Graduate Students Association of McMaster University

***Council Meeting***

January 25th, 2022

Teleconference - Zoom

5:00 pm.

**Minutes**

**Attendees- voting members:** Caroline Seiler (GSA President), Spencer Naylor (VP Administration), Wei Zhao (VP Services), Zarwa Saqib (FRC Health Science), Newton Meng (FRC Business), Ce Ji (FRC business), Ana Portillo (FRC Health Science), Sudeshna Dhar (FRC International), Ying Dong (GSA CRO), Sarah Elshaht (VP External), Shuwen Qian (VP Internal), Lucas Klein (FRC Science), Moyo Sogaolu (FRC International), Ghada Sasa (FRC Social Science), Paramita Bhattacharyya (FRC Engineering), Dhanyasri Maddiboina (FRC Engineering)

**Attendees- non-voting members:** Ashley Ravenscroft (DoO- non-voting), Samantha Sada (Executive Secretary-non voting),

**Guest non-voting:** NA

**Regrets:** Seraphina Vasilodimitrakis (FRC Humanities)

**Absent:** Sahand Sepehrvand (Senator Engineering- non-voting), Dina Hansen (FRC Social Science), Nicole Areias (Senator Humanities-non voting),

**Quorum: 30% of seats (20) – met**

**Call to order 5:05 PM**

1. **MOTION: Approval of Agenda**

**Motion to approve the agenda for January meeting moved Seraphina, seconded by Spencer, all in favour, motion carried**.

1. **MOTION**: **Approval of Minutes**

**Motion to approve the minutes of December 1st meeting moved by Zarwa, seconded by Wei, all in favour, motion carried**.

**President & VPs remarks:**

· Caroline begins to mention that the University will be supplying masks in the upcoming weeks but further updates will come from the University

· The university has also acquired 40,000 rapid antigen tests that are going to be available for those at risk.

· Ashley notifies Caroline that the University is handing out N95 masks on campus, Spencer questions why there has not been any communication concerning this.

· Caroline expresses that it is new information and will check to see who qualifies to receive masks as they might be available on a smaller basis.

· Caroline explains that she will try to get the information out when it is available however the level 3 surgical masks will be available to students

· Two booster clinics on Tuesday and Friday last week, which many students have taken advantage of.

· In addition, Caroline states boosters are now available at the student wellness center.

· Earlier in the term, Caroline met with the University President to advocate for greater support for grad students delayed by COVID, as the GSA had the COVID relief fund.

· Still working on trying to get more support, Spencer will have more updates from his analysis

· Since there are many questions on the return to campus, The GSA has planned a Q&A with Doug Welsh next Thursday at 3 pm. Caroline urges everyone to advertise it to students and faculty to get clearer answers.

· Caroline notes that specifically, grad students with younger children were at risk and most affected from COVID delays.

· Working on budget and fees for next year that might increase to 5.1% due to the consumer price index. There is a lot of inflation but urges everyone to let her know if they have any questions.

· Another update, Mona the executive secretary has found a new position but there is a new executive secretary Samantha who is joining the team.

· Caroline expresses that they are working with an HR consultant group ‘Salopak’ to better understand and define staff packages to make sure they are comparable to other non-profit groups.

· She explains that they are comparing the referendum with the Dialogue health care app, to see if students are interested in keeping it for the future.

· Caroline asks if there are any questions, and Ghada brings attention to a petition that is calling on the University to provide more online options and masks for students. Ghada was wondering what we can do for the students and to put more pressure on the University to provide more options to students.

· The GSA had sent out that petition in a December weekly email, and Caroline says the discussion is large and the GSA wants to support students with specific health and accessibility concerns.

· Phoenix update, Caroline describes that the Phoenix closed during December. The staff is updating the menu.

· The Phoenix is planned to be opening on Feb. 2nd when the university regulations allow.

· The new waiter minimum wage is 15 dollars which affect planning for next years’ budget but should not affect us too much.

· Caroline expresses that they did speak to the University concerning a rent waiver as there was an impact on the sales and the ability to run. They are likely to help.

**VP Admin**

· Spencer expresses the work being done concerning the COVID relief fund.

· Spencer confirms that for the COVID relief fund they received applications from the first block of eligible students. A second round of applications is being planned for grad students who received insufficient COVID relief funding.

· He explains that he is trying to figure out how to provide people who got some funding with a relief fund as well. In addition, the GSA Executive will ask the Board to introduce a second round.

· When the applications are reviewed the funds can be released to the eligible students.

· The Phoenix just had a meeting concerning a rent waiver as a COVID relief.

· Upcoming finance meeting to determine our funds that will be putting our money into an investible income account.

**VP Services**

· Wei discussed the student experience committee meeting with UFA and STS that they talked about two things.

· The first thing discussed at the meeting was the experience in exploring the McMaster website, Wei explained to them that if after the website was redesigned and students were having issues navigating; they could give an introduction at the beginning of the year.

· Wei explains the second thing discussed at the meeting, that they can have events next month only between international students’ clubs.

· The next update Wei touches on is the information technology students advisory committee meeting, which discussed the amount of time spent on student inquiries that are directed to the wrong department. Introducing a ticket system to open a file for a student’s concern and have the right department respond.

· Wei hopes that the GSA can also incorporate a ticket system.

· Wei explains that we have one last vacant club position and was hoping The Indian Student club would take vacancy but has not received the proper documentation from the club.

· Wei does not want to discuss the welcoming initiative as he is still discussing with other students in the culture-related club and the policies. But is aiming we will welcome them at least a term before, to allow them to prepare for their travel.

· Wei is still seeking out the possibility for the University can give us a media distribution list including the new incoming students.

**VP Internal**

· Shuwen explains that there are not many updates but just had a trivia night for the welcome week and will have a leadership workshop in the coming two days.

· Due to COVID, no in-person events could be held but Shuwen hopes we can plan an event in the future.

**VP External**

· Sarah mentions the main updates that she has relates to the weekly newsletter and upcoming contests. She has coordinated with Sam to award the winners with gift cards.

· Sarah has tried to hold some engaging activities, but the issue is the difficulty in reaching out to students. To maximize outreach, Sarah is planning a social media contest to gain outreach and should be launching this contest in the next few days that will last 2 weeks.

1. **MOTION: Faculty representatives to the GSA Council**

* Caroline explains that Dina Hansen has not been in contact with the Council, and has been absent for three consecutive meetings. And to have their position open to new applicants.

**Motion to approve the removal of Dina Hansen and open the position to new applicants moved by Spencer seconded by Wei, all in favour motion carried.**

1. **MOTION: Referendum vote in March 2022**

· Caroline mentions the referendum coming up to ask if Graduate students would like to add the mandatory supplementary fee of 50 dollars for the virtual doctor’s program Dialogue provided by Studentcare. Caroline explains students would be able to opt-out of Dialogue.

· The implementation is for the September 2022-2023 academic year and onward, with annual review.

· The GSA CRO will call campaigners, arrange debates, and inform the student body of the vote happening on March 1st – March 3rd.

**Motion to approve the motion moved by Dhanyarsri seconded by Paramita, all in favour motion carried.**

**4. FRC Update:**

Health Science

* No new updates, but in the works of planning a professional development event for January.

Science

* No new business

Business:

* No new business

Engineering

* Re-examining the student supervisory relationship and the rules of conduct related, and how to escalate issues and/or identify potential issues in a student-supervisor relationship.
* The main initiative is to establish a set of rules for students to follow and have it approved by the Faculty by the end of the term.

SciGSA

* No new business

Humanities:

* No new business.

IGSA

* No new business

1. **Senate / BOG Updates:**

* No new business

1. **Adjournment**

**Motion to adjourn the meeting at 5:40 pm, moved by Wei, seconded by Ghada all in favour, motion carried.**

**Action Items:**

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