive/receptive.

Igor asked where is the money coming from on the GSA side of things. Ashley responded that there is a cushion from the surplus.

MOTION: To buy up to \$35,000 worth of Phoenix Account Receivable debt and bill Phoenix for the manpower used to reconcile the account.

Moved by: Talena Rambarran

Seconded by: Igor Osowski

Carried unanimously

c. Events and Trips Planning Committee (VP External)

Lucia Lee reported that the Wine Tour trip scheduled for August 2, 2014 is almost full. There are 48 seats available and as of today 41 people have signed up. Other events planned are a Beach Day on August 16, 2014 and a Niagara on the Lake trip – date TBD (Sept.)

d. Academic Affairs Committee (VP Internal)

Jack Huang reported the Academic Affairs Committee met last week and awards and bursaries have been chosen. The GSA Keith Leppmann Teaching Assistant Excellence Award is open again for nominations as no applications were received. Jack also reported that the adjudication process has been difficult for the GSA Millennium Award for Community Service because of the lack participation on the committee. We need a FRC on the committee. Jack pleads for more FRC representatives on the Academic Affairs Committee as the adjudication process needs to be fair and impartial.

e. International Student Representative Report (International Reps)

No report presented

f. By-laws Committee (President)

Talena Rambarran was pleased to report that the updated bylaws (which were reviewed/edited by Sara Morton-By-laws consultants, Talena and Ashley (and hopefully other members) were passed at the AGM! Moving forward, Talena reported that different sections will be reviewed every year. Talena welcomed anyone who wants to join, to let her know.

g. GSA Summer Leagues Committee (VP Services)

Rachel Kelly reported that the next meeting will be in September and there is nothing to report at the moment.

h. Graduate Student Services Review Committee (VP Services/ President)

Rachel Kelly reported there are a couple of initiatives in the works for Grad Students. One is a pilot wellness program that tracks the grad student lifecycle. The GSA is working with SGS on this initiative. More information can be obtained from Andrea Cole from SGS (ext. 23437).

Rachel also reported an increase in bursary applications due to increased financial hardship. Rachel proposed to add 7 x \$150 bursaries in addition to the 3 x \$500 bursaries (in conjunction with SGS). Funds are to come from the Health and Dental Bursary that I Have a Plan provides us each academic year.

MOTION: To earmark \$2,000 from I Have a Plan bursary to create 7 x \$150 bursaries in two allotments – 2013-2014 and 2014-2015. The bursary is to be named IhaveAPlan Graduate Student Needs Bursary.

Moved by: Rachel Kelly

Seconded: Jack Huang

Carried Unanimously

A discussion was started regarding tuition fees between domestic and international students and stipends/TA salaries. It was stated that it is a complicated issue and stipends and TA salaries vary from department to department and it is best to speak to your department about this.

i. Health & Dental Committee (VP Services)

Rachel Kelly reported that the GSA will be meeting with Del Pereira from I Have a Plan next month (August) to finalize Health and Dental plan benefits for 2014-2015 year. There is a proposal on the table to increase the premiums in favour of additional benefits (i.e. vision). There will be a need to have a referendum in order to ratify the increase in premiums. It will be a two-tiered system with increased benefits, regular benefits and an option of opting out of all of the above. The student will have a choice (obviously they have to have coverage elsewhere to fully opt out).

6. New Business

a. HSR contract

Talena Rambarran reported that the GSA needs to resign the agreement with the HSR for the bus pass. They are offering us the same deal as previously, 210% the cost of the monthly pass for the year (current rate is \$87 per month – so \$182 for the year, they do not think it will increase). We can sign for 1 year or multiple years, however, there is no additional incentive to sign a longer contract. Megan has been in

discussions with DeGroote Business School regarding inclusion of the MBA's in the HSR deal along with potential opt outs, however, nothing has been finalized regarding this topic.

Ahdi stated that there is a lower price for undergrads – a \$30 monthly difference. It was noted that there are more undergraduate students than grad students but also HSR believes that only 10% of UG's would use the pass in the summer, where Graduate students are all here and heavier users. Graduate students still get the benefits of longer service and more buses that was in the UG agreement when they renegotiated their fee.

MOTION: To sign the HSR contract for another 3 years.

Moved by: Talena Rambarran

Seconded by: Lucia Lee

Carried unanimously

Adhithya Ravichandran left the meeting at 6:45 p.m.

7. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 6:52 p.m.

MOTION: To adjourn the meeting.

Moved by: Igor Osowski

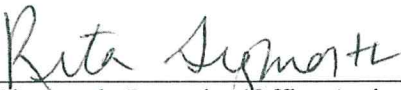
Seconded by: Lucia Lee

Carried unanimously



Lucia Lee, VP External

Date Aug 29, 14



Rita Sigsworth, Recorder (Office Assistant)

Date 2014 08 20