

Graduate Students Association of McMaster University
Council Meeting
March 29th, 2023
Teleconference - Zoom
3:45 pm.

Minutes

Attendees- voting members: Caroline Seiler (GSA President), Letizia Dondi (VP Administration), Wei Zhao (VP Services), Shuwen Qian (VP Internal), Ghada Sasa (FRC Social Science), Xiaobing Li (FRC Sciences), Sarah Elshahat (VP External), Megan Li (FRC SciGSA), Ana Portillo (FRC Health Science), Zahra Tootonsab (FRC Humanities), Si Lui (FRC Business), Ruchini Abayakoon (FRC Humanities), Beyza Hatun (FRC Social Sciences)

Attendees- Staff: Samantha Sada (Executive Secretary-non voting), Ashley Ravenscroft (Director of Operations- non voting)

Guest non-voting:

Regrets: Ankit Ranjan, Paramita Bhattacharyya (FRC Engineering), Moyo Sogaolu (FRC International),

Absent:

Quorum: 30% of seats (20) – met

Call to order at 3:46 PM

1. MOTION: Approval of Agenda

Motion to approve the agenda for the March 2023 Council meeting moved by Letizia Dondi, seconded by Ana Portillo, all in favour, motion carried.

1. MOTION: Approval of Minutes

Motion to approve the minutes of the February 2023 Council Meeting moved by Letizia Dondi, seconded by Zahra Tootonsab, all in favour, motion carried.

1. AGM Presentation

- Caroline explains that the GSA reinstated our overtime relief fund of up to \$3000 and is reviewing applications.
- Caroline states that the GSA has also re-negotiated the HSR bus pass and negotiated the University's supplementary fee increases to be 1.9% below Ontario's CPI.
- Caroline adds that the GSA executives have been working to address Graduate funding, being involved in many discussions with the Dean of Graduate Studies and gathering data across the University.

- Caroline states that the GSA has also introduced a new unlimited mental health program: *Conversation* for students.

MOTION: To accept the minutes of the 2022 AGM moved by Shuwen Qian, seconded by Zahra Tootonsab, all in favour, motion carried.

MOTION: To ratify the election results of the GSA primary elections for 2023-2024, moved by Shuwen Qian, seconded by Letizia Dondi, all in favour, motion carried.

MOTION: To ratify the HSR Referenda moved by Letizia Dondi, seconded by Shuwen Qian, all in favour, motion carried.

- Letizia continues the presentation by going over the GSA audit pieces. She explains that both the GSA and The Phoenix are financially healthy.
- Letizia points out that the GSA and The Phoenix have liquidity of \$1.9 million.
- Letizia explains that The Phoenix did pay less rent over the pandemic.

MOTION: To allow the GSA Board to appoint new auditors for the 2023-2024 fiscal year and to approve auditor fees moved by Ana Portillo, seconded by Zahra Tootonsab, all in favour, motion carried.

- Letizia begins by explaining the financials of the GSA; she states that there has been an increase in income due to MBA students joining the GSA, GSA sports making a comeback, and GICs.
- She mentions that the HSR fee has increased.
- Letizia adds that the Student Project Fee has replaced the Capital Build fee.
- Letizia states that there was an increase in staff salaries as the GSA performed a Salopek review.
- She explains that the members' equity remains the same.
- Letizia explains that the Phoenix has spent a lot of money on advertisements to keep it competitive and attract new events and customers.
- The Phoenix has had good retention of staff members and hired new employees as well.
- Letizia states that though The Phoenix has experienced a net loss in the previous years, they now have a net profit of \$68,000.
- Letizia continues the discussion by moving on to the GSA Budget, outlining that staff and executive pay are the most significant changes.
- Letizia continues to The Phoenix Budget, highlighting that many expenses go to advertising and accounting.

MOTION: To accept the GSA and Phoenix budgets for the 2023-2024 financial year moved by Letizia Dondi, seconded by Shuwen Qian, all in favour, motion carried.

- Letizia begins explaining the GSA student fees, outlining the differences but mentioning that the GSA keeps their fees under inflation.
- She explains that the GSA fees have increased by 4.5%. However, that is 1.9% lower than CPI.
- Another change Letizia highlights is the 9% increase in health and dental insurance fee. She explains that this increase is due to student usage and inflation.
- Letizia states that the HSR fee is less than a 2% yearly increase.

MOTION: To ratify the Graduate Students Association's student fees as outlined moved by Letizia Dondi, seconded by Shuwen Qian, all in favour, motion carried.

MOTION: To adjourn the AGM 2023 meeting moved by Letizia Dondi, seconded by Ana Portillo, all in favour, motion carried.

President & VP Remarks

- Caroline begins her updates by stating that the GSA in April will focus on transitioning the new executives.
- Caroline states the GSA has been attending Raise the Floor meetings and released a Graduate Funding letter last week.
- Caroline mentions that the University had a Sexual Violence and Prevention Task Force Meeting and urges anyone interested in attending to contact the GSA.
- Caroline explains that the GSA has contacted the Ombuds Officer and is discussing how we can get a graduate student on their advisory committee.
- Caroline highlights that Sam has been planning two GSA trips: a trip to Canada's Wonderland on May 6th and a pottery painting trip on April 24th.

VP Admin

- Letizia explains that the GSA has reviewed the first round of Overtime Relief Fund applications but needs some information to clarify for the applicants.
- She states that the GSA is gathering some of that information before the funds are released to eligible students.

VP Services

- Wei states that he is updating the website with new features.
- Caroline mentions that as the website has been undergoing updates, it has caused rollbacks. But she states that this will be fixed soon.

VP Internal

- Shuwen states that she aided the GSA with adjudicating the Overtime Relief Fund applications.
- Shuwen mentions that she has been helping with updating the GSA website.

VP External

- No updates

The Phoenix Updates

- Ashley explains that The Phoenix has been doing well and are experiencing pre-pandemic numbers.
- Ashley mentions that they tend to have more bookings as the wedding season approaches.

Syria Sanctions

- Ghada explains that in collaboration with her friends, she created a parliamentary petition calling on Canada to lift the sanctions on Syria.

- Ghada mentions that they have launched a written petition sponsored by Matthew Green and hope the GSA could also sponsor it.

MOTION: To approve the SIAC-forwarded letter on Canadian sanctions on Syria moved by Zahra Tootonsab, seconded by Letizia Dondi, all in favour, motion carried.

7. FRC Updates:

Health Science

- Ana explains that they are in the process of creating a document of bylaws as they do not have any governing document.
- Caroline mentioned that she would send the bylaw document that she and previous HSGSF members created and ratified through the GSA.
- Ana mentions that they are also making more modifications to improve representation by all students within the Faculty of Health Science.

Social Science

- No updates

Business:

- No updates

Engineering

- No updates

SciGSA

- Xiaobing explains that they held an event at the Phoenix that was well received.

Humanities:

- Zahra mentions that they discussed the state of their funding with the English students caucus and what they look forward to seeing from the University in terms of action.

IGSA

- No updates

8. Senate / BOG Updates:

- No updates

9. New Business

Motion: To adjourn the March Council Meeting moved by Letizia Dondi, seconded by Ana Portillo, all in favour, motion carried.

Action Items:

Item	Action by	Due date