



Graduate Students Association of McMaster University  
Council Meeting, Tuesday, February 3, 2015  
GSA Office, East Tower Refectory  
5:30pm  
Minutes



Present: Talena Rambarran (President), Megan Murphy (VP Admin), Lucia Lee (VP External), Manraj Kaur (VP Internal), Rachel Kelly (VP Services), Debbie Ritskes (Administrator), Adhithya Ravichandran (Engineering), Vi Dang (International), Mai Yamamoto (FRC Science), Sarah Kanji (Health Science), Neha Dewan (Health Science), Anumeet Toor (Social Science), Carla Abarca (Engineering), Ali Vaezi (Business), Natalie D'Silva (FRC Science)

Guests: Peter Self (SGS), Sean Van Koughnett (Student Affairs), Gina Robinson (Student Affairs)

Regrets: Alireza Taibakhsh (Business), Igor Osowski (Humanities), Ayush Ranawade (Science), Marion Jamard (International), Fran Lasowski (Past President)

Absent: Zeeshan Ahmed, Majid Taghavi, Cassel Busse, Stephanie Marciniak, Jeff Price, Charles Burke, Hytham Afifi, Asim Soomro

- 1.0 Call to order 5:34
- 2.0 Acceptance of the agenda – 1<sup>st</sup> by Carla, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Adhi, **motion carried**
- 3.0 Information from Student Affairs and SGS regarding proposed ancillary fees increases (25 minutes)  
Handouts were given and a power point presentation was presented to Council, re; Proposed Ancillary Fee increase for 2016/2017.
- 4.0 Approval of minutes from December 18, 2014; 1<sup>st</sup> by Rachel, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Megan, 1 abstention, **motion carried**
- 5.0 Recognition of the **Engineering Graduate Society (EGS)** as a Faculty Association – Definition according to the GSA bylaws is a student body with a particular faculty that has to abide by the bylaws of the GSA. It is an independent student body that has the right to provide a representative to the GSA. Carla and Adhi have been working on starting EGS for quite a while and wrote all the documents and a set of bylaws to help the EGS function. Nothing contradictory was found when reading the bylaws and comparing them to the GSA bylaws. In case of a contradiction the GSA bylaws would prevail. EGS will be holding their first elections. Adhi and Carla may have to step down as FRC on GSA council as outlined in the bylaws. Motion to recognize EGS as a Faculty Association; 1<sup>st</sup> by Mai, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Manraj, all in favour, **motion carried**
- 6.0 Reports from the board
  - 6.1 Presidents report –Megan, Ashley and Talena met last week to do Kevin's performance review. Megan will report further.

From the BOD, a code of conduct for committee members was passed. It outlines unacceptable behavior and a removal policy. Final copies of the Code of Conduct will be given to the committees. The GSA financial position was reviewed. Megan will report further. Gina Robinson from Student Affairs was appointed to the BOD as a Community member. Motion to accept Board's decision to have Gina Robinson as our Community member; 1<sup>st</sup> by Megan, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Sarah, 2 abstentions, **motion carried**.

Changes to Mosaic –The disappearance of the payment agreement and how it will affect Grad Students: At the end of the winter term, students will be able to view the student portal and will be able to get unofficial transcripts on-line. Some important dates to remember; February 23: Grad Studies online admissions opens, March 19: Student administration Systems goes live, and March 23: Students will have access to Mosaic to enroll, register for classes, and see their grades.

There were recent changes to scholarship payments: scholarship payments are now being paid once per term. The GSA was not aware that these changes were going to occur. The Executive was very disappointed that this was not communicated to us nor discussed with us ahead of time. The GSA has urged Graduate Studies to involve us in the process.

6.2 Senate report - no representative to report.

6.3 Board of governors report – no representative to report

## 7.0 Committee reports

7.1 Finance Committee – met this month. We apologize the document wasn't ready yet for the meeting. The GSA bookkeeper is working on budget vs actual, and it will be ready for the AGM. Budgets for the GSA and the Phoenix are being reviewed. Some adjustments still need to be made. Club funding has a \$2000.00 budget. There is \$730 still available. The GSA hasn't received a lot of applications for funding support this year. Last year over \$2000.00 was paid.

7.2 Phoenix Executive Committee - Kevin's performance review went well. A document was created for the review. Overall it was a very positive review. Areas of development and improvement were discussed. Kevin has made huge improvements to the Phoenix. As an example November we were at a positive \$10,000.00 for the same period last year we were at a loss of \$70,000.00. There was a meeting with Chris Roberts from Hospitality Services regarding accepting meal plan cards. The cost with implementing the plan was quite high and not very profitable. It would cost approx. \$2000.00 to run the cards, and \$100.00/month in maintenance fees, and the GSA may have to fund the cost of offering a discount for the meals. Lower peak hours should be used to stimulate undergrads using the Phoenix. Suggestions could be to do half of appetizers. It would be a good idea to try and do perks for those hours that aren't busy. There are 3500 undergrads, 500 faculty and then grad students. An increase in advertising is needed. Flex cards gives you a discount and you can load up with any amount. The 15% off Wednesday nights costs about \$150.00. A cost analysis needs to be done for the Phoenix to expand the discount. There have been minor revisions to the menu and new menus are being printed in the next month. Pulled pork is being added to the menu.

7.3 Events and trips planning committee – last Friday January 30 McMaster hosted a Summit. Ontario GSA's were invited. Topics discussed were supporting students, health services, fees, also governance and management of the association. It offers professional development. 7 Ontario Universities participated. A summarization will be presented at the next meeting. The Yoga event was cancelled because of the snow storm. Another learn to curl event at the end of February is possible. There is a Ski Trip planned at Snow Valley on March 14.

A student survey is being drafted for the end of February. There will be a meeting next week regarding the survey. The survey will be distributed to the Executive before it is sent out. The Winter Warm Up was cancelled due to not having a VP Internal. An event during reading week could be held. It could be called "not your reading week". The Phoenix could be used. Manraj and Lucia will discuss ideas, possibilities for a Soup fest?

7.4 Academic Affairs Committee – Student Wellness Centre collaborated with the GSA on a SPICES grant to provide nutrition and exercise-related educational sessions to the graduate students. Manraj attended the SPICES grant meeting and provided comments on the grant application.

The student wellness centre had a Nutrition Event. Topics were how to eat healthy on a budget, making smoothies, and how to eat at a Conference. An idea could be to do a cooking event at non rush hour times at the Phoenix. The Travel Awards will be adjudicated on a Friday evening and some snacks will be provided from the Phoenix.

7.5 International Student Representative Report –A fair for the new students ran again, and there will be another fair in May. Another fair trade fair will also run next month. A committee needs to be formed to be able to pass information along for the following years. It would involve getting a committee member from each faculty. Some research should be done to find all the committees on campus that should have representatives from the GSA .

7.6 By laws Committee – There was a meeting two weeks ago. There are only 2 people on the Committee. We reviewed the first 8 documents in the bylaws. There were some grammatical errors. There are just minor changes to be made. The committee will be reviewing the next 5 or 6 sections at the next meeting. If there are enough changes it could be presented at the AGM.

7.7 GSA Summer Leagues Committee - January 20<sup>th</sup> there was "A Learn To Curl Event". There is a possibility of another Learn to Curl Event to be held in February since there was a huge number of students that came to the event. 11 teams registered for the curling league. There was room for 8 teams for this term due to ice time.

7.8 Graduate Student Services Review Committee – The student services review committee is releasing a survey. This survey will evaluate the graduate student opinion on services offered by the GSA, other campus groups and how students prefer to receive information regarding changes to services and other information.

In November, the GSA participated in a grant spearheaded by Student Affairs. This grant was for the addition of a service for McMaster students called "Arrive and Thrive". The grant, which received funding, is a three part plan consisting of Arrive and Thrive, Pause and Change the Channel. Arrive and Thrive is an online survey for incoming students that will evaluate the students coping skills and risk for addictive behaviour. The pause component is an opportunity for those at-risk to meet individually with a counsellor. The Change the Channel is a link between on campus and community counselling options for students. All components of the Arrive and Thrive program are voluntary. The GSA is excited to be able to participate in the development of such a beneficial service.

7.9 Health & Dental Committee - MSU has added 80% coverage for contraceptives and vision care to their benefits. The Health and Dental survey report will reflect our possible changes. There was a UHIP meeting and there was negative feedback regarding making claims.

8.0 Next meeting and setting AGM Date – **Date: Tuesday March 31 time to be determined.** Talena will contact Kevin at the Phoenix to book an appropriate time when the Phoenix isn't busy. A BBQ invitation seems to have the best response for attendance to meet quorum. Everyone should bring a couple of people with them to improve attendance. A Suggestion was made that emails are not very effective do posters instead. Lucia was asked to create posters for the AGM and advertise on facebook etc. Lucia to contact Sean to do news blasts in regards to the fees.

9.0 New Business

9.1 Interdisciplinary Conference at Laurier - cancelled

9.2 Housing Focus Group – for potential grad student housing. Volunteers to form a focus group are Manraj, Lucia, Sarah, Rachel, and Adhi. There will be just one meeting for feedback.

9.3 Library Groups – Future of the library meeting at 11-12:30. It would be good to have a representative from the GSA to go to the meeting, Sarah may go.

9.4 Motion to appoint Mai Yamamoto as a FRC Science Representative, 1<sup>st</sup> by Adhi, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Manraj, **motion carried**

10.0 Adjournment 7:55



Lucia Lee, VP External

Wednesday, Mar 4 115

Date



Debbie Ritskes, Recorder (Office Assistant)

mar 4/15

Date