

Graduate Students' Association



GSA Executive Retreat Meeting Minutes **Thursday, June 20, 2015 - GSA Commons** **10:30 A.M. – 7:30 P.M.**

Present: Natalia Terekhova (VP External), Ziad Ghaith (VP Operations), Jebunnessa Chapola (VP Academic), Hardi Shahadu (VP Student Affairs), David Bennett (VP Finance), Dana Carriere (Aboriginal Liaison), Rajat Chakravarty (President)

1. Call to Order

1.1. Meeting called to order at 10.30 a.m.

2. Approval of Chair

2.1. Rajat Chakravarty (President) calls for nomination. No response.

2.2. Rajat Chakravarty nominates himself. All in favour. Motion passes.

3. Approval of Minute Taker

3.1. Rajat Chakravarty nominated. All in favour. Motion passes.

4. Approval of the Agenda

4.1. Agenda was circulated previously for everyone's perusal.

4.2. Hardi added that a discussion item on personal expectations of every executive should be added to get a better understanding of work ethics and ideas of other executives. This item was added in the agenda.

4.3. Motion to adopt the agenda. All in favour. Motion passes.

5. Session 1 – Team Building

5.1. Executive Duties

5.1.1. All executives went over and discussed individual roles and expectations as per the new governing documents of the GSA.

5.1.2. If a position is vacant, an Executive meeting will be called to delegate duties.

- 5.1.3. Unless the issue pertains to a specific portfolio, the President can act as spokesperson of the Association. In all other cases, the President must consult with the pertinent executive(s) for further clarification on comments.
- 5.1.4. Executives are responsible to communicate activities within their portfolio at their discretion – Either through an informative report at the meeting, or email/verbal communication.
- 5.1.5. The GSA Executive has resolved to increase their informal communication. It would be helpful to spend time at the Commons to find out what others are doing. However, informal discussions should not lead to important executive decision making. Maybe going together for meals is a good way to start.
- 5.1.6. For issues external to the university, Natalia will be the point of contact.
- 5.1.7. Natalia speaks to the Deputy Minister and/or their secretary.
- 5.1.8. The GSA needs a fundraising committee for events – Natalia coordinates this.
- 5.1.9. The GSA Executive are in favour of campaigns for the coming year – mental health, federal elections and sexual assault
- 5.1.10. Building bridges project / ISSAC – Talk to community groups and build partnerships.

5.2. Executive Meetings

- 5.2.1. *Natalia* - We should not follow Robert's rules very strictly - we should maintain a speaker's list. We should not speak out of turn. We could use talking chips - communication techniques.
- 5.2.2. *David* – Executive meeting should be for decision making. There should be a reasonable point where we should stop discussion. We should speak in turns. We should record meetings. We should not make assumptions about what each executive is doing without gathering adequate information.
- 5.2.3. *Jebunnessa* - Do we need a 3-hour meeting? We need a time limit for 2 minutes. We shouldn't debate and lead to no conclusion. We need to inform more people at the outset to build rapport - more coffee talk. 1-to-1 interactions should not lead to pocket alliances.
- 5.2.4. *Dana* - Meetings should finish in 1.5 hours - arrange agenda items in order of priority. Limit how much we speak - get more clarification.

- 5.2.5.** *Ziad* - Limit speaking opportunities and time in a meeting. Push everything to vote. Keep time limits for every agenda item. Trust is important, also maintain informal communication. Cutting conversations by being exhausted in discussions does not lead to democratic decision making.
- 5.2.6.** *Hardi* - Long meetings can be avoided if we don't have private conversations - all executives should be informed about the issue. Let's have informal conversations on Facebook. Let's not mistake informal conversations to private conversations.
- 5.2.7.** *Rajat* - An executive motivating a motion for discussion or decision should be accountable to inform the entire executive of the issue.

5.3. Executive Communication

- 5.3.1.** *Hardi* - I want to be honest. I want to speak the truth on strong principles. Being critical is for the issue than the person. Appreciate transparency among all executives instead of creating alliances. Let's involve each other instead of indulging personal conversations.
- 5.3.2.** *Ziad* - Trust is important. Nothing should be assumed as a personal interest even if it's wrong. Put yourself as a third person in the opinion.
- 5.3.3.** *David* – Executives should not be perceived as acting on personal gain. We don't have to be best friends but focus on working together.
- 5.3.4.** *Dana* - Spending time informally. Be open to criticism/suggestions. We should be here to help each other - ask people for help.
- 5.3.5.** *Jebunnessa* - Passionate for this space. Respecting each other's decision. Be ready to receive constructive criticism.
- 5.3.6.** *Natalia* - Trust is important. Be flexible to change your mind. I don't like stubbornness - we should compromise to keep the peace for the team.
- 5.3.7.** *Rajat* – We should focus on creating a safe and happy work environment.

5.4. Executive Decision Making

- 5.4.1.** The GSA Executive agree executive decision making can happen via email. If you have an issue with it, respond within a time frame (typically 24 hours), silence means approval.
- 5.4.2.** Email Subject Line – “MOTION / REQUEST FOR DECISION - 24 Hours”

6. Lunch + Social Break

6.1. The GSA Executive have resolved to check swimming pools for pH.

7. Session 2 – GSA Undertakings

7.1. U-Pass

7.1.1. Okay with status quo - as far as implementation is concerned.

7.1.2. Summer U-Pass - a discounted U-Pass for the summer. The executive should consider running a summer referendum for the summer U-Pass. Meeting with Sask Transit should determine future outcomes.

7.2. GSA Commons

7.2.1. Cameras? - Places restrictions in the ways we work, costs too much.

7.2.2. Differential rate for graduate students and people outside - We need to find out more about what this change should be compared to other venues on campus.

7.2.3. Dishwasher is actually a sanitizer - a replacement? – Ziad looks into that.

7.2.4. *Ziad* - Advertise for night events at the Commons.

7.3. Health & Dental Plan

7.3.1. Mental health crisis - Collaborate with student health to reduce claims.

7.3.2. Happy with studentcare.net - no need for changes.

7.4. Social Groups

7.4.1. Put up information on the GSA website. 7.65\$ per head. Add a separate page on the GSA website.

7.4.2. Social groups - make a PAWS group. Need to be involved in GSA activities.

7.4.3. Consent form. Send out an email in September.

7.5. Human Resources – Coordinators + GSA Staff

7.5.1. Coordinators - Hire 2 new coordinators that complement the 4 existing coordinators. Have a session with the existing coordinators and outline mutual expectations.

7.5.2. Sherri - Need a separate executive meeting to revisit her contract, should we wish to change her contract. Ask Sherri for her expectations. The executive must revisit her existing job description to compare. Only part of the executive should know her salary. Also, Policy 1.8 and 7.3.1.1.

7.6. GSA Website + Facebook + Twitter + Instagram? + Newsletter

- 7.6.1. Let's have a website committee to design the new website.
- 7.6.2. Make a Facebook group. Be more active on Twitter. Post pictures of events so that GSA can show that we do stuff.
- 7.6.3. Twitter feed - e.g. *GSA_Exec*
- 7.6.4. Newsletter - Need to restart the newsletter - monthly updates. Ziad will update us further. Rajat has volunteered for the typesetting and designing.
- 7.6.5. Women's Centre / LGBTQ information must be on the GSA website.
- 7.6.6. Student concerns - Google Forms hosted online and checked regularly.

8. Tea / Coffee + Social Break

9. Session 3 – GSA Initiatives for the year 2015-16

9.1. GSA Survey

- 9.1.1. GSA has had inadequate engagement in the past with graduate students. Have a structured survey - on the feedback, we will have a town hall meeting to prioritize issues for the coming year.
- 9.1.2. CGSR proposal for a survey coordinator? - If not, fundraise. Else, find some amounts from our budgets.
- 9.1.3. Every executive is recommended to suggest a list of items within or beyond their portfolio for consideration as a survey question - the response to suggested question must feedback as a GSA initiative in the future (31st July) - GSA Accountability Survey

9.2. Orientations

- 9.2.1. Hardi will be looking for a coordinator - this week

9.3. Conference / 3-Minute Thesis

- 9.3.1. 3 days - Proposal and budget will be prepared in September and sent to President's Office.
- 9.3.2. Need coordinator for 3-Minute thesis
- 9.3.3. Need a more professional conference - a suggestion - make it like 3-minute thesis or a 990 presentation.

9.4. GSA Gala

- 9.4.1. It should not be at the Radisson anymore. It could maybe somewhere inside the campus. Probably look for other venues.

9.5. Social Events

9.5.1. Anti-racist / feminist movie screenings - Great success from the USSU in collaboration with WGST and STARS.

9.5.2. Want some educational/academic social events - can be informal or in residence.

9.5.3. Funding available for students to attend multicultural workshops. Include in newsletter - involve ISSAC.

9.5.4. Suggestions for events:

9.5.4.1. Showing the Ph.D Movie 2. – David is in charge.

9.5.4.2. The GSA should have a Happy Holidays social.

9.5.4.3. Food festival + New Year social

9.5.4.4. Wine + Cheese

9.5.4.5. Board games night

9.5.4.6. Campus Rec teams - Signup teams at the GSA Orientation

9.5.4.7. Trivia nights

9.5.4.8. Open Mic Night

9.5.4.9. Year-end social

9.6. Workshops

9.6.1. Job-related workshops - SECC not interdisciplinary - topics need to have more broad focus.

9.6.2. Anti-racism workshops - One in fall, one in winter

9.6.3. Industry talks

9.7. Aboriginal programming

9.7.1. Event every month - keep the same events.

9.7.2. Communication was important - attendance will be helpful.

9.7.3. Booking events - need better coordination.

9.7.4. Wine and cheese regularly. Aboriginal Awareness Week

9.8. Council / Committees

9.8.1. Get people to communicate with each other on the agenda items from before the meeting.

9.8.2. Coordinate more with Chair for a safer environment.

9.8.3. Have councils appreciated through socials.

9.9. Campaigns

- 9.9.1.** Campaign workshops? - Natalia will coordinate with CFS
- 9.9.2.** Mental Health - coping strategies workshop (Natalia / David)
- 9.9.3.** Sexual Assault (Hardi / Natalia / Jebunnessa)
- 9.9.4.** It's No Secret - Federal Elections (Natalia / Rajat - workshops)
- 9.9.5.** Joint Collaboration with IGSC and Jebunnessa on IGSC initiatives

10. Tea / Coffee – Social Break

11. Session 4 – Scheduling

11.1. Executive Meetings

- 11.1.1.** July 22, August 12, August 26, September 9, September 23, October 14, October 28, November 4, November 25, December 2, December 17, January 13, January 26, February 10, February 24, March 9, March 23, April 5, April 20

11.2. Council Meetings

- 11.2.1.** June 30, July 29, September 16, October 21, November 18, December 9, January 20, February 17, March 16, April 27 (Annual General Meeting)

11.3. GSA Events

- 11.3.1.** September – Fall Orientation (first week)
- 11.3.2.** September – Wine + Cheese?
- 11.3.3.** September 21st ish - Ph.D Movie 2
- 11.3.4.** December - Holidays Social
- 11.3.5.** January – GSA Winter Orientation
- 11.3.6.** 29 Feb - 3 March – GSA Conference
- 11.3.7.** 3 March - GSA 3-Minute Thesis
- 11.3.8.** 4 March - GSA Gala
- 11.3.9.** 27 April - Year-End Social

12. Adjournment

- 12.1.** Motion to adjourn. All in favour. Motion passes. Meeting adjourned at 7.30 p.m.