

Graduate Students' Association Course Council Meeting Minutes



**University of Saskatchewan
Thursday, January 24th, 2012
5:00 P.M - 7:00 P.M
GSA Commons**

Present: Samuel Alara, Akindamola Awujoola, David Bennett, Chris Callahan, Miranda Cary, Patrick Chasse, Brandon Demuth, Devin Ens, Lauren Erickson, Colleen Fitzpatrick, Phillip Garvey, Lisa Gaylor, Layla Gould, Gale Hagblom, Julian Hamara, Kristian Hermann, Adrian Hunt, Lara Larsen, Phillip Lashley, David Edgar Lelei, Cinnati Loi, Aaron Mackay, Cody Manchester, Wendie Marks, Samantha Purchase, Molly Patterson, Rob Perry, Sarah Purdy, Mohammad Rafati, Reanne Ridsdale, Fred Sage, Srah Sangster, Cindy Sherba, Janelle Sloychuk, Anja Sorenson, Josie Steves, Hu Wang, Toro Balazs, Muhammad Asaduzzaman, Abenga Adebayo, Omeasoo Butt, Weicheng Lian, Jon Doering, Jessica Prescott

GSA Executives:

Ehimai Ohiozebau, John McLeod, Steve Jimbo, Maily Huynh, Elizabeth O'Meara, Dylan Beach, Nicole Callihoo

1.0 Call to Order – 5:08PM

2.0 Approval of Agenda

Motion: Fred

Seconded: Brianne

3.0 Add to agenda: Sarah Purdy, seconded by Fred

Late motion introduction

WHEREAS it is the duty of the Graduate Students' Association to assess and evaluate the financial policies and activities of the U of S that affect graduate students and

WHEREAS the graduate student population has a vested interest in a healthy financial situation at the U of S for research funding, teaching and training, and workplace infrastructure and

WHEREAS the University of Saskatchewan is undertaking a transparent review of all units in the University in the form of the TransformUS and

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the GSA supports a transparent investigation into the University's financial transformation in the form of the TransformUS initiative for the prioritization and reallocation of resources.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT The Graduate Students' Association

participate in the assessment and review of the financial reforms of the University of Saskatchewan as a full participating member of the TransformUS initiative.

Approved to be added

4.0 Approval of last meeting Minutes

Moved by Fred, seconded Sarah

5.0 Ratification of new Course Councils - None

6.0 Ratification of new Course Councillors

Jiff Thomas from toxicology and Brittany godzala from kinesiology

Moved by John McLeod and seconded by Miranda Carey

7.0 Speaker from University Learning Center – Elana Geller (PAL coordinator)

- PAL is where undergrads help fellow students learn
- Wants to start a grad student section to mentor and put on these workshops
- Commitment about 5 hours a week, things such as talking to advisors to writing at a graduate level, etc.
- Asking for a show of hands of how many people would be interested – many hands raised
- Asked if students are interested in participating in this
- Info coming in the future about the program
- Questions: if there are some ideas from grad students, is there room for collaboration on this – could be possible, would just need to be worked out
- How can GSA increase its profile on this project?
 - Not really extend the profile, just a way to show association if GSA helps promote it
- Is a volunteer position – does not limit the work you do if you are on a scholarship, there is an honorarium but its not guaranteed
- Potential new programming through University Learning Center’s Peer-Assisted Learning Program

8.0 VP Student Affairs Report

- Following up on residential rate increase
- Meeting with university president – says that rent should not be increased until stipend is reviewed
- stipend review is being looked at
- Question: who is sitting on this committee? – committee not yet formed, but we hope to hear more about it and will make recommendations as needed as the acting dean of CGSR works towards this
- Would recommendation take effect immediately? - No

9.0 VP External Report

No report – will discuss Gala later

10.0 Aboriginal Liaison Report

- Call for Aboriginal Graduate presenters – deadline Feb 1, 2013 – related to Aboriginal Achievement Week during March 11-15, 2013
- Call for Posters for poster competition will be released soon (Aboriginal Graduates and/or Aboriginal research) – related to Aboriginal Achievement Week
- Call for Aboriginal Graduates involvement on the AIGSC

- Call for Aboriginal Graduates interested in speaking about their program/department to Aboriginal undergraduates and encourage continuing their education – related to Aboriginal Achievement Week
- AIGSC position on GSA funding priorities will be provided at the meeting

11.0 VP Academics Report

- Documents on different advocacy positions and what other universities in the U15 are taking
- take this info back and provide GSA with feedback on what positions are needed
- Question: What is GSA's relationship with the PAL program? - She came up recently as she is curious to see why the PAL didn't have a grad portion to it
- Comment: Want to see GSA's mark on it
- Comment: PAL doing it is a relief to us as they become source of the money and not GSA

12.0 VP Operations and Administration Report

- Good food box was moderately successful but due to it being right before the holidays, there was a low number of orders and students that did order preferred more locally sourced items and indicated they would not order again
- Question: Use of the common space – wondering if the use of private events are taking up valuable grad student space – this issue is noted and will be more carefully monitored but there are currently no policies that limit the use of commons to private (student or non-student events)
- Reply: council can make amendments to make limits

13.0 VP Finance Report

- we are making money off of these bookings and have a surplus
- No new updates on the accountant

14.0 Presidents' report

- glad the use of the commons is being debated
- addressing the need to improve our profile – yes, it is and we are working on this
- emphasized the graduate funding, we are using the national average for the U15 for this as recommendation
- addressing graduate retention program – will be meeting with minister of advance education – invite to course council to attend, 10AM Feb 8 at the GSA commons and ask questions. He will also attend our gala
- we need representations for the dean advisory council in arts and science
- Need representation at the president's award committee

15.0 Questions and answers

- no additional questions

16.0 Motions:

WHEREAS the GSA is not planning on hosting a GSA Conference this year, and

WHEREAS the original budget for the GSA Conference was \$2500.00, which would otherwise be unspent,

WHEREAS the GSA is planning on hosting the first annual Graduate Awards Gala in March of this year,

BE IT RESOLVED that Course Council authorize the GSA Executive to spend \$2500.00 towards unexpected expenses for the Graduate Awards Gala.

Moved by John, seconded by Liz

- Normally this fund is used for the conference but over the last few years, the prestige and size of the conference has decreased and for this year we will use this year to restructure it for next year
- Gala has 450 spaces and tickets are being sold for \$25. Since this is not in the budget, we need course council to approve this – need to sell 400 tickets to break even
- Hoping this will be budget neutral
- Comment: may be a good idea to do a biannual event (1 year conference, 1 year gala)
- Question: who is the gala open to? Grad students only, or others (spouses, etc) allowed? – grad students, alumni and guests.
- How many people have benefitted with the gala and awards and what is the problem with the conference?
- In the past, the conference was opened nationally, so it would be ideal for us to go back to that stage - Idea is to create a procedure for the conference so that in the future, it can be planned much earlier and be a larger event
- CGSR has slowly lost interest in the diminishing level of the conference
- When did this decline for the conference begin? - In the past it was tried to advertise nationally, there was very minimal bite from other locations
- Use this money towards the planning of the next conference?
 - o Moved by sarah purdy to table the motion, seconded by Rob Perry
- John: urge council to vote yes or no, no point in delaying it
- Discussion about whether gala is needed or not
 - o Nomination for awards shows more prestige than a conference presentation
 - o In the future, this discussion should occur before the decisions are made
 - o Conference used for networking, a gala can be used for the same purpose
 - o Can we borrow this money from the overflow instead of using it from the conference fund? – same pool
- Call to question by Omeasoo: motion passed

16.1 BE IT RESOLVED THAT the wording of the U-PASS referendum question is acceptable to Course Council.

Background

At the beginning of Term 1, graduate students started expressing their concerns why they had to pay minimum of \$242 per term for bus services. They wanted a reduced rate. The GSA advised that in line with the GSA policies (Policy 2, Elections and Referenda), at least 50 signatories of graduate students would be required to call for a referendum. On September 28, 2012, some graduate students came to the Course Council meeting with a written petition demanding a referendum. The written petition was signed by over 100 graduate students. They also submitted the names of over 200 graduate students who signed online petition demanding a referendum.

During the meeting, the President promised to lead a committee that would negotiate with Saskatoon Transit and come up with “the question” that would go through a referendum. An eight person committee was formed that negotiated with Saskatoon Transit. The process of the negotiation lead to a survey in November, 2012 and culminated in getting a quote from Saskatoon Transit.

The Referendum Question

Graduate Students' Association (GSA) entered negotiation with Saskatoon Transit to negotiate a U-PASS deal for graduate students. In order to determine if the U-PASS is desirable to graduate students and if the GSA should sign an agreement with the City of Saskatoon, the GSA will be holding a referendum on this issue on Wednesday, February 27, 2013. If the referendum passes, the GSA will enter an agreement with the City of Saskatoon subject to City Council approval. If the referendum fails, then the UPASS issue may not be visited again until there is popular student demand in the future.

Only students registered in the College of Graduate Studies will be eligible for this UPASS. The referendum question is: 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. With a yearly consumer price index adjustment.

Students in one or more of the following categories will be eligible for exemption. Those:

- (1) Living outside the city limits;
- (2) Living in on-campus housing (Ogle Hall, Voyageur Place Residence, Lutheran Theological Seminary and St. Andrew's);
- (3) Enrolled exclusively in distance education courses; and
- (4) Unable to ride bus due to a disability

Motions to Course Council

(1) In line with GSA Policies (Policy 2, Elections and Referendum) and Constitution, Section 13.1.7 to 13.1.8: "13.1.7 The placement of all questions in the referendum shall be subject to Course Council approval. Normally Course Council shall approve any question that has garnered sufficient signatures in support; however, Course Council shall retain the authority to reject any question where it finds compelling reason to believe that the passage of the question would constitute a violation of the mission or operating statement of the GSA; a violation of law; a contravention of University policy; a violation of contractual, financial or other obligations undertaken by the GSA; or would otherwise pose a significant threat to the best interests of the GSA or be injurious to the welfare of the graduate students at the University of Saskatchewan. Any such rejection shall require a two-thirds (2/3) vote in support from all voting members of Course Council.

13.1.8 The wording of all questions to be placed on any GSA referendum shall be subject to the approval of the Course Council. Course Council shall have the authority to remove or amend misleading statements or extraneous promotional content; correct errors of fact; and edit technical errors of spelling and grammar. Course Council shall not have the authority to fundamentally change the substance of a question"

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the wording of the U-PASS referendum question is acceptable to Course Council.

Motion: David, seconded Dylan

- Many students had asked for a upass referendum, a committee was established to meet and negotiate with the city for the best price
- Josie speaking against due to numbers (differential between undergrads and grad students), there can be lobbying efforts, City councillors may be willing to talk lobby for a equal price, VP external should be on board for lobbying more; Should push back, would mean that couldn't be implemented for September but maybe at a later date
- Worried about the consumer price index adjustment rate – done by stats Canada, the choice of which one is use can vary the price
- The contract for this is the same as USSU
- Students should have right to make the decision with what is presented
- Does this included research hour for exemptions: if not doing research on campus, then they will be exempt, we will need to clarify the living in Saskatoon, not on campus but registered as a grad student
- Are there attempts to negotiate a different rate for students using this for other transit times (not peak)
- Exemptions spelt wrong, if we don't take this now, we can renegotiate in 1 year
- After the trial, we can lower the price
- **Point of order:** 1 year condition is not in the wording
 - Friendly motion by Josie, seconded by Dylan to add: **the 1 year trial period commencing in September 2013**
- Concerns about other students in residence and the summer term
- Reminder that we are not voting on having the UPASS and voting on the wording of this question
- Course council may have the power to limit it to just 2 instead of 3 terms
- This price is the same as other institutions have in the city (ie: the Siast)
- Transit is committed to running this at a revenue neutral method
- Committee contends the comment that not enough work was putting this into this
- Use of this would increase ridership for the city, will improvement be made by transit?
- More routes will be added, and busses purchased, improvements are being made by the transit system
- Numbers of grad students use bus passes – an overwhelming number of students answered the bus pass survey (over 1500) stated they already buy the \$243 bus pass
- This may discriminate against other modes of transport such as biking or walking
- Appeal by a bus pass user to let the students decide
- Has work gone into if there is a procedural contractual loophole that grad students can benefit from the USSU contract?
- The survey wasn't a random sample, a voluntary sample
- Comparing to the USSU = 50 000 vs. 3000 GSA
- Motion to call question: Sarah, seconded by Rob - passed

16.2 BE IT RESOLVED THAT the proposed referendum date of Wednesday, February 27, 2013 satisfies the requirement.

In line with the GSA Policy 2.2.1.1 “Course Council shall ratify the dates of GSA

referenda at least a month before a referendum is held”

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the proposed referendum date of Wednesday, February 27, 2013 satisfies the requirement.

- Motion by Rianne and David
- No discussion
- Motion passed

16.3 BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Graduate Students’ Association take the position such cuts are not in the best interests of graduate students and therefore speak against any cuts

16.3.1 AND FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Graduate Students’ Association demand that the cuts to academic services be immediately suspended and that the University administration, in conjunction with GSA representatives, immediately undertake a transparent investigation into the University’s financial investment strategies, and then if appropriate investigate alternative revenue and cost control schemes which do not adversely affect the interests of students.

Motion Re: University of Saskatchewan Cuts

Motion: Laura, seconded Patrick

- Arts have lost secretaries, another round of cuts in the university, another round of cuts in April, wants GSA to say that we are opposed to the cuts

Discussion:

- We are not responsible for support staff, they have their own union, it is not our responsibility to stand up to them
- We are not in a good shape to tell university how to run their finances, university will go ahead anyways, we should look to getting involved with that instead
- Suggestion for motion:
- Cuts to academic programs directly affects us, we are not representing the job loss but to the services that is lost
- University have said that they are not taking students into consideration
- The utransform is assuming that they are treating students as equal
- Suffering from severe administration costs
- Our position should be not to touch academic stuff
- Agreement that with the deficit, cuts will be needed
- GSA should take position that cuts are in administrative and not academic – task force will include students as per email sent
- The wording is to force us to take a stance
- Voting: role call vote
 - o Y=20
 - o N=14

- Abstain=2 (John McLeod noted)

17.0 Motion

WHEREAS it is the duty of the Graduate Students' Association to assess and evaluate the financial policies and activities of the U of S that affect graduate students and

WHEREAS the graduate student population has a vested interest in a healthy financial situation at the U of S for research funding, teaching and training, and workplace infrastructure and

WHEREAS the University of Saskatchewan is undertaking a transparent review of all units in the University in the form of the TransformUS and

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the GSA supports a transparent investigation into the University's financial transformation in the form of the TransformUS initiative for the prioritization and reallocation of resources with the participation of a graduate student association (GSA) representation on the Transform US taskforce.

Motion: Sarah Purdy, seconded laura

- Amended with the new information that university council just sent out
- Discussion:
- Friendly amendment? cuts be made to administrative and not academic – this amendment would close our options
- Response: would be assuming that all academic programs are essential – this is not friendly
- Motion to amend: That if cuts should be made, the GSA should support administrative cuts over faculty
- Discussion on this: there are 2 task force: 1 is admin one is academic
- This process is intended to include people to minimize conflict of interests, if taking this, we are walking in with a conflict of interest
- Not all faculty are being productive so we shouldn't limit ourselves to that
- Wording in resolution should say graduate student not just GSA
- Call to question of amendment: motion failed

Motion voting: motion passes

17.0 Next Course Council meeting: Thursday, February 28th 5 – 7PM

18.0 Adjournment

19.0 Fred, David