Graduate Students Association of McMaster University

***Council Meeting***

March 29th , 2022

Teleconference - Zoom

4:00 pm.

**Minutes**

**Attendees- voting members:** Caroline Seiler (GSA President), Spencer Naylor (VP Administration), 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), Seraphina Vasilodimitrakis (FRC Humanities)

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

**Guest non-voting:** NA

**Regrets:** Wei Zhao (VP Services),

**Absent:** Sahand Sepehrvand (Senator Engineering- non-voting), Nicole Areias (Senator Humanities-non-voting).

**Quorum: 30% of seats (20) – met**

**Call to order at 4:05 PM**

1. **MOTION: Approval of Agenda**

**Motion to approve the agenda for March meeting moved Spencer Naylor, seconded by Sudeshna Dhar, all in favour, motion carried**.

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

**Motion to approve the minutes of the February Council meeting moved by Moyo Sogaolu, seconded by Sudeshna Dhar, all in favour, motion carried**.

**President & VPs remarks:**

* Caroline begins with the biggest update which is the GSA elections. She states that the GSA still has one position open: VP admin, however, the GSA has accepted applications and there are currently 3 applicants.
* Caroline states that the successor will be determined at the next council meeting.
* Caroline says that we did have the referendum but did not meet the quorum, so the council will be voting on it today.
* Caroline continues her updates, saying that the GSA is wrapping up the COVID Relief funding, and generating a report to show the amount of support we were able to provide.
* Caroline explains another update is that the GSA held our annual meeting but had a low turnout, so we will be voting on these materials today.
* Caroline explains that the mask and vaccine mandates will be removed as of May this year.

**VP Admin**

* Spencer begins to explain that they are working on the COVID Relief funding report to share with the Graduate Student community.
* He states that around 8/40 students expressed how helpful the funding was for them.
* Spencer explains that we are still waiting on testimonials to gain more detailed feedback, and once received will release a reporting package on the results.
* He also states that there are some work-in-progress projects concerning bylaws and investments that will be discussed with the Finance Committee and the Board.

**VP Services**

* Caroline explains that Wei was not able to attend the Council Meeting and that she will be discussing his updates instead.
* The first update Caroline mentions is the work Wei is performing to ensure the HPV vaccine is included with our insurance plan.
* Caroline says that Wei was successful in manually adding visiting students to our GSA insurance plan.
* In addition, Caroline mentions that Wei has been working with Studentcare to prepare for the annual report meeting.

**VP Internal**

* Shuwen starts off updating the council on McMaster’s aim to improve teaching and learning.
* She explains that the teaching and learning committee announced privately that they will be providing small teaching and learning seed grants up to $4000 for individuals or small-scale projects.
* Additionally, she adds that they will also be providing a garden grant of up to $25000 and is aimed at more interdisciplinary and departmental projects. And that both of these grants are expected to be announced between March and April.
* Shuwen continues to explain that the grant recipients will be announced in August and the grant would begin from September until August next year, making it a one-year program.
* Shuwen says that there will be a selection committee expected to be made up of teachers and students from different faculties. However, the university has not announced how representatives will be selected.
* Shuwen states that a student group that evaluates the teaching quality at McMaster has reached out to the GSA, and was hoping to have some graduate students represent their group as volunteers.
* Shuwen has reached out to the group asking them to clarify whether they were looking for a GSA-affiliated rep or to distribute the information through the GSA. She explains that though they have not yet responded, the information has been distributed to the FRCs.

**VP External**

* Sarah states that her biggest update is that the GSA has hosted a multicultural event and social media events; and that she has been ensuring that winners have received their prizes.
* Sarah describes that there is a proposal for an in-person event such as a painting event and that the GSA is working to aid this proposal.

**The Phoenix Updates**

* Ashley explains that there are not any big updates with the Phoenix. But as the provincial restrictions have slowly come back down we have seen more foot traffic at the Phoenix.
* Ashley states that the GSA is more hopeful for those gross revenues to increase.

1. **MOTION: Dialogue Referendum**

* Caroline explains that the referendum on the use of Dialogue had a very low number of people voting and received feedback that students were not interested in using the app as many services are available through the Wellness Center.
* Caroline states that the thought for this meeting is to move to not hold another referendum and leave it as the students do not seem interested.
* Spencer notes that it is important to assess how the app differs from TeleHealth and who it benefits.
* He explains that there is almost no difference and could be of use to international students that don't have access. Spencer says it may be more useful to have students be able to opt-in rather than leaving it to them to opt-out.
* He adds that it was great to experiment but agrees we should leave it as students are not interested.
* Lucas states that he is curious if there is data to support if the app is alleviating some use of the health and wellness center or just giving people a service they already have.
* Caroline says the app was to aid students with minor medical questions with 24-hour service but did have low utilization.
* Ashley notes that there are overlapping trends between Telehealth and virtual appointments offered by doctors. She says that the data they reviewed was over 5 months that showed a 0.1% usage.
* Caroline asks how long it would take to see proper usage trends, Ashley states it takes about 3 years.

**MOTION: Whereas, voter turnout was a record low, and quorum was not reached, the GSA will not hold another referendum for Dialogue at this time moved by Spencer Naylor, and seconded by Lucas Klein, all in favour motion carried.**

1. **AGM Update:**

* Caroline begins to explain the GSA’s executive reports for the past year.
* Caroline explains the following main improvements the GSA reported
  + The GSA has reduced our capital build fee from $30 to $0
  + Created a COVID relief fund for graduate students
  + Finalized the Investment Strategy policy
  + Re-examined the Associations Human Resources
  + Included visiting students onto the GSA insurance plan.
  + Represent and monitor 24 clubs.
  + The GSA awarded event, sponsorship, and club funding to the graduate student community.

**MOTION: to approve the minutes of the 2021 AGM moved by Ana Portillo, seconded by Shuwen Qian, all in favour motion carries.**

* Caroline continues the AGM presentation and shares the election report with the Council. She highlights that we have two vacant roles: VP admin and FRC social science.

**MOTION: To ratify the election results of the GSA primary elections for 2022- 2023 moved by Spencer Naylor, seconded by Ana Portillo, all in favour motion carries.**

* Caroline states that Jing Zheng and Yue Xi were nominated for external director’s positions.

**MOTION: To appoint those nominated for the Board of Directors moved by Spencer Naylor, seconded by Sarah Elshaht, all in favour motion carries.**

* Spencer continues the presentation by explaining the Audited Financial statements for the past year.
* He notes that the numbers for 2022 are not present as many transactions and cheques still need to be confirmed.
* Spencer explains that The Phoenix did show a net loss in the past year as the pandemic heavily affected them. However, the projections for the Phoenix going into next year is positive; based on comparable data from 2020 and 2021.
* Ashley notes that some of the loss that is seen from the Phoenix side is amortization, and the more representative of our loss is around $70 000
* Spencer confirms that the investment in capital assets is not accurate as we are in a transitional period to ensure our investments are allocated properly.
* He continues to explain that CERB aided the Phoenix and its employees.
* Caroline states that the GSA typically uses KPMG to audit our finances every year, and their proposed audit fees are $15 500 plus the technology support fee of 5%

**MOTION: To appoint KPMG as the Auditors for the 2022 fiscal year and to approve the Auditors fees moved by Spencer Naylor, seconded by Lucas Klein, all in favour motion carries.**

* Spencer begins to discuss the review of financial statements for 2021/2022. He highlights that the capital build fee was waived last year, but is going to be reintroduced this year as a student projects fee. The goal of the fee is that whatever comes in directly goes back to the students.
* Caroline adds that if anyone was interested in how the GSA is going to use this feature, they are invited to the bylaws meeting happening in two weeks.
* Spencer says that we are in the process of closing ThinkGrad, and will be in the update in the 2022 numbers.
* Ashley confirms that we did receive wage subsidy, Spencer highlights that it will be the last batch.
* Spencer discusses that the Phoenix graduate student discount was heavily used. Additionally, the Phoenix had a jump in sales despite the lack of full capacity.
* Spencer points out that the rent expense was lower reflecting the rent waiver the University provided.
* Spencer says that there is not too much to highlight in the proposed GSA budget other than the HSR admin fee increasing to $8000 as a result of accumulated billing.
* Spencer states that the budget reflects a higher investment income as we will have an investment strategy for more productive use.
* Spencer also highlights the increase in the emergency fund as we might not have a COVID relief fund next year, to offer students aid.
* Ashley states the GSA will have more income with the inclusion of the MBA students coming in. This explains the increase in travel awards, awards, and emergency funding.

**MOTION: To accept the GSA and Phoenix budget for 2022-2023 moved by Spencer Naylor, seconded by Sudeshna Dhar, all in favour motion carries.**

* Ashley continues onto the fee schedule and notes fee increased by 4.5% which was less than CPI. She says that the CPI was 5.2% saying that we felt it was a good gesture to put forward with the university to show that we didn't want to see a fee increase by 5.2%.
* This increase left the proposed fee for $67.93 and the health and dental fee was set at $425 which was less than a 2% increase. Ashley states that we're increasing our plan more for inflationary trends.

**MOTION: To ratify the Graduate Student Association's student fees as outlined moved by Spencer Naylor, seconded by Ana Portillo, all in favour motion carries.**

1. **Ethnic Diversity Club Application**

* Caroline asks if there are any thoughts on their application or cover letter.
* Caroline also mentions that they have a modest budget for events, and they have a good breakdown of events and projects they would like to hold for the year.

**MOTION: For the approval of the Ethnic Diversity Club moved by Spencer Naylor, seconded by Ana Portillo, all in favour motion carries.**

**4. FRC Update:**

Health Science

* Not too many updates, they held a February event that focused on graduate student wellness
* They also had a panel of different upper-year graduate students to answer some questions for newer students about graduate school.
* Additionally, they are in the process of handling a March event and holding meetings in April.

Science

* The main updates are the Alumni social was successful. In addition, elections are coming out and nominations are due on April 1st

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

* They are currently accepting nominations for the IGSA executive team until April 8 and will be holding elections one week after the deadline.
* On March 11th, they are having an immigration workshop discussing permanent residents applying for different permits.
* They tried to host a photo contest but the sponsorship was not secured.

1. **Senate / BOG Updates:**

* No new business

1. **Adjournment**

**Motion to adjourn the meeting at 5:20 pm, moved by Spencer Naylor, seconded by Sudeshna Dhar all in favour, motion carried.**

**Action Items:**

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