



## GRADUATE STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION

### Executive Meeting



### Executive Agenda

Wednesday, August 30, 2017, 5:30 – 7:30 pm

### GSA Commons

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**Present:** Z. Ghaith (President); J. Bonkowski (VP Finance & Operations); A. Kiani (VP Academic & Student Affairs) I. Efimoff (Indigenous Liaison)

**Regrets:** N. Sahtout (VP External)

#### 1. Call to Order / Opening Remarks

Meeting called to order @ 5:13 pm. Sahtout is out of country at an academic conference.

Ghaith wishes us all well as the fall term begins.

#### 2. Approval of the Agenda

Efimoff adds RISE Conference to Other Business. Bonkowski adds Copyright

Committee Presentation to Other Business. Bonkowski removes GSA Commons A/V

Upgrade discussion as this will be discussed sufficiently during her Executive update.

Ghaith moves to approve agenda as amended. Seconded by Efimoff. All in favour.

**Carried.**

#### 3. Approval of July 18 Minutes

Edits were circulated after July meeting. No changes suggested. Ghaith moves to approve minutes. Efimoff seconds. All in favour.

**Carried.**

**\*\* Supplementary Materials Attached**

#### 4. Executive Updates

- a. **Student Affairs** – Meeting w/ USSU re: Orientation; Event Coordinator hired, dealt with student concerns; Orientation invitations extended to faculty and staff; Orientation game plan is in place and paid for; made call for Orientation volunteers. Fundraised for the Orientation. Had a meeting with the Customer Success and Engagement Consultant | OOHLALA Inc regarding GSA app and how we can promote GSA news in the app. Attended a meeting with ISAC.
- b. **Indigenous Liaison** – On vacation and out of town for conference for majority of August; Attended tuition meeting to discuss grad student wants/needs/concerns; Consulted w/ Ghaith to create consultation documents; call w/ CFS for annual check-in; USSU meet and greet
- c. **Finance & Operations** – Attended Board of Directors meeting; Arranged for an A/V consult at the Commons, one quote has been received so far, more will be gathered from other companies and a proposal assembled for the Board; Two Commons Coordinators were hired for the upcoming academic year; Met with CGPS EA Lori Lisitza re: GSA/CGPS communication structure
- d. **President** – Out of office for some of the month, worked remotely; 11 meetings from mid-July to date; RAAC signed by GSA, USSU and Provost; 1000 Fundraised for Orientation and September socials; Tuition policy w/ recommendations coordinated w/ Efimoff; Work with Saskatchewan Student Coalition on behalf of Sahtout; Made successful motion to appoint external Directors on Board, Dr. Henderson and Dr. Pulfer's terms begin September 1

## **5. 2017 Executive Meeting Dates**

By-laws require two Executive meetings per month. Based on Executive availability meetings will occur on Fridays at 4:15 pm.

- a. September 15 & 29
- b. October 13 & 27
- c. November 3 & 24
- d. December 1 & 15

## **6. 2017-18 Council Meeting Dates**

By-laws require Council meet once per month during the academic year. Meetings will tentatively take place from 5 pm to 7 pm on the following days:

- a. September 28
- b. October 26
- c. November 30
- d. December 14

Meeting dates are subject to revision following the confirmation of other stakeholders' schedules for the Fall term. Winter term Council dates will be determined at a later date and ideally posted to the website by mid-November.

## **7. Summer U-Pass Update**

Summer transit passes would be ~ \$108 for the total Spring/Summer period. In order for this to be implemented a referendum must be called. Ghaith will spearhead this initiative and hopes to have the vote sometime in October.

## **8. CFS Workshops\*\***

Efimoff has circulated a list of available workshops offered by CFS. This list is not exhaustive. This is an item for awareness, no formal decisions have been made regarding workshops for the year yet, but the workshops offered by CFS will be kept in mind while planning.

## **9. ThinkGrad Update\*\***

Ghaith has elaborated on this information on behalf of Sahtout: Conference in Montreal went well. Policy papers are underway. Decisions regarding annual membership in the ThinkGrad group can be found in the following item.

## **10. ThinkGrad Membership\*\* - Decision**

Membership fees each year will be \$800. This will allow the USASK GSA to access surveys in other universities, and participate in any federal advocacy efforts for graduate students. This annual membership fee does not include conference / travel fees. The decision must be made by December. The Executive have decided to wait until Sahtout returns to make a formal decision, and if approved the item will be brought forward to Council.

## **11. Sexual Assault Awareness Dance\*\***

The dance will take place Friday, September 22 from 5 pm to 11 pm in the GSA Commons. Sahtout has asked if the GSA is willing to donate additional funds for refreshments in addition to the donation of the venue. The Executive have decided that up to \$150 may be donated as needed, which will be decided upon communication with the organizers and their needs for the event.

## **12. Other Business**

### **a. RISE Conference**

September 29 to October 1 in Toronto. CFS will subsidize one representative.

Subsequent parties are \$400. Registration closes on September 6. Must register as soon as possible in order to ensure a seat. Efimoff will extend an invitation to a deserving student, if they are unable to attend she will register.

### **b. Copyright Committee Presentation / Q&A Session**

Before reading week in November. Bonkowski will suggest that they hold the event.

## **13. In Camera Session**

## **14. Adjournment**

Ghaith moves to adjourn at 7:07 pm. Kiani seconds. All in favour.

**Carried. Meeting Adjourned.**

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## Supplementary Materials

### CFS Workshop Topics

- Issues
  - The Case for Free Post-Secondary Education
  - The importance of building consent culture on our campuses and in our communities
  - Student-worker solidarity
  - Where's the Justice? and the campaign for funding for the PSSSP
  - etc.
- Governance
  - By-law writing and interpretation (and general organizational review)
  - Student union finances
  - Directors Rights and Responsibilities
- Day-To-Day
  - Meeting facilitation
  - Human Resources
- Campaigns & Outreach
  - Campaigns 101
  - Graduate Student organizing
  - Media Relations
  - Social Media for students' unions
- Anti-Oppression

### ThinkGrad Conference Update

Montreal, Quebec  
August 2 - 4

Many of the topics that were discussed are initiatives that have been successfully followed through and implemented at other universities and are things that perhaps the University of Saskatchewan could benefit from. I have briefly discussed a few things that were of great interest.

*Note: I was not in attendance on August 2, due to prior commitments; therefore, I am waiting for the minutes to be distributed to have a better understanding of what was discussed.*

### **Workplace Entry**

*McGill University*

There are three kinds of internships that are available;

- (a) Mandatory: for those taking courses that require field work
- (b) Essential skills training

(c) Entrepreneurship

- McGill offers funds for students to do start-ups

McGill has a database with over 700 places to work at and this database is available to all of their students. The university as well as industry is investing in having these non-mandatory internships available to students because of the increased need for experienced learning. Theoretically, every student can do an internship and get funded for it. CGPS also offers “graduate pathways to success” in which students can learn the skills that are necessary to help them thrive in the job market.

*University of Montreal*

Only 1/3 of graduates go into academia, even though there is not much emphasis on other possible job options. They hold a Graduate Student week which consists of roundtable discussions, industrial talks, courses offered by administration. They also offer ‘Has been nights’ in which graduates come back to talk about their pathway to employment.

*McMaster University*

Career counseling is available to students. Students can learn about ‘how to sell their skills’, which need to be emphasized in any job application. Students can also access industrial mentorships.

*University of Saskatchewan*

At our university, we do have many different options that graduate students can access to gain a better understanding of what job opportunities are available.

- Industry talks (both GSA run and university run)
- Career services offers assistance on many different topics
- Gwenna Moss Centre offers workshops for academia and non-academia related topics
- MITACS is available and a presentation is often held before the application deadline

Should we try and get a larger interest from industry to try and encourage industrial internships? Should the GSA and CGPS work towards creating a database / website that would include all workshops / opportunities that are available for graduate students? This could also include where graduates are working after graduation and show what employers are looking for so as to increase employability. Should we try and introduce an employment week and a mentor program? Are there courses available for credit that would help graduate students increase their employability?

**Peer Support Centre – McGill University**

McGill University offers a student run service that is free and is an active based support / place for resources for all students (undergraduates and graduates). This service was operational in the Winter 2014 with only 4 – 6 hours / week. Currently it runs every day from 11 am – 7 pm. In the 2014 / 2015 academic year only 25 people used this service. In the 2015 / 2016 academic year, 30 people used the service. In the 2016 / 2017 academic year, about 400 students used this service. This increase in participation is a result of a

cross campus collaboration that has allowed the peer support center to be incorporated into the step care model that is used by Peer Health. Furthermore, since there are usually long wait times for professional help, students can access this service knowing that they do not have to wait for a long time. The volunteers are heavily trained (40 hours before they start with professionals) and continually receive training on different topics (sometimes led by other volunteers). Some volunteers, who are more experienced, receive specialized training. The center offers sound-proof rooms for confidentiality.

These services are complementing to those that are professional and in no way, replace them. Volunteers are aware that there are 3 levels of crisis and that there is a protocol to follow if help seems needed urgently. There is a large participation from the Arts and Science sector, 80 % of those who use this service are undergraduate students and 50 % are international students. Generally, those requesting this service have a low mood and high anxiety. Overall, there is a general satisfaction with the support that participants receive.

In the future the center is looking towards offering support groups, faculty specific programs, remote site programs and to start a coalition of peer support across Canada.

### **StudentCare**

“The Wellness Strategy” – consolidating all health information so that when a student approaches, the file is reviewed and the student can be directed to where they need to be (I think the U of S is going towards this???)

#### *EmpowerME:*

- accessible service with no geographical constraints
- 1 fee / student / year
- Complement the back log of wait time
- Different modes of session (video conference / one on one / phone)
- Volunteers have multiple years of experience, educational backgrounds, multilingual and therefore it is inclusive

#### Cavoites:

- Student usage may be low
- They cannot do any drastic medical treatments – it is not a long-term care option

There are currently no statistics on how many graduate students are using this program. Manitoba and McMaster have opted in to this program, among others. They have said that we could opt in for a few years and if the participation rate is low then we can opt out.

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For the rest of the topics, I will wait until the minutes are distributed so that I can share them with you. After the minutes are shared, I will be able to word the terms and agreements of becoming a member of ThinkGrad to council and Board.



The membership fee will be used to;

- Hire a coordinator that will be responsible for maintaining a website, taking minutes and applying for funding and grants, among other things
- Pay for coordinator travel to meetings
- Pay a lawyer to go over the by-laws and policies
- Prepare a basic website that other GSA's can access if they are interested in becoming members
- Pay for an accountant if need be
- Administrative purposes

Members are allowed to disaffiliate from the organization by letting the organization know 6 months before the membership fee is due (which has been set to April 1<sup>st</sup> of every year).

Of importance is that the University of Saskatchewan, mainly the VP External, is in charge of leading a White Paper. The purpose of this paper, which is to be completed by December, is as follows;

- Present literature on the graduate student funding situation in Canada
- Suggest links and present a discussion
- Act as an official document that can bring immediate value to students
- Act as something that can be taken back to administration for negotiation purposes
- Act as literature to help make funding a necessity
- Has the following structure:
  - o A short introduction
  - o Data / graphs to show what happens by universities in each defined subject
  - o Distinguishes between GTA / GRA
  - o Report on tri-council grants and provincial differences / international students
  - o Incorporate index to average living cost in each province

### **ThinkGrad Decision Item**

The following needs to be decided as soon as possible so that it can be brought forth to the council and Board for approval. A final decision needs to be made on this before December.

***Whereas the University of Saskatchewan Graduate Students' Association becomes a member of ThinkGrad and pays an annual membership fee of CAD 800.***

ThinkGrad is an excellent initiative, as you will see below, that allows for GSA's across Canada to discuss best practices, consult on policy's and access resources that would be beneficial to the graduate student members of all campuses. As members, a representative of our association, namely the VP External, will attend two meetings per year. The VP External will also be in constant communication with the other members on initiatives that would be decided on every year. These initiatives include things such as gathering literature on graduate student tuitions, stipends, salaries, well-being across Canada so that all members can have access to this information. I urge the executive to approve this membership and fee as I do see future benefit and potential for our GSA.

### **Sexual Awareness Week Dance Decision Item**

As part of Sexual Awareness Week, the GSA will host, in collaboration with USSU and other groups on campus, a dance on September 22 in the GSA commons. The dance will be all inclusive and family friendly and will run from 5 pm – 11 pm. As executives, we need to confirm / decide the following;

- a) Will the new audio and visual equipment be available for that day as they have requested this for music?
- b) Do we want to allocate some funds for this event for decoration and snacks?

I feel that since we are already providing the GSA commons free of charge that we not allocate funds but instead contribute the hot beverages (tea / coffee) and water.

I urge you to discuss thoroughly the above matters and inform me by email of the decision so that I can proceed forward with the two items. I look forward to your responses. I will have little access to replying to emails from August 15<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> as I will be out of the country at a conference but I will try my best to reply to any if the need arises.