

Graduate Students Association of McMaster University

Council Meeting

July 30, 2020

Teleconference - Zoom

3:00 pm.

Minutes

Attendees: Shawn Hercules (GSA President), Caroline Seiler (VP Internal), Sydney Valentino (VP External) Anthony Quarshie (VP Administration), Ashley Ravenscroft (DoO), Wei Zhao (VP Services), Dhanyasri Maddiboina (FRC Engineering), Ghada Sasa (BoG), Pritpal Matharu (FRC Science), Shuwen Qian (FRC Health Science), Zarwa Saqib (FRC Health Science), Anita Acai (Senator Science), Sahand Sepehrvand (Senator Engineering)

Regrets:, Hebe Hu (FRC Business)

Absent: Mariam Munawar (Senator Business), Sushil Navin Chander (FRC Engineering), Manisha Pahwa (Senator Health Science), Tiffany van Lieshout (FRC Science)

Call to order 3:04

1. Call for New Business

a. **MOTION:** Approval of Agenda

- Shawn requested the addition of the following to new business:
 - Update on transportation committee – move to agenda item number 4
 - FRC Business nomination – goes after the approval of HSGSF
 - Black Lives Matter (BLM) letter endorsement

Motion to approve the agenda with amendments moved by Anthony, seconded by Caroline, all in favour, motion carried.

b. **MOTION:** Approval of Minutes

Motion to approve the minutes of the last meeting moved by Wei, seconded by Pip, all in favour, motion carried.

2. President remark:

a. Phoenix reopening

- Phoenix patio was reopened last Tuesday. Opening the Phoenix was discussed with the university, as the university didn't want people to come and rush to campus; nonetheless, the opening was approved.
- The GSA provided the university with a procedure on returning to work after COVID19.

b. Fee schedule- Anthony mentioned the following:

- Last year fees were assessed according to Student Choice Initiative (SCI). However, the supreme court deemed SCI illegal. The university allowed the GSA to combine its operational fee to one reduced fee, which is approx. \$49.
- The university approved waiving capital build year for one year.

c. HSR – Anthony mentioned the following:

- Still negotiating fee reduction with Hamilton Service Railway (HSR). Very close to confirming a number during the coming days.
- HSR will refund students for the period the HSR was operating for free.
- There is no grace period for HSR this year.

d. Student Issues Action Committee Update – Sydney mentioned the following:

- Recently the committee met and developed the Policy on Anti Oppression ~~created the anti-oppression policy~~. The committee members believe the Policy on Anti-Oppression reflects the views of the GSA. It will allow the GSA to act on endorsing the McMaster Political Science Graduate Student Association letter regarding the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement. The current Policy on Neutrality and Anti-Discrimination prevented the GSA Council from endorsing such a letter.
- One of the points of this policy is that the committee will meet every year to discuss actions completed to support oppressed groups. In coordination with the strategic plan committee, every four years, a formal review shall be done.

e. New website – Wei mentioned the following:

- In the next few weeks, he will create an account for clubs and faculty associations, that will allow them to post events and news on the GSA website.
- He is planning on creating pages for faculty association.
- Currently working on Wiki for the GSA

f. Welcome week – Caroline mentioned the following:

- Scheduling a meeting with SGS next week.
- Planning hosting a Q&A, so we need FRC volunteers to answer faculty-specific questions and GSA resources.
- Coordinating with Mike & Connor, the media students who developed the phoenix video, to create an Introduction Video for the GSA team.
- Earlier this week attended a social committee, and more ideas for the welcome week came out like; online cooking class & outdoor movie night.
- Looking into doing micro-credential workshops in coordination with SGS and CUPE, this still works in progress.

g. MS Teams for communication within the GSA

- Shawn suggested to the council to start using MS-team for council communication.
- It will be better to use for conversation and file sharing on MS-team instead of using email.

h. Next Meeting – TBD

3. Executives update:

This is discussed on point number 2.

4. Update on the transportation committee:

Elise mentioned the following:

- She has been having conversations with different stakeholders on campus. One of them is Wayne Terryberry from Athletic and Recreation; he pulled together a new committee reporting to the presidential advisory committee. They had a meeting in June; it was a quick meeting because of the Sobi issue; they wanted different stakeholders to know the actual and potential loss of the program. Nonetheless, the program is now back.
- Last week's meeting, someone highlight that there is a representation from MSU but none from the GSA on this committee. The committee's broad mandate is to advise the university about the issue of walking, cycling and public transit. They strive to make it safer and more enjoyable to encourage other modes of transportation besides driving to campus.
- The core component of their work going forward is working with different stakeholders at the university to develop a transportation strategy to increase walking and cycling to and on campus.
- They received a grant that was funded by the Okanagan Charter Committee for next year. They received \$5000 to do cycling activity to students. However, because of COVID, they had to shift a lot of that online.

- She is offering to remain as a liaison between the committee and the GSA. If any member is interested in joining, they can send her an email.
- She asked if the GSA will be interested in being part of the Sobi program since MSU showed interest? Ashley explained six years ago, this was discussed, and it can be addressed again at the GSA council.
- Sydney offered to assist Elise for further GSA communication.

5. Approval of HSGSF

- The application was circulated. Shawn mentioned that this was discussed before, and the amendment requested was done.
- Council members agreed to proceed forward with the approval of HSGSF.

Motion to approve the HSGSF as an association under the GSA moved by Caroline, seconded by Wei, all in favour motion carried.

6. Student Issue Action Committee recommendation to the policy of neutrality and anti-discrimination

- Explained before on item 2.d. SIAC update.
- Ghada explained that the idea of changing the current neutrality & anti-discrimination policy came when the council members are requested to endorse the BLM letter. However, due to the current policy, it didn't allow the endorsement.
- MSU & CUPE did endorse the BLM letter, and the group is looking for an endorsement from the GSA. To allow this, the GSA needs to change to the anti-oppression policy.
- Shawn asked about point 5.a. on the policy, he suggested adding something that aligns with the GSA values, as there is not always a 100% overlap between unions, progressive campus organizations, and GSA mandate and values.
- Shawn added the anti-oppression policy would be forward to the board for discussion and suggestions.

Motion to forward the Anti-oppression policy to the board for discussion moved by Ghada, seconded by Sydney, all in favour motion carried.

7. FRC Business nomination:

- The GSA received two applications for the FRC business vacant position.
- Anita asked if any of the candidates have experience working with the GSA or something similar? Shawn explained that Mona Nasery has experience working with the Degroote Doctoral Student Association (DDSA) club as a social director.

- Caroline mentioned that engagement, like DDSA involvement, is considered an assist. Sydney added that Mona said on her statement that she has the enthusiasm for social events and that something we need in FRCs.
- Council members suggested to appoint Mona Nasery and offer Si Liu a position on the GSA finance committee.

Motion to approve Mona Nasery's application for FRC Business position and offer Si Liu a position on the finance committee moved by Zarwa, seconded by Pip, all in favour motion carried.

8.FRC reports:

SCIGSA

Pip mentioned the following;

- The SciGSA hosted a photo contest and is now discussing/ organizing a Hamilton wide Scavenger Hunt for August (we are carefully organizing this event to ensure that social distancing guidelines can be respected)
- The SciGSA is planning a meeting with the Equity and Inclusion office, to discuss a potential EDI training or workshops, but we are currently waiting for a response from them

EGS:

- Dhanyasri mentioned that not much update on EGS side. They are preparing for the welcome week, and they have some events to choose from.

Health Science:

Shuwen mentioned the following:

- Have the first association meeting online, and they discussed what the association would do the next academic year—planning to have one event each month.
- Discussing have the new website by the end of August
- The association budget will be done by the end of August

Business:

- No new business

9. Senate / BOG Updates:

Anita mentioned that;

- The last meeting was July 8. They have had an increase in enrolment for grad students except for domestic master's student.

Ghada mentioned:

- They discussed supplementary fees and how the reduction is minimal compared to tuition.
- They discussed the September opening.
- They discussed a petition that is going around to reduce McMaster tuition.
- The university highlighted that 3% of university stock is on fossil fuel.

10. New business:

a. BLM letter Endorsement (i.e. the McMaster Political Science Graduate Student Association letter regarding Black Lives Matter BLM movement):

- Ghada suggested moving the Board meeting earlier as a meeting Dr. Farrar, on August 17. Ashley highlighted that it isn't possible to move the board meeting to an earlier date as this meeting date set a few months ago. The incoming board meeting is for audit result discussion.
- Ashley mentioned that according to the Bylaws, 2/3 of council members agreed this policy could go to the board.
- Ghada asked if it possible to have another earlier board meeting? Ashley explained that this is possible if the 2/3 of council members approved to call a board meeting to discuss the policy.
- Ghada asked if it is possible to council members to endorse the BLM letter and approve the policy pending board approval for the new policy? Ashley explains that this is possible.

Motion to approve endorsing the BLM letter as the GSA pending Board approval on anti-oppression policy, moved by Ghada seconded by Zarwa, all in favour motion carried.

11. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn at 4:45 pm moved by Caroline, seconded by Tiffany, all in favour, motion carried.

Action Items:

Item	Action by	Due date
May minutes summary	Ashley	Next meeting