



Meeting Minutes

Graduate Students Association Council Meeting
Tuesday, January 28, 2014, 6:00 p.m.
GSA Office, East Tower Refectory



Present: Frances Lasowski (GSA President), Talena Rambarran (VP Eternal), Ivana Postic (VP Internal), Aaron Maxwell (VP Services), Megan Murphy (FRC Business), Maryam Ghasemaghaei (FRC Business), Adhithya Ravichandran (FRC Engineering), Sarah Kanji (FRC Health Sciences), Jeffrey Wyngaarden (FRC Humanities), Priscilla Medeiros (FRC Social Sciences), Zack Batist (FRC Social Sciences), Murray Wilson (BOG Representative), Marion Jamard (International Student Rep), Vi Dang (International Student Rep), Niel Van Englen, Margaret Jackel (Office Assistant)

Regrets: Stephen Hanson (VP Administration), Carla Abaraca (FRC Engineering), Ahmed El Ganzouri (Senate Rep), Stephanie Marciniak (Senate Rep), Geoff Callaghan (CRO)

Absent: Jennifer Nicholl (FRC Health Sciences), Ashley Marshall (FRC Humanities), Stephanie Jones (FRC Science), Rostyslav Zvanych (FRC Science), Majid Taghavi (Senate Rep), D'Andra Parker (Senate Rep), Cassel Busse (Senate Rep), Spencer Savoie (Senate Rep)

Item	Motion		
1.	Call to Order	6:04 PM	
2.	Acceptance of the Agenda	Frances Lasowski amended the agenda to include a point regarding meetings for the term to the end of the agenda. The amendment to the agenda was accepted by Jeffrey Wyngaarden and seconded by Aaron Maxwell.	Motion Carried
3.	Approval of the Minutes from meetings of December 17 th , 2013	<p>Talena Rambarran indicated an error on page 11 of the minutes regarding the spelling of the Rudy Heinzl award and that she was the speaker for that segment and not Frances Lasowski.</p> <p>Adhithiya Ravichandran spoke regarding page 8 of the minutes and indicated that he did not recall speaking of the engineering student advisor and requested that it be removed.</p> <p>The motion to accept the minutes of December 17th, 2013 were accepted by Aaron Maxwell and seconded by Adhithya Ravichandran. None opposed. One abstained. Motion carried.</p>	Motion Carried
4.	Reports from Board a. President's Report	Frances Lasowski announced that Ashley Ravenscroft had been hired as the general manager for the GSA effective February. Ms. Lasowski indicated that part of the challenge is that the role is new and is thus looking for feedback over the coming months to assist with developing the role.	

		Ms. Lasowski moved on to speak about the strategic mandate stating that it went out in December and is now available on the Provost's website. Ms. Lasowski indicated that graduate research was more highlighted in this version in comparison to the original SMA and there will be a continued grown focus in future years. The SMA references a plan, but does not discuss the plan. The SMA also highlights teaching and learning and there is a lot aimed at the undergraduate level.	
	b. Senate Report	No representative was available to report.	
	c. Board of Governor's Report	Murray Wilson stated that there was nothing new to report.	
	d. Fees Committee Report	<p>Ivana Postic spoke regarding concerns that had been raised regarding fees for new students starting in January being \$133 instead of the \$113 it's supposed to be. This has been addressed and the proper amount will be charged.</p> <p>Ms. Postic continued to speak about changes to professional fees indicating that Allison Sekuler has been a great advocate for graduate students regarding this. Attention has been directed to how much higher tuition is for international students, and this will be reviewed and may result in the revisiting of the 6% increase. Ms. Postic also indicated that there are also changes to the fee approval for student groups. All information is available on the financial services website.</p> <p>Maryam Ghasemaghahi inquired if this was the average for all universities. Ms. Postic responded that the tuition framework has changed and that it used to fluctuate. It is now fixed, and domestic tuition fees will not rise, but international tuition fees will increase at a set rate of 6%. As she had indicated previously though, that this rate could be adjusted but feedback would be required from students in order to do this.</p>	
6.	Committee Reports	Representative was not available to report.	
	a. Finance Committee (VP Admin)		
	b. Phoenix Executive Committee (VP Admin)	Frances Lasowski indicated that there is yet some work to be done for the numbers. We have received the first draft for information that we've been waiting for since June. We encountered delays due to Robin Redding being off and transitioning bookkeepers during the audit. Ms. Lasowski reported that we have information up to the end of	

		<p>December. The Profit and Loss statement was presented but no balance sheet was provided. The Phoenix was not as profitable as we were expecting. The biggest losses occurred during the summer and are a carry-over from prior to the GSA discovering the problem. The most recent months appear to be more positive.</p> <p>Murray Wilson stated that the new menu will be released soon. The Phoenix is refining it, and while it looks different, he is not sure if it looks better yet.</p> <p>Megan Murphy indicated that PEC is waiting for pricing to determine profitability and examining new ideas for the future such as a QR code. Ms. Murphy also indicated that the Phoenix has lost the ability to use their Facebook page.</p> <p>Ms. Lasowski indicated that PEC and the GSA are looking for ways to promote events to people and that as always, comments regarding the Phoenix can be forwarded to Stephen Hanson.</p> <p>Ms. Lasowski briefed council that our return to school on the 3rd of January was met with a union drive to unionize the non-unionized staff of the Phoenix. There was a vote scheduled for Friday, but the union withdrew this drive. Nothing has currently changed, but they are eligible to try again if pursued. This is carrying the cost for us as there are lawyer fees involved. They have to go back and forth to the lawyer.</p>	
	c. Events and Trips Planning Committee (VP External)	<p>Talena Rambarran stated that the ice wine festival was this past weekend in St. Catharines. However upon arrival, there was nothing there. Marion Jamard was acting as bus monitor for the event. After consulting, Ms. Jamard contacted the bus company to come back and pick up attendees from St. Catharines to bring them to Niagara on the Lake. Ms. Jamard contacted the registered attendants, but was unable to get in touch with seven attendees for the pick-up. The bus company did return to St. Catharines to pick them up for the original stated pick-up time. All individuals were refunded their money with apologies.</p> <p>Ms. Rambarran stated that February's event will be a planetarium showing scheduled for February 27th.</p>	
	d. Student Issues Action Committee (VP External)	<p>Talena Rambarran indicated that the committee has not met.</p>	
	e. Academic	<p>Ivana Postic announced that the travel award adjudications</p>	

	Affairs Committee (VP Internal)	<p>will begin soon and that there is a meeting scheduled for Monday at noon regarding this. The academic affairs meeting will be held at the same time.</p> <p>Ms. Postic continued to indicate at the last meeting, the committee addressed the FRC rules. They expanded them keeping the strategic mandate in mind. The new proposed bylaws will be presented at next month's council meeting to be added to the AGM.</p> <p>Ms. Postic indicated that FRCs have been allotted funds to promote events within their faculties and that this is coming together nicely.</p> <p>Ms. Postic indicated that the GSA has received correspondence from CUPE regarding MOSAIC.</p> <p>Ms. Postic announced that the GSA Winter Warm-Up is being held this week, with events scheduled every single day. Individuals were provided rain cheques for pierogi if they didn't receive them from Monday and if the rain cheque was not received, they can still be obtained. Not all dips were well received. A total of 139 people purchased pierogis and no losses were incurred.</p> <p>Ms. Postic indicated that there was some feedback received that the events are very late in the evening and that this has been noted for future events to try to have them earlier in the day. Trivia will be held later this evening beginning at 8:00 and there will be a games night on Thursday which the start time can be changed to 7 instead of 8.</p> <p>Ms. Postic announced that due to the winter warm-up and the strategic mandate, the GSA's page has received many more views, and 10 new likes this past week.</p>	
	f. International Student Representative Report (International Reps)	Marion Jamard stated that they met with the international representative from CUPE and that will be organizing an event for both international CUPE and IGSA members planned to be held on February 20 th . There be games to for entertainment and snacks will be provided.	
	g. By-laws Committee (President)	Frances Lasowski stated that the committee is currently trying to reorganize the board of directors as it is currently not a very functional board. The GSA has hired an individual to come in to provide some good governance training. As the GSA transitions to a new executive and new board members, this information will be available to them and indicates what their responsibilities and roles as their	

		position and as a graduate student and so forth. We have persuaded this individual to draft some of these changes so that our organization does not have to generate the changes ourselves. As a legacy item, we will indicate the previous, the new and why this change is happening. This will also be the same with the FRC changes and all will have to be approved at the AGM.	
	h. GSA Summer Leagues(VP Services)	Aaron Maxwell indicated that there was nothing to report.	
	i. Graduate Student Services Review(VP Services)	Aaron Maxwell stated that the committee has had some ideas suggested to them from administration. McMaster is currently undergoing a health and wellness review and has hired a project manager to determine what wellness means on campus. Part of this may be getting some funds to increase mental health tools, awareness etc. for graduate students specifically. However, it's not clear at the moment what this will look like. Another initiative will be for assistance with careers both outside and inside of academia. Not much information is available for this yet either, as both initiatives are in the planning stages. Mr. Maxwell indicated that either he or Frances Lasowski will forward information as soon as they are able to.	
	j. Health & Dental Committee (VP Services)	<p>Aaron Maxwell stated that as per the GSA bylaws, our organization needs to receive quotes every few years to ensure that we have the best plan for students. The Health and Dental committee will need to meet soon to provide feedback as to what is wanted in a plan make a decision. The committee will also have to set a cap for the drug plan. Our current broker is assembling a package to show what the cap will look like. Mr. Maxwell stated that the GSA won't be able to obtain all information until February, but decisions need to be made as soon as possible.</p> <p>Frances Lasowski provided further background, indicating that despite renegotiating our contract now, we still have one year remaining on our current agreement. Ms. Lasowski indicated that it is very customary to negotiate the plan one year prior to the expiration. The new contract will be effective for the 2015 ~ 2016 year.</p>	
6.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Business • Election Update 	Frances Lasowski referenced the packages forwarded to council at the beginning of the meeting stating what options were available to us. There are two options; the first is that the GSA can remain with UTS for one more election. The GSA will have to select a new provider and switch services after this election, as UTS will no longer be available. The second option is to go with another provider straight away which will more economical as it will cost less. The options	

		<p>that the GSA has available for alternative services are Simply Voting, EVote and Canvote. Jeffrey Wyngaarden stated that the MSU had no complaints regarding that service when they utilized it for their own elections. Ms. Lasowski continued to state that EVote was costly. When approached, CanVote stated that they couldn't match the quote provided by Simply Voting. Geoff Callaghan also looked into Survey Monkey and Lime Survey, while he was certain that they would work, they would require more set up to use for our purposes whereas Simply Voting is designed for voting. Ms. Lasowski indicated that the GSA currently spends approximately \$2,000 on voting per year, by switching to Simply Voting, it would reduce this cost to about \$875.</p> <p>A vote was cast on which option the GSA will use for when UTS discontinues its services.</p> <p>Simply Voting – 10 in favour. EVote – 0 in favour. CanVote – 0 in favour. Survey Monkey – 0 in favour. Lime Survey – 0 in favour.</p> <p>A vote was cast on if the GSA would utilize UTS one final time or to switch to a new provider on the assumption that we can use a new provider for this upcoming election. The default if we cannot use the new provider is that the GSA will remain with UTS for this election.</p> <p>Use UTS's services one final election – 1 in favour. Use Simply Voting from this election forward, provided we are able to – 7 in favour. None Abstained. None opposed.</p> <p>Ms. Lasowski continued to state that elections will go out in the second or third week of March so that they can be announced at the AGM. Call for nominations will be forwarded shortly.</p> <p>Murray Wilson inquired as to which roles are available. Ms. Lasowski indicated that most of the executive would be graduating this coming year, if possible, she wishes to transition people to make the process easier. The GSA is also working on that for the board as well.</p> <p>Ivana Postic indicated that those interested could probably contact those currently in those roles to learn more information.</p>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dean of 	Frances Lasowski indicated that the Dean of Humanities is	

	Humanities selection process	currently being selected and that if anyone had thoughts on the selection process to bring them forward. There will be a graduate student available to provide input to as to what they feel is important for their new dean.	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MOSAIC communication for graduate students 	<p>Frances Lasowski stated that the GSA is working with SGS to put together a communication out to graduate students on the whole MOSAIC process. The GSA and SGS are aware that the process for submitting expenses has changed. An introduction will be provided as to what has changed, and how it impacts graduate students. Changes are being phased in. There will also be changes on how students register for classes, how students are paid and so on. Ms. Lasowski indicates that they can only provide information as it is developed. Our organization, as well as SGS and CUPE have flagged issues and we are all working together to ensure that items of concern are addressed. This is a work in progress, and our organization has indicated what we feel is important and SGS is backing us in this proposal. Where this falls has yet to be determined.</p> <p>Murray Wilson indicated that as the BOG representative, he only hears about MOSAIC on a high level but offered his services to push things forward if needed to the BOG.</p> <p>Ms. Lasowski spoke regarding pay equalization. The scholarship portion for graduate students is currently set up to be controlled personally, if the individual wishes to front load it, or back load the scholarship. Should students have concerns or questions regarding this, it can be forwarded to SGS as they arise.</p>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MSU Teaching Initiative 	Frances Lasowski stated that the MSU is looking to improve some of the training that graduate students get as TAs and they have some very creative ideas going forward. They are looking for input from people who have TA'ed and from the GSA as an organization. Ms. Lasowski indicated that individuals should approach her if interested and indicate where they've seen issues. Currently the team is mostly administration, so they need students.	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AGM Reminder 	Frances Lasowski reminded council that the AGM would be on Tuesday, March 25 th and a breakfast would be provided. Spread the word and encourage people to attend.	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New committee 	Murray Wilson stated that the committee will consist of 4 non-executive members plus the chair. An email will be sent.	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Future meetings 	<p>Frances Lasowski indicated that Doodles will be sent out regarding future meetings for the term.</p> <p>Ivana Postic inquired if there was a place to locate prior</p>	

		meeting minutes. Margaret Jackel indicated that the signed copies needed to be scanned into the system and forwarded to VP External.	
8.	Adjournment	Motion to adjourn the meeting was accepted by Aaron Maxwell and seconded by Jeffrey Wyngaarden at 7:05 PM.	


Person	Action Item	Due Date
Margaret Jackel	Revise the minutes from December to correct errors.	
Geoff Callaghan	See if switching to Simply Voting was a viable option for our upcoming elections and proceed accordingly if able to.	
All	Feedback regarding what is wanted for a new Dean of Humanities.	
All	Provide feedback to Frances Lasowski to forward to SGS regarding any issues encountered regarding MOSAIC	
All	Volunteers for the MSU teaching initiative	
All	Advertise the GSA AGM and encourage attendance	
Margaret Jackel	Email non-executive GSA members regarding the new committee that had been struck in December.	
Margaret Jackel	Scan the signed minutes for past council meetings to be posted to the GSA website.	



Talena Rambaraan
VP External

March 26, 14

Date



Margaret Jackel
Office Assistant

March 26/14

Date