



Meeting Minutes

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



Present: Present: Talena Rambarran (GSA President), Megan Murphy (VP Administration), Lucia Lee (VP External), Marlana Whinton (Acting VP Internal), Ali Vaezi (FRC Business), Carla Abarca (FRC Engineering), Adhithya Ravichandran (FRC Engineering), Neha Dewan (FRC Health Sciences), Igor Osowski (FRC Humanities), Vi Dang (International Student Rep), Marion Jamard (International Student Rep), Ashley Ravenscroft (Director of Operations), Margaret Jackel (Office Assistant), Jeffrey Price, Jack Huang

Regrets: Rachel Kelly (VP Services)

Absent: Alireza Taibakhsh (FRC Business), Sarah Kanji (FRC Health Sciences), Ayush Ranawade (FRC Science), Murray Wilson (BOG Representative), Majid Taghavi (Senate Rep), Ahmed El Ganzouri (Senate Rep), D'Andra Parker (Senate Rep), Cassel Busse (Senate Rep), Spencer Savoie (Senate Rep), Stephanie Marciniak (Senate Rep)

Item	Motion		
1.	Call to Order	6:03 PM	
2.	Acceptance of the Agenda	<p>The motion to accept the agenda was accepted by Adhithya Ravichandran.</p> <p>Marlena Whinton amended the agenda to add to new business.</p> <p>The motion to accept the amendment was accepted by Megan Murphy and seconded by Mr. Ravichandran. None opposed. None abstained. Motion carried.</p>	Motion Carried
3.	Approval of the Minutes from meetings of May 27, 2014	The minutes of May 27, 2014 were approved on a motion by Megan Murphy and seconded by Lucia Lee. None opposed. None abstained. Motion carried.	Motion Carried
4.	Reports from Board <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. President's Report <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VP Internal/CRO 	Talena Rambarran introduced Mr. Jack Huang who indicated that he was pursuing his masters in Biochemistry. Mr. Huang indicated that he has always been interested in student government bodies and when he found out about the vacancy, he applied for the position. Ms. Rambarran clarified that Mr. Ming Quan Fu had stepped down as VP Internal and that Marlana Whinton, FRC Science, took on the duties of that position during the month of June. The position is now up for election at council, and the position will be open for election by the by-election in October.	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Payroll Changes 	<p>Ms. Rambarran continued to introduce Jeffrey Price, a 4th year Chemistry student who has been involved in a variety of society activities. Mr. Price was appointed by the President to hold the position of CRO.</p> <p>Ms. Rambarran moved on to speak regarding CUPE and payroll changes. The way that scholarship and employment for graduate students is administered will change this September. These changes are occurring as part of MOSAIC, McMaster's multi-year project to update its administrative systems for student, finance, research and human resources. There will be a communication going out shortly from the GSA/SGS that details:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Graduate students with a teaching assistantship (TA) or a research assistantship (RA in lieu appointment) will receive their employment income in bi-weekly payments rather than monthly, starting in September of 2014. • Scholarship funds will continue to be paid monthly. • Tuition fees will be deducted from scholarship and bursary funds in September and the remainder will be paid evenly across the year to students as one twelfth of their scholarship each month, unless the specific scholarship has other requirements. • The annual amount of financial support that an individual graduate student receives will not change as a result of the new system <p>The university will be holding discussions with representatives from the Graduate council, GSA and CUPE 3906 when appropriate regarding these changes. We are also working with SGS to develop workshops around financial planning and budgeting to find solutions so that TA/RA in lieu funds can be used toward tuition fee deductions. Further details and a schedule of payment dates will be communicated prior to September 2014.</p>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aidan Johnson – Councillor Ward 1 	<p>Ms. Rambarran stated that Alison Sekuler, the current Dean of Graduate Studies, will be going on sabbatical. Douglas Welch will be filling the role during Ms. Sekuler's absence. Ms. Rambarran indicated that before her departure, Ms. Sekuler put into contact Aidan Johnson to meet with Frances Lasowski and herself. Mr. Johnson will be running for counsellor of Ward 1 (the ward which the University resides and its surrounding neighbourhoods). Mr. Johnson wanted to discuss what issues face graduate students that can be addressed at the municipal level. Topics of interest that were discussed included voting in municipal elections and</p>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Committee to Recommend a President 	<p>the LRT. Mr. Johnson, who is also a lawyer, inquired if students would find an information session useful regarding landlord/tenant relationships/rights and responsibilities. Ms. Rambarran indicated that if anyone has any municipal issues that affect graduate students that they wished to be brought up, to bring them forward to herself as she will be meeting with Mr. Johnson in the future.</p> <p>Ms. Rambarran indicated that Dr. Patrick Deane's 5 year term as President and Vice-Chancellor will be ending as of June 30th, 2015. The university has established a committee to recommend a president that is seeking consultation from the members of the university community. The committee wanted to solicit feedback on the role of President and Vice-Chancellor. The GSA meets regularly with Dr. Deane and has put forward a written submission acknowledging our appreciation of the time Dr. Deane has taken with us to discuss issues arising within the GSA or graduate student body and supports his reappointment.</p>	
	b. Senate Report	Representative was not available to report.	
	c. Board of Governor's Report	<p>Representative was not available to report.</p> <p>Talena Rambarran indicated that she has reviewed the minutes from the BOG meeting and an item of note she was able to determine was that tuition will not be increased for research based programs.</p>	
	Vice President Internal appointment.	The GSA Council voted to have Jack Huang assume the position of VP Internal. None opposed. None abstained. Mr. Huang was appointed by council to fill the role of VP Internal until by-elections.	
5.	Committee Reports a. Finance Committee (VP Admin)	Megan Murphy indicated that as was approved in the AGM, that KPMG has been contracted to be our auditors for the upcoming year. The audit fees align with our budget, however this depends on the complexity of our audit. The audit will begin on July 14 th .	
	b. Phoenix Executive Committee (VP Admin)	Ms. Murphy indicated that council will need to vote on how the Phoenix will pay back the loan made to them by the GSA of \$13,487.04. Ashley Ravenscroft provided some background information stating that historically there is one broker who provides insurance for both the GSA and the Phoenix. The GSA had worked with the previous general manager regarding this matter, and a cheque was written for the balance of this value. However, upon his departure it became apparent that the Phoenix could not afford this cheque. The new General Manager of the phoenix has made	

		<p>substantial strides forward since starting on May 16th and has decreased value of the outstanding accounts with vendors. There are other financial requirements due for the Phoenix as well, namely rent owed to the university as well as the quarterly HST payment. The executive would like to propose terms for the \$13,487.04 to be paid back to the GSA within a certain time frame. If it is not passed here, then it will not be considered a loan and the GSA will give until next week to pay it.</p> <p>Carla Abarca inquired about the performance of the new General Manager. Talena Rambarran indicated that the new GM has decreased the cost of labour and cost of goods by implementing small things here and there. Ms. Ravenscroft added that the new GM has implemented smarter buying and improving the Phoenix's bottom line. Ms. Abarca inquired what our arrangements were with contractors. Ms. Ravenscroft indicated that the Phoenix is on very good terms with distributors but are putting better business practices into place. Ms. Abarca asked how we were decreasing costs of labour. Ms. Rambarran indicated that better scheduling was being implemented, and less shifts were scheduled during slower periods and that the Phoenix was utilizing some overstock of alcohol to not repurchase more.</p> <p>Igor Osowski inquired in terms of the loan are the GSA and the Phoenix still one entity? Ms. Ravenscroft indicated that through CRA's eyes, yes we are one entity, but we regard each other separately given that one is for profit and the other is not.</p> <p>Jeffrey Price inquired what the trajectory was of lowering the debt whether or not it was a one-time saving or a saving moving forward. Ms. Murphy indicated it was a bit of both. The reduction of labour will be a continued thing but the alcohol will eventually have to be repurchased.</p> <p>Jack Huang inquired if the Phoenix was financially viable in the past? Ms. Rambarran indicated that the mandate was always to break even or to only generate a small profit. Graduate students paid \$60 each year to move the Phoenix to this location amounting to \$2.4m over several years. The GSA now wants the Phoenix to drive back a bit of profit to give back to the GSA to utilize for student scholarships, professional development and so forth. Since the GSA has moved to this location, there have been many challenges with the new location and management turnover. Things are now calming down and we hope to make the Phoenix</p>	
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	<p>profitable.</p> <p>Ms. Murphy indicated that the GSA used a different auditing system before KPMG and upon reviewing older audits, she was determined that some things were just covered by the GSA and was unable to get an accurate picture of performance. Ms. Rambarran indicated that the GSA is now getting a more accurate representation of the two sides with the new auditors. Ms. Murphy clarified that the GSA now receives monthly financial statements from the Phoenix providing more clarity and a better picture of the situation. Ms. Ravenscroft indicated that the university is willing to assist the GSA with this situation. The Phoenix now has goals in place to benchmark. Ms. Rambarran also indicated that the situation of the Phoenix should not continue forward, the current manager in place has years of restaurant experience running a successful business and we have the support of the university to assist us.</p> <p>Megan Murphy put forth the motion to loan the Phoenix the balance of their insurance portion of \$13,487.04 with terms to be payable within one year. Ms. Abarca amended the motion to be payable on February 1, 2015. The motion was accepted by Igor Osowski and seconded by Marlena Whinton. None opposed. None abstained. Motion carried.</p> <p>Ms. Murphy continued to state that the PEC meeting scheduled had been postponed and will be rescheduled for the second week of July and a Doodle would be sent out shortly. The Phoenix and PEC will be working to update Phoenix policies to ensure better processes are in place for both the Phoenix management and employees and to increase communication between the two houses.</p> <p>Ms. Murphy indicated that the GM has made some menu changes to improve our current margins as some items were significantly mispriced. The GM is also working to improve other procedures at the Phoenix. The GM is working to determine the costs of food going out, not only the materials but also labour associated with it. We still don't have a 100% picture regarding the labour, but are getting a better idea of the COGS. The Phoenix will be launching a new menu in September.</p> <p>Ms. Murphy continued to indicate that Ms. Ravenscroft and Mr. Lafontaine have been working together to meet the health and safety requirements of the Ministry of Labour. This includes training and a joint health & safety committee,</p>	<p>Motion Carried</p>
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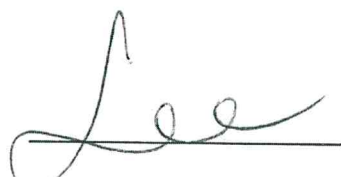
		<p>including new documentation for monthly reviews.</p> <p>Adhithya Ravichandran indicated that he had been to the Phoenix frequently as of late and was at one point told directly to order food or to leave while watching the World Cup by a server. Carla Abarca clarified that the server was a tall gentleman with black hair. They were in a group with about 15 people and hadn't even been provided menus. Talena Rambarran indicated she would bring this matter up with the GM regarding courtesy. Ms. Abarca continued indicating that the group knew that they had to order something, but the server didn't even ask what they would like and stated that they had to order something right away. Ms. Rambarran requested that a formal write-up be presented to be forwarded to the GM.</p> <p>Marion Jamard stated that she had gone to the Phoenix recently around 7:30 with the intention to stay the entirety of the evening there. Her group placed an order for beverages and food, but were told shortly that they had to leave due to an upcoming event. Her group had arrived only 15 minutes before the event was to start and Ms. Jamard felt that her group should have been notified earlier so that they could have chosen another venue. Ms. Rambarran indicated that she would forward the issue to the GM. Ms. Rambarran also indicated that if any of the council members, or if they knew of any issues from others could forward those comments as the GSA and the Phoenix want that kind of feedback to bring forward to the GM to ensure they do not happen again.</p> <p>Mr. Ravichandran stated that there are currently no graduate specials and there is only the stamp card available. Ms. Rambarran indicated that moving forward, the GSA would like to initiate a 10% discount to graduate students, but the Phoenix needs to be more financially stable before something like this can be rolled out. This is on the radar however, and the GSA wishes to give back more to graduate students beyond the card.</p>	
	c. Events and Trips Planning Committee (VP External)	<p>Lucia Lee stated that for the month of May, the GSA had a trip to Ripley's Aquarium that went well, and no complaints were received. The committee went slightly over the budget of \$400 for this trip by \$80. The committee will be adjusting this moving forward to stay close to the budget. Ms. Lee indicated that Marlena Whinton was very helpful in organizing June's event to Canada's Wonderland. They will be using two buses for this event and are charging \$35/registrant and has sold out.</p>	

		<p>Ms. Lee indicated that a BBQ will be coming up on July 21st. Ms. Whinton indicated that an individual had emailed in stating that the Wonderland trip was on the first day of Ramadan. This individual has been invited to sit on the committee to diversify and be more aware of what needs to be taken into consideration. Ms. Lee continued to state that they plan on having a wine tour in July.</p>	
	d. Academic Affairs Committee (VP Internal)	<p>Marlena Whinton stated that herself, Neha Dewan and Ayush Ranawade adjudicated the May – August travel grant applications and the adjudication was oversaw by Jack Huang. There were twenty four awards provided overall ranging from \$100 to \$500. There will also be additional awards presented to engineering students as there was an extra funding pool for those in Engineering. This did not affect the other adjudications.</p> <p>Ms. Whinton continued to state that bursaries will be adjudicated shortly and a meeting will be called.</p>	
	e. International Student Representative Report (International Reps)	<p>Vi Dang stated that they had a meeting with SGS and CUPE to arrange an event during welcome week. There will be a social and information session on September 4 between 2-4pm. This event will be to welcome international students and provide information. They are searching for volunteers to share their experiences. IGSA held a popsicle party to recruit some volunteers and many volunteered. Ms. Dang requested if some of the FRC's could talk about their experiences and to provide information regarding the GSA and the FRC's roles. Marion Jamard clarified that this event was planned during times when nothing else would be happening so that students wouldn't miss out on things and this event would not be competing with the other numerous events to get as many attendees as possible. The idea is to have various topics and have people at booths to provide information at them and have some topics that they may not have thought about asking. This is an opportunity to welcome them more personally and to hear others' experiences. Most of the volunteers have been pretty enthusiastic for sharing their experiences. They are also looking to do something similar in January and May for those who come at those points. The group is also working on a handbook to be given out with contacts information and where to get information on Canadian life and a possible mentorship as well. Ms. Dang indicated that the event will be located in Gilmour Hall and everyone is invited to attend.</p>	
	f. By-laws Committee (President)	<p>Talena Rambarran indicated that there was a lot of work done regarding the by-laws with the assistance and consultation of Sara Morton. These were changed and</p>	

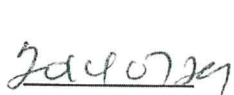
		passed at the AGM, but as council is aware, these are not in effect. The committee has not yet met, but Ms. Rambarran invited those interested to join the committee.	
	g. GSA Summer Leagues(VP Services)	Talena Rambarran reported on Rachel Kelly's behalf. Both the GSA softball and soccer leagues are currently in full swing. The next meeting of the committee will be in early September to review the seas and make note of what items need to be changed for the next year.	
	h. Graduate Student Services Review(VP Services)	<p>Talena Rambarran reported on Rachel Kelly's behalf. On June 13th, Ms. Kelly and the interim VP Internal Marlana Whinton represented graduate students at a workshop held by the co-leads of the McMaster Student Mental Health Strategy. The purpose of the workshop was to discuss what mental health resources are available to students that attend McMaster, and what resources might be missing. Based on the workshop, Ms. Kelly and Ms. Whinton concluded that one of the current problems with our services is that students do not know that they are available to them. The next Graduate Student Services Review Committee meeting will take place in mid-July and is currently looking for volunteers to join the committee.</p> <p>Ms. Rambarran clarified that the university wants to impose a new fee as the graduate students are paying a small portion of what undergraduate students are. This fee increase needs to be passed by the graduate students in order to impose it. If they increase the fee, they also have to increase the services for graduate students. The university wants to know what graduate students want.</p>	
	i. Health & Dental Committee (VP Services)	<p>Talena Rambarran reported on Rachel Kelly's behalf. The Executive will be attending a training session on the GSA health and dental plan on July 3rd to ensure that they have a thorough understanding of the plan and can answer questions from the members. Del Pereira from 'I have a plan/Student Care Networks', our health and dental broker, has committed to undertaking a survey that comprehensively reviews the needs of our members. Ms. Kelly is looking for input from the council with regards to the kinds of questions we would like to be part of this survey. Some suggestions so far have included questions about mental health, professional development and career services.</p> <p>The next Health and Dental Committee meeting will take place in July and are currently looking for volunteers to join the committee.</p>	
6.	• New Business	Talena Rambarran stated that a policy was sent out along with the minutes regarding a policy for a code of conduct for	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policies - Conduct 	<p>employees employed by the GSA and encouraged individuals to bring forward any points of concern now. There will be a separate set of policies for the Phoenix.</p> <p>Ms. Rambarran put forth a motion to accept the code of conduct for the GSA policies. The motion was accepted by Lucia Lee and seconded by Carla Abarca. None opposed. None abstained. Motion carried.</p>	Motion carried
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AGM Date 	<p>Talena Rambarran stated as the by-laws did not get passed at the previous AGM due to not having quorum, the GSA will be hosting another AGM on July 21st coinciding with one of the \$2 BBQs. The AGM will run from 11:00 AM to noon. Those who attend the AGM will receive free entrance to the BBQ. Ms. Rambarran requested for FRCs to put this date into their calendars and try to be there. Jeffrey Price inquired as to what is quorum? Ms. Rambarran stated that it is 1% of our membership. Lucia Lee will be organizing and planning the BBQ. The GSA will have a list of all graduate students and will highlight their names as they attend. Ashley Ravenscroft stated that they are doing this to ensure students aren't denied. Ms. Rambarran stated that the Phoenix staff will be taking care of this.</p> <p>Carla Abarca proposed for each FRC to bring a poster board for people to see their faculty and to get to know what the FRCs are and what they do. Adhithya Ravichandran stated that the GSA should have hosts. Ms. Rambarran indicated that the FRCs should use these opportunities as a chance to speak to members. Mr. Ravichandran suggested that GSA members have something colourful to identify them.</p>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Welcome Week 	<p>Talena Rambarran indicated that the GSA is working with SGS to discuss the planning of events. The graduate awards ceremony will be from 3:30 – 4:30 on September 5th. Ms. Rambarran would like for different members of council to present the awards to show that we acknowledge fellow graduate students. The BBQ in September will be during the first week from noon to 6:00 PM. The date has not yet been determined. Lucia Lee stated that she is working with Correen Smith to set up the date.</p>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FRC Meeting 	<p>Marlena Whinton indicated that a lot of the FRCs are unaware of what the impact the GSA has on the university. It would be helpful to know what the GSA affiliation has with the various university committees. This way, when FRCs go to the student body, we can help them with their problems by knowing where to go.</p> <p>Ms. Whinton also requested a more formal email introduction for FRCs to meet with the Deans of their</p>	

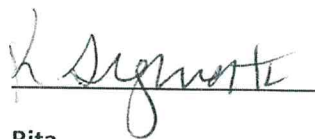
		<p>faculties. Some FRCs do not feel comfortable cold contacting them. Things are easier now that there is an official email for each faculty and it looks more professional. Talena Rambarran indicated that setting up meetings between the Deans of each faculty with the FRCs is something on the radar to do.</p> <p>Ms. Rambarran also indicated that for some committees, the GSA does not have a lot of input in, for instance, the BOG and Senate, the GSA has an observatory seat, but no voting power.</p> <p>Ms. Winton indicated that FRCs have access to a web page for each faculty. FRCs will be meeting in early July that will be organized by Jack Huang. Carla Abarca and Adhithya Ravichandran will be presenting their site as an example or template for others to model after.</p> <p>Ms. Whinton indicated that it can be difficult to convince the student body of the importance of the GSA, thus it is beneficial to have other GSA representatives other than the faculty representatives to answer questions and represent the GSA. Ms. Whinton suggested that a rotation could be done. For the short term goals, the FRC are to introduce themselves to the faculty to determine what they want to do, where and when. This will be due on July 3rd to report to the VP Internal. They will reconvene on July 7 to work on the web page. Meeting with the faculty Deans and secretaries are the best ways to contact the student bodies.</p>	
7.	Adjournment	The motion to adjourn was accepted by Adhithya Ravichandran and seconded by Marlena Whinton at 7:26 PM	



Lucia Lee
VP External



Date



Rita
Office Assistant



Date