

# Graduate Students' Association Course Council Meeting Minutes



**University of Saskatchewan**  
**Thursday, February 28<sup>th</sup>, 2012**  
**5:00 P.M - 7:00 P.M**  
**GSA Commons**

Present: Miranda Cary, Alyson Crozier, Brandon Demuth, Lauren Erickson, Phillip Garvey, Julian Hamara, Laura Larsen, Jaime Leonard, Molly Patterson, Sarah Purdy, Janelle Sloychuk, Anja Sorenson, Jessica Prescott, Sarah Crawford, Megan Clark, Amir Abolhassani, Akindamola Awujoola, David Bennett, Patrick Chasse, Devin Ens, Kristian Hermann, Grant Scoular, Aaron Mackay, Mohammad Rafati, Reanne Risdale, Fred Sage, Ehimai Ohiozebau, John Mcleod, Elizabeth O'Meara, Dylan Beach, Nicole Callihoo, Maily Huynh, Steve Jimbo

## **1.0 Call to Order – 5:11**

## **2.0 Approval of Agenda**

Moved by: David, Reanne

Additions: Sarah – a motion for transform us

**Motion Passed**

## **3.0 Approval of last meeting Minutes**

Error: last page no discretion if the motion passed or not add after voting total to say whether or not motion passed or not – changes will be made

Moved: Sarah, Jessica

**Motion passed**

## **4.0 Ratification of new Course Councils**

Canadian obesity network and Nepali student association

Moved: Amanda, Elizabeth

**Motion passed**

## **5.0 Ratification of new Course Councillors**

Paul Hawthorne – School of Environment and Sustainability, Grant Scoelar - Physics, Sean Locke - Kinesiology

Moved: Sarah, John

**Motion passed**

## **6.0 Presentation from Amanda Smytaniuk – Studentcare.net health and dental plan**

- Don't need to change the possible plan this year, would need to go over preliminary plan to go over the plan normally at this point
- About \$3 difference on the higher side with the premium
- As of right now, annual claims over the last 3 years, they have remained steady but enrollment has increased
- Based on current information about the plan, recommendation is to hold the plan, over the next few months, will explore options of adding new benefits to the plan

- Question: about eyecare, how much do we have
  - o \$100 towards glasses, then \$50 for eye exam
  - o Has come up in survey and we'll look into it. Grad students did identify as wanting increase
- Question: some birth control prescriptions are not covered
  - o Can review the formulary
  - o We use the provincial formulary in the plan – so we are covering what the government has decided what is needed
- Question: about documentation – explain significance of loss ratio, what happens with that difference
  - o Cost of plan is driven about 90% by claims
  - o Amount of money paid in premiums that are taken out in claims
  - o This is low right now, but no cause for concern because it has only been 5 months of data so far
  - o Will need to keep in mind that a new dental office will be open on campus, reason for recommending that price stay the same even with the reduced premium so that the effects of the office can be gauged and adjusted into the plan next year
  - o Will be back next month to go over spreadsheets

## 7.0 UPASS referendum results

Dena presented:

**The referendum question was:** Do you support the implementation of U-PASS (universal bus pass which would be for terms September-December + January-April + May-August subject to City of Saskatoon Council approval) for graduate students enrolled in the College of Graduate Studies and Research for \$110.85 per term for a 1 year trial period commencing in September 2013. With a yearly consumer price index adjustment.

**1099 voting members of 2900 grad students – 38% voter turnout  
66% voted yes, 32% no, 1.4% abstained**

If 8% of grad student votes, then it is binding

Largest voter turnout on record

- o Some technical issues
- o Due to paws server, too many students trying to access it at the same time, server crashed
- o IT given to 10AM to sort it out, resulted in an extension to 6PM
- o Issue was addressed in a timely manner
- o Communication was done as best as could with what we had available to us
- o Has to rely on CGSR to communicate to all students
- o Total of 3 emails sent out about this
- o There were no “No” campaigns – 20-25 students had problems with the question, all were offered the position of running the no campaign – no one took it up
- o Recommendation for next time is to hold referendum over a few days to account for paws
- o Need a better communication system
- o With the tools we had, we did the best we could

- Questions:
  - Server issue: any assurance by IT that problems didn't affect the votes received
    - Between 10:30 – 11 that everything was in order was assurance by IT
  - GSA requirements of min. 8% in policy 2.2.273 of constitution
  - Constitution has evolved over the year, it has been voted on by the students over the year, if issues, then we welcome any recommendations and will bring it to a vote – the committee will review everything yearly
  - Reviews conducted based on recommendations for reviews
  - Results was sent by CGSR – this should have received all grad students
  - Concern about information: student didn't receive no information about it
  - Voter turn out was high this year, how is it compared to the last U-pass. We don't have that information on the last U-pass referendum. Compared to the USSU, this was higher this year for the GSA
  - Previous committee member regarding the 8%, kept at that number because few people actually vote, it was changed to 8 a few years ago.
  - Not all students receive these emails by CGSR
  - Could have a better communication method
  - How will issues of opt-out issues be addressed?
  - Implementation will be challenging but we will honour the options that were in the referendum questions. Students who are eligible to opt-out - committee will look at this and develop an appropriate procedure
  - CGSR are not be part of the implementation procedure
  - Curious about the list of grad student – CGSR had said they would try to get us the list back in 2008, not always appropriate that they send out our communication.
  - Information was promoted on the GSA website
  - 38% voter turnout was higher than the last municipal election
  - Is there room to discuss further opt-out criteria after the trial period – once it passed through the referendum then the city will have people to renegotiate after the trial period
  - There are very few students that qualify for exemptions – how will new university residences be affect this

### **8.0 VP Student Affairs Report**

- Student residences issues of students not having sufficient time to move out or the amount of no

### **9.0 VP Operations and Administration Report**

- Low bursary applications this term
- In need of committee for this term
- Why low: we are not sure

### **10.0 VP Academics Report**

- Looking for interest of the need for an ombudsperson
- When draft is finalized, course councillors will be emailed
- Student-supervisor relationships
- Urging departments to prepare or provide this information and guidelines.
- Working with new individual at CGSR on this issue

- Graduate program review: graduate studies programs will need a review of all these programs
- Ongoing review of different colleges and programs over the last few years
- Reviews for this year and next year are halted due to the transformUS task forces
- Call for volunteers for these hearings
- Question about ombudsperson: it was voted against by students due to extra charge that would be associated in the past.
- Does CGSR have student handbook: there is not something like this out there – this is spelt out in some department handbooks but not all
- Are employee issues being addressed with the supervisor relationship as well? – can look into it

### **11.0 VP Finance Report**

- Auditor has said that he won't be able to get to it until the end of April
- Can look into others, but as tax season is coming, it may be difficult to find someone
- New budget on the GSA website
- Most items in budget are as were projected
- Income will exceed what was expected, so do a few expenses - expecting to have a surplus by the end of this year
- Discussion about the surplus and what to do with this
- What will be done with the surplus – as discussed in the pass

### **12.0 Aboriginal Liaison Report**

- AIGSC is hosting the event - Aboriginal Women in Leadership Panel – March 11, 2013, great opportunity, public event and hosted at the GSA commons. First time that we can get all level of leadership levels to attend and cost \$0
- AIGSC is hosting the event - Aboriginal Graduate Studies Panel – March 12, 2013 – 11-noon and event is for upper level undergraduate students but trying to increase participation and awareness in undergraduates about grad studies
- AIGSC Chair and Omeasoo Butt to speak at April event related to Idle No More Series Events on Campus – discussion about what the University can do about what can do with the information we learned from this movement
- Selection of Aboriginal Graduate Students to attend ISC Banquet – March 15, 2013 – tickets will be distribute shortly
- Assisting with the Gala

### **13.0 VP External Report**

- International activities committee: campus wide investigation of internationalization
- Looking at all the study abroad agreements, international partners etc, if ideas about others to look at, please let Liz know
- Gala
  - Closer to 200 tickets sold
  - Sponsorship from over 10 departments (buying gold and silver tables to support the gala)
  - Many silent auction sponsorship – currently over \$700 value
  - Many award nominations

- Last day for early bird ticket price is tomorrow
- After Friday, ticket prices will be \$35
- Health and dental will provide a large sponsorship as well
- Speakers – Minister of advance education, president of the university, dean of graduate studies
- Questions: how many left to sell?
  - Printed 400 but expect to sell at least 260 – can accommodate up to 300

#### **14.0 Presidents' report**

- Thanked the UPASS committee for their commitment – some personal money was even spent to ensure that the work would be completed
- Award nominations are impressive – difficult to pick just one in each category
- Encouraged course councillors to attend
- College of Arts and Science have some extra tickets to provide to their students
- Will try to work with our resources for the UPASS implementation
- Stipend review – need has been identified by the university but few groups are taken responsibility for this at the administrative level – we will keep working on this

#### **15.0 Questions and answers**

- Constitution review: will it be done this year – yes – hope to have it approved by April course council meeting – email to extend invitation to new course councillors
- Health and dental: Amanda had explained difference between premiums and claims – our records on these excess, about 5 years ago there was a large surplus but over the last few years there had been some deficits since then and the records available at the GSA are limited.
- Will track things down to the university money records to see what has happened in the past

#### **16.0 Motion:**

**16.1** WHEREAS the first GSA Awards Gala banquet has attracted a great deal of interest from graduate students and faculty, and will host prestigious speakers, and

WHEREAS the GSA is charging graduate students a low price for the tickets,

BE IT RESOLVED that the GSA executive be permitted to spend up to an additional \$2000.00 to accommodate any deficits.

- Moved: John, Sarah
  - If we don't sell any more tickets, we will be in a \$2000 deficit
  - This hasn't been formally in the budget so we are being cautious
  - Clarification: first \$2500 + this \$2000
  - Precautionary just in case more tickets are sold then predicted as cost per person is less than the cost of a ticket
    - **Motion passes**

**16.2** WHEREAS the GSA Course Council is allowed to approve an increase in 5% of the GSA membership fee,

WHEREAS increasing the membership fee is important so that the GSA can continue to provide a high level of service to its members,

BE IT RESOLVED that the GSA membership fee for the 2013-2014 school year be increased by 5% to \$32.04 for the Fall and Winter terms (\$64.08 in total).

- Moved: John, Sarah
  - o Book- keeping, fees need to go to board of governors
  - o Slight fees, course councillors invited to be part of the budget review committee
  - o Why not spend the surplus instead of raising the fees? Surplus can be put towards other things. Growing the budget slowly may allow for better GSA services in the future (ie eventually able to hire an ombudsperson)
  - o At what point will the fee increase stop? Issue with student government – only 1 year for each executive
  - o Can we postpone this? No, BOG needs a report immediately on whether or not we have a few
  - o Stipends were not increased? Not yet, but we are working with the university on this issue
  - o Course councils and departments also have responsibilities and are encouraged to talk to the university as well
  - o It is in our constitution to have the ability to approve this up to 5%
    - **Motion passes**

**16.3** WHEREAS the GSA mediates a Health and Dental plan on behalf of its membership,

WHEREAS the current premiums of the Health and Dental are appropriate for the level of Health and Dental claims made by the GSA membership,

BE IT RESOLVED that the Health plan premium remain at \$186.80, and the Dental plan premium remain at \$153.71 for the 2013-2014 school year.

- Moved: John, Sarah
  - o Leave the fee as but we still need a fee
  - o No discussion
    - **Motion passes**

**16.4** WHEREAS the University Council has guaranteed that each of the two TransformUS initiative committees will have at least one graduate student member; and

WHEREAS serving on these committees represents a substantial time commitment on the part of these volunteers, reducing the time available to perform their program related duties;

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Graduate Students Association provide an honorarium to the graduate student committee members as the equivalent of four hours of work per week for the period 01 March 2013 to 30 Nov 2013. The hourly rate shall be at minimum the University approved hourly rate for graduate students (\$17.71/hr x 4 hrs/week x 39 weeks = \$2792.76 per committee member).

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the two honoraria will be funded from the current GSA surplus, rather than from the current budget.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the graduate student committee members provide updates on committee activity to the Graduate Students Association Course Council at regularly scheduled Course Council Meetings.

- Moved: Sarah, John
- Anyone who has been nominated has volunteered. The meeting time for this is 4 hours a week as announced for these meetings, this does not include any additional preparation time required for this commitment
- Friendly amendment:
- Be it further resolved that the student represents all graduate students
- 
- Not fair that GSA fees being used to pay for this when not all students are represented (due to no course councilors) – GSA represents ALL graduate students
- 

(Notes for PEGASUS: 39 weeks, current pay rate 17.71 per hour, 2 hours per week => 39 week total = 1381.38, 4 hours per week => 39 week total = 2762.76)

- Motion to table: david, liz
  - o Motion carried
  - o Decision will be retroactive for March 1<sup>st</sup> if this passes in March

**17.0 Next Course Council meeting: Thursday March 21<sup>st</sup>, 5 – 7PM**

**18.0 Adjournment**  
**Sarah, Jessica**

## **FEBRUARY EXECUTIVE REPORTS**

### **1) VP STUDENT AFFAIRS**

Oral report

### **2) VP OPERATIONS and ADMINISTRATION**

- No new unusual activities in the commons
- The university has installed blinds in one of the offices due to a safety concern
- Bursaries applications are being accepted and deadline is March 1<sup>st</sup>

### **3) VP ACADEMICS**

#### **Update on Ombudsperson**

-The USSU VP Academic and I have drafted a petition form to request of The University of Saskatchewan, Vice-President Student Affairs for the creation of an Ombudsperson office at the University of Saskatchewan. The finalized petition form will be emailed to course councilors. Please distribute it to your students. This will help to inform the university whether or not this is an important issue.

#### **Update on Student-Supervisor Relationship**

-Earlier in the year I began a project to try to get roles/expectations of students and supervisors more standardized across academic units at the university as well as more publicized. Ideally, expectations for students, supervisors, supervisory committee, and graduate chairs would be laid out in each units graduate student handbook. Many of the student cases that I handle are rooted in unclear expectations and/or a poor student-supervisor relationship. It is my thought that some of these conflicts could be mitigated through better dialogue about roles and expectations.

-Progress on this item stopped in November due to the resignation of the individual from CGSR with whom I was working. I have had a discussion with Trever Crowe, Associate Dean, CGSR on 2/27/13 about next steps to finish the project.

#### **Call for Volunteers**

- There are three academic hearings which I cannot attend this month:
  - March 5, 10:30 - 12:00, E160
  - March 7, 2:00 - 4:00 PM, E160
  - Time and date TBD, possibly March 11

### **4) VP FINANCE**

An updated budget is on the web. We have received the GSA fees from the Winter term, at this point I estimate our revenue from GSA fees will be \$172 000, rather than the \$167 000 initially projected.

### **5) ABORIGINAL LIAISON**

- AIGSC is hosting the event - Aboriginal Women in Leadership Panel – March 11, 2013
- AIGSC is hosting the event - Aboriginal Graduate Studies Panel – March 12, 2013
- AIGSC Chair and Omeasoo Butt to speak at April event related to Idle No More Series Events on Campus
- Selection of Aboriginal Graduate Students to attend ISC Banquet – March 15, 2013



- Assist in coordination and planning of March 8, 2013 Gala
- Assist in ticket sales and fund raising for Gala event
- Ordered print materials and awards for event

#### **6) VP EXTERNAL**

**International Activities Committee** : The committee is in the process of developing a campus wide investigation to evaluate internationalization of the University (Study Abroad agreements, international partners in research, international students etc.).

**Graduate Awards Gala:** Over 150 tickets have been sold. We have support from 10+ departments in table purchases as well as from CCGSR. We have also received sponsorship in the form of silent auction donations from University partners as well as from community businesses and local artists.

Award recipients will be notified Friday March 1st.

Last day for Early Bird ticket price \$25.00 is Friday March 1st. Tickets for the Awards Gala will cost \$35.00 after Friday March 1st.

Speakers list for Gala:

- Minister of Advanced Education, Don Morgan
- President of the University, Ilene Busch-Vishniac
- Dean of Graduate Studies, Adam Baxter-Jones

#### **7) PRESIDENT**

- Will present at the meeting