Graduate Students Association of McMaster University

***Council Meeting***

February 26, 2021

Teleconference - Zoom

12:00 pm.

**Minutes**

**Attendees:** Shawn Hercules (GSA President), Caroline Seiler (VP Internal), Anthony Quarshie (VP Administration), Wei Zhao (VP Services), Dhanyasri Maddiboina (FRC Engineering), Tiffany van Lieshout (FRC Science), Pritpal Matharu (FRC Science), Sarah Elshaht (FRC Social Science), Rida Mohsen (FRC Social Science), Zarwa Saqib (FRC Health Science), Michelle Ragany (FRC Engineering), Alyaa Abdelhalim (Senator Business), Ghada Sasa (BoG), Ashley Ravenscroft (DoO), Sydney Valentino (VP External), Sudeshna Dhar (FRC International)

**Regrets:** Shemar Williams (FRC International)

**Absent:** Sahand Sepehrvand (Senator Engineering), Mona Nasry (FRC Business), Shuwen Qian (FRC Health Science)

**Call to order 4:05**

1. **Call for New Business**

**MOTION: Approval of Agenda**

**Motion to approve the agenda for the February meeting moved by Wei, seconded by Caroline, all in favour, motion carried**.

1. **MOTION**: Approval of Minutes

**Motion to approve the minutes of January meeting moved by Dany, seconded by Pip, all in favour, motion carried**.

1. **President & VPs remarks:**
   * AGM scheduled for March 26 at 10 am.
   * The GSA Board appointed Ying Dong as the new CRO. Mona and Ashley were to meet with her to discuss nominations and the election election process.
   * The nominations opened on February 26 and will stay opened for a week.
   * The phoenix is doing well, and today the phoenix income is $800.
   * HSR agreement was signed and sent to the university
   * The GSA team was to attend an anti-oppression training the following week. This will be conducted every year.
   * The GSA submitted the proposed fees to the university.
   * The RTW group has 5 different committees. The teaching-learning and student experience committee asked for a grad student representative to sit on this committee. Interested council members can email Shawn.

Vp Admin:

* Anthony reached out to insurance companies to get a new insurance quote. He is looking into cheaper insurance to save extra money on the budget.
* Looking into moving GICs after maturity to saving accounts for more interest.
* IGSA appointed 2 copresidents.
* Task force at the IGSAG had been put together to work on making a case for dedicated scholarship for international students.

Vp Internal:

* Continuing with the data science workshops
* The student/Supervisor workshop planned for the week of March 1.

Vp Services

* Finalizing the procedure for enrolling visiting students.
* Working on providing information for clubs regarding reimbursement for events.

Vp External

* + A letter circulated from U15 GSS advocacy groups regarding exempting international students from the 2k hotel stay. It was suggested to host international students at institutional residence instead.
  + Sydney will send the GSA logo to them to add to this letter to show that the McMaster GSA is in support and endorse this letter.
  + Wei mentioned that the 2k is the maximum; however, some students mentioned that the cost was 1k. He suggested having international students stay as a group to get a better rate at the hotel.
  + Sydney highlighted that each university is handling this differently, the GSA is joining the U15 for stronger representation to the government, in advocating for the student needs.
  + Shawn mentioned that he had a university meeting 3 weeks ago, and they highlighted that they would support international students with their accommodation fees. He added that the executives would have time to review the letter details and get back to Sydney in the evening.

1. **AGM Material**
   1. Phoenix Finances
   2. GSA Finances
   3. GSA Fees
   4. GSA proposed Budget
      * Anthony gave a summary of the above-mentioned documents.
      * Shawn added that the university enquired if the GSA would submit different fee structures for entirely virtual and in-person school year starting in the fall. Nonetheless, the GSA submitted one fee structure as everything the GSA does is essential irrespective of whether school is virtual or in-person. He added that the GSA did not increase fees overall. The GSA also waived the capital build fee for another year.
      * Council members agreed on moving the fee schedule and GSA budget to the AGM.
2. **FRC Update:**

Social Science

Sarah mentioned that:

* A Social Science meet-and-great event was held in collaboration with CUPE and the event was well attended.
* She received feedback from student and brought that to the attention of the SIAC.
* She was looking into setting up Social Science Association, however there have been challenges with student engagement.
* FRCs could collaborate to share ideas on how to connect with students to give the GSA more visibility.

Engineering

Michelle & Dhany mentioned:

* Currently wrapping up the science communication workshop series, the third one was very successful and had close to 70 people attending.
* They had a student survey that had 150 responses. they used gift cards as an incentive. The questions were focuse on what EGS does to support students.

SciGSA

* Tiffany mentioned that she and Pip met with the Dean and Ass. Dean the previous day. They were told that the university asked the government to consider being flexible on quarantine, which was not passed. So the provost office set up a fund to provide $500 per student, while the faculty of science will contribute $1000.
* Having anti-oppression workshops; the last one had a smaller group
* Held a trivia night the previous week, which was well attended.
* Alumni event planned for the following week.
* 3 minutes thesis competition this year to be like a video editing contest, where people can talk about their research in one minute using animated videos.

Health Science:

* Hosted a mental health workshop, which focused on managing stren in a research environment.
* Collaborating with the McMaster money center to provide a financial literacy workshop to teach students money management skills
* Collaborating with Science and silence group on workshops to enhance graduate students communication skills.

IGSA:

* Having challenges with student engagement. One of such challenges is time difference for international students who are yet to arrive in Canada.
* Held a love story writing contest which had a good participation.
* Moving away from video-confrencing type events
* Cooking and baking contest in December
* Focusing on grad students stories, where grad students are asked to submit a bio about themselves and speak to their experience and what they hope to achieve.

1. **Senate / BOG Updates:**

* Alyaa mentioned that DeGroote School of Business launched a Lunch and Learn. One of the alumni who attended spoke about the job market.
* Financial support for international students who arrive before end ofApril; the funds will be up to $1000 to cover the hotel expenses if the hotel cost exceeds $500.
* Ghada mentioned that at the last BoG last meeting, she motioned to release the university investments. The university did approve the motion, however, later, they moved it to an information item and released no information.

1. **New business:**

* No new business

1. **Adjournment**

**Motion to adjourn the meeting at 1:07 pm, moved by Tiffany, seconded by Anthony, all in favour, motion carried.**

**Action Items:**

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| **Item** | **Action by** | **Due date** |
| NA |  |  |