

Graduate Students Association of McMaster University
Council Meeting



Wednesday, January 27, 2016
GSA Office, East Tower Refectory
6:00 p.m.

Minutes

Attendees: Talena Rambarran (President), Megan Murphy (Vp Administration, through Skype) Manraj Kaur (Vp Internal) Farhad Sadeh (FRC Business), Hadi Eslami (FRC Business), Neha Dewan (FRC Health Science), Tarushika Vasanthan (FRC Science), Mai Yamamoto (International Representative), Anna D'Angela (Board of Governors), Vi Dang (International Representative), Maleeha Qazi (FRC Health Sciences), Natalie D'Silva (VP Services) Lucia Lee (VP External), Ashley Ravenscroft (DoO), Theo Nazy (FRC Social Science), Sid Nath (Senate Health Science)

Regrets: Shawn Hercules (FRC Science)

Absent: Azam Shamsi (CRO), Darko Ljubic (FRC Engineering), Andrew Kloiber (FRC Humanities), Philip Tominac (Senate Engineering), Naby Nikookaran (FRC Engineering)

1.0 Call to Order 6:00

2.0 Acceptance of the Agenda, **motion** first by Natalie second by Manraj all in favor motion carries.

- Mai requested adding OHIP for international student campaign to new business.

Motion to accept the amended agenda first by Manraj second by Natalie all in favor motion carried unanimously.

3.0 Approval of Minutes from the meeting of December 16th, 2015

Motion to approve the minutes from December 16th meeting first by Natalie second by Maleeha all in favor motion carried unanimously.

4.0 Reports from the Board

4.1 President's Report

4.1.1 Board of Directors

- Talena mentioned they had a meeting last week; the BOD are currently reviewing performance of full time employees (Kevin and Ashley) and undergoing salary negotiation.
- Lease of the Phoenix is still in negotiation and is not signed yet with the University, the Phoenix has a lower rate for the next 3 years but the University wants to increase the lease to be approximately \$150,000 annually, this is roughly 3 times what they are paying now. This is a lot as the Phoenix isn't making this amount in profits. Talena added that the GSA is trying to negotiate with the University as the BOD is not

comfortable signing the agreement in its current state. A meeting will be held to discuss this subject.

- An additional stipend for incoming executives was approved; anybody who gets elected for President and VP's this year will be paid in the month of April (a transitional stipend) \$200.00 for VP's and \$300 for President to be trained and shadow the previous Executive.

4.1.2 Ontario Graduate Students Alliance Strategy meeting

- Talena mentioned, the OGSA started few years ago between 8 University in Ontario, they represent graduate student needs specifically, other group like CFS and CASA represent a lot of stakeholders but not Graduate student specifically, this group started to just represent graduate students. OGSA is trying to get position policies through the government; one of the policies they recently put forward was an Ontario Technology Tax Credit to get grad student on a refundable tax credit for purchases they make for school (Laptops, software).
- Lucia and Talena attended the OGSA strategy meeting in Waterloo two weeks ago. The attendees (from Universities in Ontario) discussed how they can make a positive change for graduate students and what the top priorities are for the next couple of years. A hot topic was mental health and ancillary fees and how they can encourage the Ontario government to get involved. Talena noted that the GSA donates a small amount of money every year to OGSA to help cover operational costs as the McMaster GSA is a member.

4.1.3 Dental reimbursement for CUPE members

- Talena mentioned that students are automatically enrolled into the GSA health and dental plan; if students are on the CUPE dental (TA 130 hours) they get reimbursed the \$170 which is the GSA dental insurance amount. Some students got the reimbursement deposited directly in their bank accounts and others, the money was added against their tuition owing on Mosaic, which means students will have their money back in August when the tuition is paid off. Talena has been in contact with SGS to find out what can be done to rectify this issue going forward.
- Talena mentioned some students who have OGS got over paid, as there is some sort of issue in the system coding. SGS sent students and an email to who got an overpayment explaining the overpayment. Other students did not get paid correctly (underpaid); SGS suspects this may have occurred from improper registration for term 2. An explanation of this situation was sent to all graduate students today through EDL, SGS now have a separate email for grad pay and it is continuously monitoring into answer all questions about payment issues.

4.2 Senate Report

Nothing new in the University news, Sid offered to highlight important info for the council that was mentioned during senates meetings going forward.

4.3 Board of Governor's Report

Anna mentioned they haven't met yet for New Year but the next meeting will be March 10th.

5.0 Committee Reports

5.1 Finance Committee (VP Administration)

- Megan (over skype) mentioned they met with the bookkeeper this month to review the GSA and Phoenix financials. Paolo will be putting together an Actuals vs. budget document for them once the January numbers are complete so they can create the GSA budget for the AGM – fiscal 2016-2017.
- Talena added she and Megan sit down every year to make the GSA budget; the GSA has a small amount of money from student fees (\$200,000) for a year, which includes payment of staff salaries and many fixed expenses. Full time students are charged \$ 57 as the GSA fees, without increasing fees there is little room to add new programming for students.

5.2 Phoenix Executive Committee (VP Administration)

- Megan mentioned Kevin has asked the GSA to work on an event booking policy. He has suggested a minimum order per head to help reduce parties taking up tables during peak hours and not ordering food or drinks.
- They need input on what students want in terms of discounts for grad student events/bookings.
- In terms of the menu, Kevin is open to suggestions of new items and specials to make it more appealing.
- The GSA hasn't had good participation in this committee (PEC). Megan has sent reminders to members, but they continue to miss meetings. If anyone is interested in attending PEC meetings, please contact Mona or Megan to be added to the list. The next meeting will be at the end of February.

5.3 Events and Trips Planning Committee (VP External)

- Lucia mentioned they had a curling event night for all graduate students on Jan 12th ; 86 students attended, which is a great turn out. There was also a GSA event that visited ice wine village last Saturday.
- For this month they are planning to visit the Royal Botanical Gardens on the last Saturday of February. They had problems with people volunteering on this committee, they only have 6 members. The committee would like more volunteers; Lucia will send an email mentioning they are looking for new members.
- Lucia added at the last council meeting she started advertising about good box programming; for \$12 you get fresh Ontario produced vegies and fruits. Lucia met the coordinator David Chang, and had a quick tour at the new facility to see where the GSA money was donated (the storage area in the basement of the phoenix).

5.4 Students Issues Action Committee (VP External)

5.4.1 Update on student survey results from last year

- Lucia mentioned at the last council meeting they discussed how to publish the results of a survey, she made an appointment with a person in charge in regards to this kind of matter in February, Talena added It will be helpful to make a summary of all a result and share it with the council.

5.5 Academic Affairs Committee (VP Internal)

- Manraj sent a report mentioning;
- The "Coffee and Cookies with the GSA" event was held on January 12, 2016 at the Phoenix where graduate students were offered free coffee and cookies. The event was well attended by students of various faculties and by local and international students. There was excellent representation by the GSA executive team members and faculty council representative who were able to answer questions regard funding, attending events and how to become an active member of the GSA.
- The Academic council is working towards the "Meet Bobby Umar" event. The event will be held on February 17 at the Celebration Hall and the advertisements have been posted on the GSA webpage and social media and the SGS webpage. The students will be informed via email in the upcoming GSA email.
- We have also received confirmation from one of the members of OMBUDS to speak at the March event. This event (Date and Location: TBD) will focus on the rights and responsibilities of the graduate students. Manraj is working towards finalizing the details.

5.6 International Student Representative Report (International Reps)

- Mai mentioned she met with international CUPE and they are putting together an event after the reading week, it going to be different session representing different cultures and food will be served.

5.7 GSA Summer Leagues Committee (VP Services)

- Natalie mentioned she and Ashley have met with the summer leagues commissioner. SA&R will be sending a new MOU that the Softball league will have to review and sign, they also discussed signing MOU for soccer but they didn't decide yet, they also discussed SOP's and feedback on it, they expect this by the end of summer.

5.8 Graduate Student Services Review Committee (VP Services/President)

- Talena mentioned that the general meeting for Thursday was cancelled. She added they met with Sean as her and Natalie have asked him for more information about break down of fees (as requested by the students). However, the information was not as available in the detail that was requested. The meeting is postponed until a later date and Sean will send more details about the breakdown of fees shortly.
- Talena noted they spoke with Sean about the possibility of CUPE bargaining for mental health (as suggested by Chandra, the CUPE President at the GSA workshop on

CAFs), The University's stand is that CAFs are a student issue and CUPE is representing TAs which is a work issue, so the University will not allow CUPE to bargain for mental health for graduate students. Talena and Natalie had a meeting with the CUPE President to discuss this issue; CUPE mentioned they are going to send out a survey in February to see what the priorities of TAs are in regards to bargaining.

- Additionally, Talena, Natalie and Ashley were going through the MTCU documents on the ancillary fees, and noted that in one document -it mentioned that any increase more than 20% has to be through a referendum. However, the GSA's agreement with the University states that it goes through a GSA general meeting. The GSA is currently is trying to determine which document takes precedence. The referendum or meeting will be held in the near future (potentially April).

5.9 Health & Dental Committee (VP Services)

- Natalie mentioned that they met with the insurance broker (Del Pereira from Student Care), the premium will stay the same for next year. Our actual costs will increase from \$329 to \$344 since new services have been added; The current charge for insurance is \$356, which covers the additional cost, and means that we will have less for the surplus. Natalie noted they have 500 students leaving the plan, and they will have another meeting with Del in couple of weeks to discuss how this will change the premiums. The GSA maintains a Health and Dental surplus account so that any sudden increases can be offset and not passed along to the students.

6.0 Update on Website

- Lucia mentioned they are sharing the same server with SGS and the new server still has not been chosen. Lucia uploaded and backed up all the documents from the web site to an external hard drive. Lucia booked an appointment with the person in charge of the websites for the SGS and the GSA on Jan 19th but she didn't get a response so she booked a meeting to meet on Feb 10th at 1 pm.
- The main menu structure of the GSA new website will be 4 parts, Health and Dental Benefits, about the GSA, Sports and Recreation, and Contacts. The new website will allow the GSA to have better access and the GSA will also have google analyst so we will be able to see how many people visit the website so we can optimize it.

7.0 Clubs Update

- Talena mentioned the MSU is going to charge the GSA \$1400 to administer each club, and that they must be academic clubs, and that the MSU can't accept more than 10 life time clubs. Given this, Talena does not want the MSU to administer the GSA clubs because the cost is too high and there are too many restrictions. Ashley added they met with the director of the DeGroote School of Business to learn how they administer their clubs. She suggested reaching out to the University and SGS and start to do it internally. Ashley and Natalie set up 2 meetings with SGS and the University representative to discuss this issue.
- It is important to highlight that there will not only be a cost of insurance and the cost of administration, there is also a liability to doing it in house, as students would have to come and report all activities to the GSA.

8.0 Annual General Meeting Date

- Talena proposed an AGM on Tuesday March 29th at 3:30; they will check room availability before confirming.


9.0 Elections 2016

- Ashley mentioned she met with the CRO this week, and a call for nomination will go out soon with the tentative date of February 08th, and closing date of February 29th. The positions will go up and everyone who is interested can apply, the election period will be in the 14th of March to the 17th of March Within those dates there will be a debate according to our bylaws, usually here in the GSA office, if anyone is interested they are welcome to introduce themselves and talk with the VPs. Talena added any question should be directed to the CRO.

10.0 New Business

- Mai mentioned there is petition campaign for having international students get OHIP instead of UHIP, other information will be sent later, Talena added when we set up our next agenda will send out the link for this information.

11.0 Adjournment 6:55 first by Lucia second by Natalie unanimous motion carries.


Lucia Lee, VP External

July 26, 16
Date


Recorder

July 27, 2016
Date