



Meeting Minutes

Graduate Students Association Council Meeting
Tuesday, May 27, 2014, 6:00 p.m.
GSA Office, East Tower Refectory



Present: Present: Talena Rambarran (GSA President), Megan Murphy (VP Administration), Lucia Lee (VP External), Rachel Kelly (VP Services), Alireza Taibakhsh (FRC Business), Ali Vaezi (FRC Business), Carla Abarca (FRC Engineering), Adhithya Ravichandran (FRC Engineering), Sarah Kanji (FRC Health Sciences), Neha Dewan (FRC Health Sciences), Marlena Whinton (FRC Science), Ayush Ranawade (FRC Science), Vi Dang (International Student Rep), Ashley Ravenscroft (Director of Operations), Margaret Jackel (Office Assistant)

Regrets: Ming Quan Fu (VP Internal), Igor Osowski (FRC Humanities)

Absent: 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), Marion Jamard (International Student Rep)

Item	Motion		
1.	Call to Order	6:02 PM	
2.	Acceptance of the Agenda	<p>The motion to accept the agenda was accepted by Marlena Whinton and seconded by Megan Murphy.</p> <p>Megan Murphy put forth a motion to amend the agenda to add standing resolutions to the new business section. The motion was accepted by Rachel Kelly and seconded by Marlena Whinton.</p>	Motion Carried
3.	Introductions	Introductions were made again for those who couldn't make the last meeting.	
4.	Approval of the Minutes from meetings of April 22, 2014	The minutes of April 22, 2014 were approved on a motion by Marlena Whinton and seconded by Megan Murphy. None opposed. One abstained. Motion carried.	Motion Carried
5.	Reports from Board a. President's Report	<p>Talena Rambarran welcomed the new executives and FRC stating that she looked forward to working with everyone this year.</p> <p>Ms. Rambarran continued to indicate that the GSA has hired a new General Manager for the Phoenix. Daniel Rodrigues was the interim manager and his contract was due to expire at the end of May. The GSA struck a hiring committee and interviewed three candidates, of which, the interim manager was one of the participants. The successful candidate was Kevin Lafontaine, and he began on May 15th. The interim manager quit his position on May 15th and did not stay until</p>	

		<p>the end of his contract on May 30th. Mr. Lafontaine was chosen for his years of experience in the food and beverage industry and operated a successful bar in Windsor for a number of years. We are excited to have Mr. Lafontaine join the Phoenix team. Feel free to greet him and welcome him.</p> <p>Vi Dang inquired as to why we hired a new general manager. Ms. Rambarran indicated that when the previous manager stepped down in the summer 2013, the GSA needed to hire someone quickly as the bar required management and thus did not go through the proper process to hire someone (such as posting and accepting applications for the position). The GSA hired a candidate who was referred to us on a temporary contract that expired in May. For hiring a full time permanent manager, the GSA now went through the adequate process of posting the position, accepting, screening applications and interviews etc. Taking into consideration the needs of the Phoenix, the best candidate was selected.</p> <p>Ms. Rambarran continued to state that the executives met on May 16th to go over the roles of various positions and set goals for the upcoming year in line with the strategic mandate. This mandate is a five year plan was written by consultants last year and Ms. Rambarran recommended members review it.</p> <p>Ms. Rambarran stated that Megan Murphy, herself, Rachel Kelly, Lucia Lee and the former president Frances Lasowski met on May 20th for governance training lead by Sara Morton, our governance and by-laws consultant. During the training Ms. Morton detailed best practices in good governance, outlined the responsibilities of executive officers and members of the board and explained fiduciary law. This training session was recorded and once editing is complete, it will be shared with all elected officials of the GSA and members of the Board.</p> <p>Ms. Rambarran attended the OGSA Annual meeting in Waterloo on behalf of McMaster this past weekend. OGSA stands for the Ontario Graduate Students' Alliance. It is an alliance of eight universities in Ontario whose mandate is to lobby the government and universities regarding policies that will improve the graduate student experience in Ontario based on common areas of concern amongst the member universities. This group began out of a meeting of GSA's across Ontario that felt they did not have adequate representation specific to Ontario graduate students. The</p>	
--	--	--	--

		<p>group recently wrote a policy for a refundable technology tax credit that will be sent to the government after elections. If successful, this policy would allow students to receive a \$150 reimbursement when submitting their taxes, with the inclusion of a receipt of any type of technology that is needed for graduate studies (software, computers, etc.)</p> <p>Ms. Rambarran continued to state that at this meeting, policy priorities for the next year were selected. These included standardized professional development, clarity in international students' offer letters, mental health initiatives and more. Another important topic that was brought up was regarding fees for the member GSA's. They are proposing a \$2,000 fee per university, plus a fee per student (FTE). Ms. Rambarran requested feedback as to what council thought students would be willing to pay. The OGSA is proposing a \$1.50 – 5.00 fee per student. This will not be for this year, as it would need to be passed at the AGM, but Ms. Rambarran noted that she would like to gain an understanding of what students what would be willing to pay. The goal is to gradually increase the fee from \$1 - \$5 over time.</p> <p>Ms. Rambarran indicated that the total number of students at the universities of eight universities is over 15,000. The OGSA would like to have a budget of \$80,000 for the year for adequate operations. Right now it's all run by volunteers, but to have continuity they will need permanent staff and professionals to write their documentation and policies. They provided a draft budget that is public knowledge and can be forwarded. The organization is trying to be frugal with spending at this time as they operate based on donations.</p> <p>Ashley Ravenscroft inquired as to what would happen if the GSA eventually wanted to exit the organization? Specifically inquiring if all the bylaws are in place and is there an exit policy? Ms. Rambarran indicated that she herself wrote the exit policy based on the bylaws. The OGSA strives to have a clear exit policy as other student groups have had trouble leaving some provincial and federal groups in the past. The organization (the GSA not the entire student body) may petition to leave and after completing a ten month consideration process, if the organization still wished to leave, they can.</p> <p>Ms. Rambarran indicated that the OGSA would not be proposing a fee until they have the technology tax credit policy put forward. If they are successful, then every student</p>	
--	--	--	--

		<p>will be able to receive the refundable technology tax credit. Currently Ontario does not have anyone representing Ontario Graduate students at the government level. There is no decision to be made at the moment.</p> <p>Sarah Kanji inquired if any other provinces had an organization such as this? Ms. Rambarran indicated that organizations such as CASA and CFS exist, but they represent both graduate and undergraduate organizations. Alberta universities have banded together, but they only have three universities. Alberta's universities can much more easily co-ordinate than Ontario given we have around twenty universities. Our concern with larger organizations is that it is difficult to have a focus on the specific concerns of graduate students.</p> <p>*section in camera</p> <p>Carla Abarca indicated that students wouldn't see the benefits of joining this new organization and if OGSA would be listing them? Ms. Rambarran stated that the OGSA is a new organization that formed only a year and a half ago. Ms. Abarca also indicated that while members of council may understand the reasoning behind joining the OGSA, she isn't certain if other students would see the benefits. Ms. Rambarran indicated that the GSA would host an information session to promote/inform students of the benefits so they could make an educated decision.</p> <p>Ms. Rambarran indicated also of note that the new Board of Directors was elected for the OGSA, and Frances Lasowski was elected as the Secretary of the OGSA.</p>	
	b. Senate Report	Representative was not available to report.	
	c. Board of Governor's Report	Representative was not available to report.	
	d. Fees Committee Report	Representative was not available to report.	
6.	<p>Committee Reports</p> <p>a. Finance Committee (VP Admin)</p>	<p>Megan Murphy provided a review summary regarding the decision to be made regarding the GSA budget as due to not meeting quorum at the AGM, we were not able to increase our fees. As our fees would be remaining the same, our two options would be to run a deficit of \$10,000 or a surplus of \$700 for the coming year after making some cuts. Ms. Murphy recommended running with the surplus of \$700 as it is the safer route on the chance that the Phoenix ends up</p>	

	<p>operating with a loss. Having a loss on both sides would compound.</p> <p>Carla Abarca indicated that the engineering council had some inquiries regarding the budgets. Firstly, why did the GSA not use any of the SGS/GSA joint funds? The modified budget reads \$0, did we did not do any events? Ashley Ravenscroft clarified that this is a joint fund that is written into the GSA lease. If SGS does not have any funds to contribute, then the GSA cannot either. SGS hopes to have funds to allocate in the coming future. The lease has yet to be signed, and this would make sure both groups commit to this fund. We will get clarity on their position.</p> <p>Adhithya Ravichandran inquired as to what this fund is used for. Ms. Ravenscroft indicated that this fund is to be used for graduate student events, but it can change every year as to what it is used for as student needs change.</p> <p>Ms. Abarca inquired about the travel grant line. Ms. Ravenscroft indicated that these funds are held in trust and that the numbers can change. The trust funds can fluctuate due to interest, so each year the value changes due to how much has been made in interest. In past years, the GSA has overdrawn the fund. Also due to the financial crisis in 2008, the endowments did not perform as well as normal. They are currently in better position now, but have still not fully recovered.</p> <p>Ms. Abarca continued inquiring about clubs funding. Is the GSA expecting to have less people applying for this? Ms. Ravenscroft indicated that we had less people apply for clubs funding this past year. Ms. Rambarran indicated that since we were not using it, we chose this line item to make cuts to. Should the GSA receive more funding requests, we could re-evaluate this and increase it. Ms. Abarca continued to state that the engineering council felt as though they were losing benefits with the new budget. Ms. Ravenscroft indicated that if one examines what was spent, that it was only a slight decrease.</p> <p>Ms. Abarca inquired if the GSA could post the increase in the honorariums for the executives somewhere to promote interest along with the hours per week on average etc. Ms. Rambarran tasked Lucia Lee to manage this task.</p> <p>Megan Murphy put forth the motion to accept the modified budget and run a balanced budget. The motion was</p>	<p>Motion Carried</p>
--	--	-----------------------

		accepted by Rachel Kelly and seconded by Sarah Kanji. None opposed. None abstained. Motion carried.	
	b. Phoenix Executive Committee (VP Admin)	<p>Megan Murphy stated that the new manager of the Phoenix is getting settled in and has already gotten much work done. The Phoenix is updating their health & safety policies. All employees will be asked to take anti-harassment training modules. They will be tracking when they are completed and staff members have until June 11th to complete it. During the last council meeting, we spoke about the union vote. The union was voted down.</p> <p>Carla Abarca inquired as to how the Phoenix tracks comments. Ashley Ravenscroft stated that individuals could bring forward their comments to PEC. Anyone interested in PEC can email Megan.</p>	
	c. Events and Trips Planning Committee (VP External)	<p>Lucia Lee stated that the event for May was a trip to Ripley's Aquarium this Friday. They reached maximum capacity on the bus of 48 people. The group will be leaving at 1:00 PM and returning at 8:00 PM. Ms. Lee is working with Marlena Whinton to organize an event in late June to Wonderland and are debating one or two buses. Ashley Ravenscroft indicated that the GSA obtained two buses last year.</p> <p>Ms. Whinton inquired whether or not the GSA should limit guests to one per graduate student. Talena Rambarran indicated that the events are open to family etc. Ms. Ravenscroft suggested that perhaps next events committee meeting that a policy could be discussed and set.</p>	
	d. Student Issues Action Committee (VP External)	Lucia Lee indicated that the committee has not yet had a meeting, but it is on her agenda to meet soon. The committee is looking to meet with IGSA to discuss issues. Talena Rambarran indicated that the international advisory committee was struck.	
	e. Academic Affairs Committee (VP Internal)	Representative was not available to report; no meeting had taken place.	
	f. International Student Representative Report (International Reps)	Vi Dang stated that the international advisory committee initiated at the beginning of May. There were a lot of representatives from different groups from campus. They were unable to discuss all topics during the meeting. They are trying to make the tuition increase clear to international students. This committee is to help guide international students. They have a mentor program to help new international students and are creating an information booklet that provides information regarding cell phones, banking, housing etc. It will be more clear next meeting who	

		<p>all will be involved.</p> <p>Carla Abarca indicated that she felt that she was not sitting on the right committees to make a change for international issues. If an individual wants to have more influence regarding the rate increase for international students, where can one find out which committees to sit on? Ms. Dang indicated that the purpose of this group is not to make gains for international students, but to help them adapt to their new environment.</p> <p>Talena Rambarran stated that we could create an international student committee as part of the GSA if this is something they find value in. We could try to recruit representatives from different faculties and so forth. Ms. Dang indicated that there is a lot of interest in this. Ms. Rambarran indicated that the committee would not necessarily just deal with university issues. Sarah Kanji requested that meetings be posted as to when they are.</p>	
	g. By-laws Committee (President)	Talena Rambarran stated that the committee has not met. As a reminder during the AGM, due to not meeting quorum, the meeting defaulted to a council meeting. Due to this, we could not pass the bylaw changes. All of the bylaws that were revamped are not in effect. Ms. Rambarran wishes to propose another AGM in new business.	
	h. GSA Summer Leagues(VP Services)	Kelly Rachel stated that the leagues had a slow start for soccer and softball. The MOU was signed and will be for two years. At that point it will be renegotiated.	
	i. Graduate Student Services Review(VP Services)	Kelly Rachel indicated that the committee has not met.	
	j. Health & Dental Committee (VP Services)	Kelly Rachel indicated that the committee voted on the cap last meeting.	
7.	<p>New Business</p> <p>a) Executive overpayment – March and April</p>	<p>Talena Rambarran stated that the previous general manager of the Phoenix was in charge of the payroll for the GSA executives. At the end of March, a mistake was made and the executives received a second payment. The error was brought to the attention of the general manager. However, the mistake was made again in April.</p> <p>Ashley Ravenscroft indicated that the general manager acknowledged the first error and stated that they had rectified it, though it was not the case.</p>	

		<p>Ms. Rambarran indicated that this has been rectified now so it does not happen again and the overpayments equated to over \$2,000. Some executives who received cheques versus direct deposit noted a discrepancy and did not cash the cheques. Since it was a mistake, we cannot legally make the previous executives return the funds. Ms. Rambarran asked for suggestions from council as to how to proceed with dealing with the situation. She provided three suggestions; 1 – the GSA can write a letter to the former executive requesting the full overpayment back. However, there is no way to enforce this. 2. The GSA can write a letter requesting half of the overpayment back since it was a mistake and allow them to keep the other half as a consequence of the mistake or 3. The GSA can accept the overpayment as a loss.</p> <p>Option 1 – Request the full overpayment back. Two in favour Option 2 – Request half of the overpayment back. Two in favour. Option 3 – Take a loss for the items paid out and cashed. One in favour. Option 4 – Those who did not cash their cheques are free to do so. Three in favour.</p>	
	b) GSA Policy – Section 2 approval	<p>Talena Rambarran stated that she has gone through them and added her concerns in regards to the GSA Policy and inquired if there were any other concerns. Ms. Rambarran summarized the policy stating that it was regarding harassment and other similar matters and how the GSA will deal with them. Rachel Kelly stated on page 16 where it refers to immediate family members, that it should include step relatives. Ashley Ravenscroft stated that we are using the Ontario definition and there should be no concerns regarding the wording. Ms. Kelly continued to speak of page 19 suggesting that supervisors be changed to management. On page 23, releases should read release. On Page 17, there should be a criminal background check option. And on page 19 regarding personnel file that background checks should be added to this list.</p> <p>The motion to accept the GSA employment policy with the amendments noted above was accepted by Rachel Kelly and seconded by Carla Abarca. None opposed. Two abstained. Motion carried.</p>	Motion Carried
	c) Passing By-Laws: Hosting another AGM?	<p>Talena Rambarran proposed another AGM for passing new bylaws. The GSA would like to have functioning board of directors. These bylaws were reviewed and passed at the AGM but we did not have quorum and as a result they are null and void. Ms. Rambarran proposed to have it sometime</p>	

		in the summer. Margaret Jackel will send out a doodle for beginning of July.	
	d) Joining committees	<p>Sarah Kanji expressed interest in joining the graduate student services committee.</p> <p>Ayush Ranawade inquired about the online space for FRCs. Talena Rambarran directed him to speak with Lucia Lee and Ashley Ravenscroft to set this up.</p>	
	e) Standing Resolution	<p>Megan Murphy put forth a standing resolution for removing executive officers and board members. It was discussed to make the wording more specific as to what deems a valid reason for not fulfilling duties; however, the wording is being left in a way that the executive/council has some flexibility in how they will remove the executive officer or board member. Talena Rambarran indicated that the council would determine if it is a valid reason.</p> <p>The motion to accept the standing resolution was accepted by Marlena Whinton and seconded by Carla Abarca. None opposed. None abstained. Motion carried.</p>	Motion Carried
8.	Adjournment	The motion to adjourn was accepted by Marlena Whinton and seconded by Megan Murphy at 8:05 PM	

Person	Action Item	Due Date
Lucia Lee	Post the honourariums online	
Margaret	Send out doodle regarding summer AGM date.	

Lucia Lee
VP External

Date

Margaret Jackel
Office Assistant

Date