

Graduate Students' Association GSA Council Meeting Minutes



**University of Saskatchewan
Friday, December 13th, 2013
5:00 P.M - 7:00 P.M
GSA Commons**

Attendees: Abdel-Salam Mohamed Rani, Amir Abolhassani, Mostafa Aghbolaghy, ASM Atiqul Islam, Akindamola Awujoola, Suranjan Bairagi, Zak Baker, Edward K.P. Bam, David Bennett, Robin Brown, Nicole Callihoo, Manuel Chavez-Ortiz, Rajat Chakravarty, Tara Chambers, Dmitriy Chesnakov, Heemel Datta, Ranjan Datta, Cody David, Seth Dueck, Priyangi Edirisinghe, Kaitlyn Frolek, Andrew Frank, Brittany Gackosa, Philip Garvey, Federica Giannelli, Layla Gould, Amanda Guy, Kim Harrison, Kristian Hermann, Nicole House, Roanne Keller, Sahtout Khalil, Mark Kroeker, Carla Labarrere, Laura Larsen, Kayla Lindenback, Cinnati Loi, Kendra Merier, Jason Mercer, Ana Maldonado, Cody Manchester, Janna Moats, Davood Ghadiri Maghadlam, Stephanie McMillan, Robert Nicks, Malhar Padhee, Krisztina Pandur, Rob Perry, Nathan Pham, Isaac Pratt, Natalie Preston, Martin Prusinkiewicz, Sarah Purdy, Kelly Richardson, Fedir Razumenko, Christine Rosser, Fred Sage, Sams Sadat, Sarah Sangster, Kumar Selvaraj, Austen Smith, Josie Steeves, Balazs Toro, Kurt Woytiuk, Qin Xiang, Zixuan Zhao

Executives:

President, Ehimai Ohiozebau
VP Academic, Izabela Vlahu
VP External, Steve Jimbo
VP Student Affairs, Reanne Ridsdale
VP Operations and Communications, Kiri Staples
VP Finance, Mohammad Rafati
Aboriginal Liaison/Rotating Chair, Nicole Callihoo

1.0 Call to Order - 5:10PM

2.0 Approval of Agenda

Motion 1 – to approve agenda

Motioned by David, seconded by Sarah

Motion carried

3.0 Approval of last GSA Council Meeting Minutes

Motion 2 - to approve minutes

Motioned by Britany, Seconded by Izabela

Motion carried

4.0 Presentation by Pauline Melis, Assistant Provost – TransformUS report

Motion 3 - to consider informality

Motioned by Josie, seconded by Ehimai

Motion carried

Report on TransformUS

- Similar process was done in 1990
- Planning is about moving institution towards vision, goals direction – what we have is series of reports that there are choices to make that could pull us towards that
- Overarching goal is to secure future financial sustainability
 - Projected deficit in 2015, if we do nothing, is \$44.5 million
 - Wanted to know what we could do about this
- 7 strategies identified to address operating budget challenge, one of which is TransformUS
- We have been preparing timeline
 - November 30th report of Task Forces were due
 - Week period for President to review, then released to University community
 - Currently getting feedback on this report
 - Student town hall has been arranged, we encourage you to attend
 - Students can write into the blog, attend the President's special meeting, or attend meetings held by college
- Third phase – analysis and implementation plan development
- Roughly 60% of resources on support side, rest on academic side, to save 5% of budget
- Middle of April plan will be shared with campus to begin the process of action
- Looking at a series of recommendations – in order to make good decisions, we need good input, so now is the time for people to engage
- Lots of information on website

Discussion

- Question: Found a lot of “not enough information” from faculties in report – was their confusion on their end and is there anything that can be done to rectify that?
 - Task Force members were identified in April/May – one of first things they did was establish criteria and develop programs list, then from this looked at type of questions they would ask campus community
 - Led to the development of templates
 - Program prioritization is about individual programs or services – when we look at programs and services, we are now looking at university from different lens than we are used to
 - There was a short window to fill in templates
 - One of the elements of this process is about the resources internally to the institution and they’re competing for priority, not about quality or competing with other institutions
 - Templates were filled out with the information they had
 - Part of job of analysis and implementation is to verify the information they received
 - We will be going back to fix or alter templates - no decision will be made on the basis of these templates

- Question: who will actually be making the final decision? My concern is that these task forces did a lot of work, but now the President can just cut things. That doesn’t seem democratic.
 - There are two different groups – support services and academic programs group, which has a very different program structure, which means we must follow University of Saskatchewan Act
 - The President on her own cannot cut anything on the academic side
 - President can initiate, then Council and Senate must agree
 - On administrative side, the management has the complete authority to decide organizational structure
 - President will receive implementation plan – she will have to initiate through proper procedures and follow collective agreements

- Question: Concern about feedback – after January the process will just involve senior administration, faculty heads, deans, but will there be another opportunity for students to provide feedback once plan is in place? There is only so much feedback we can give on recommendations, which may be different from what is implemented.
 - Simply put, we don't know yet
 - There is confusion on campus around who has the right to make decisions and what that looks like – process so far has been open, consultative and transparent, and will continue to be this way
 - Not sure what the plan will be once faculty, deans, etc. receive the plan, we are still working on this process
 - There are student representatives on Council and on committees of Council
- Question: Concerns I am hearing here is about negative side of process. What if we are observant of this university? What is happening to the reputation of the university? I have been hearing concerns that we are getting a bad reputation because it's perceived as a bad process. Transparency is great, but can be damaging if there is too much publicity. Also, when it comes to academic side, how much sense does it make to do reviews that aren't peer reviews?
 - Most other areas in Canada have had significant budget cuts in higher education
 - There is a lot of changes that will happen because revenues aren't growing fast enough and costs are growing
 - Ontario is being mandated by government to look at ways universities can prioritize their programs, which means they will likely go through a similar process in the next year - in this way, we are ahead of the curve because very few universities have done prioritization
 - We have been hearing very positive things about Saskatchewan – people are learning from us
 - It will be very difficult in many respects, but it is the way forward because we have too many programs

- External review is a hallmark on both the academic and the service side – often you would call in outsiders who seem to know the area. This was quite different because it was so internally focused.
- Quite possibly in further analysis it will be helpful to do some of that external comparative work to have that be a part of the decision-making
- There is limited appetite for additional reviews – we need to make some choices and move on
- Difference between normal review and program prioritization is that normal review isn't about resources but about quality

Motion 4 - to reconsider formality

Motioned by Izabela, Seconded by Ehimai

Motion carried

Motion 5 - to recess for 5 minutes

Motioned by Sarah, Seconded by David

Motion carried

5.0 Ratification of new Academic Councils

Department of Archaeology and Anthropology

Motion 6 – to ratify new academic councils

Motioned by David, Seconded by Cinatti

Motion carried

6.0 Ratification of new Academic Representatives

MD Nazmul Hasan (Computer Science), Natalie Preston (Animal and Poultry Science), Manishankar Mondal (Computer Science), Linzi Williamson (Psychology), Edward Bam (SENS), Amy Pitman (Physics and Engineering Physics), Sara Worsham (Geology), Kumar Sewaray (Biology)

Point of information: Make sure you have not reached max number of alternates at beginning of meeting

Motion 7 – to ratify academic representatives

Motioned by Nicole, Seconded by Cody

7.0 Ratification of new Social Groups

No new social groups

8.0 Executive Reports

8.1 VP Student Affairs Report

8.2 VP Operations and Communications Report

- Looking for new Chair – please contact me if interested
- Updated policies have been put on website

8.3 VP Academics Report

- GSA Congress on March 6-8th – please submit an abstract if you are interested
- Is a conference open to all graduate students

8.4 VP Finance Report

- Signed agreement with ISAAC – GSA will contribute \$6,000 to ISAAC Travel Award, used only for graduate student travel – ISAAC will also use other funding sources to cover awards for graduate students
- Signed contract with auditor
- Met with Health and Dental representatives, have another meeting in January to consider any changes in the future

8.5 Aboriginal Liaison Report

- Met with President to discuss AIGSC priorities – if you want a copy of these priorities let us know
- Aboriginal Leadership Student Group – making sure we coordinate on issues, events, etc.
- Potluck in early December that went well
- Have another rotating chair coming in and one leaving

8.6 VP External Report

- Setting up Gala Awards Committee – still asking for participation, will involve about 5 hours in January

8.7 Presidents' Report

- Met with Minister of Advanced Education this morning on issue of Graduate Retention Program – he assured us he will consider our request
 - We also invited him to our Awards Gala

- Awards Gala – has had positive responses from some sponsors, which may reduce costs of ticket
- TransformUS Report – I am on the committee to represent graduate students, so let me know what you think about it
- Have invited Provost to next meeting to discuss Graduate Review
- Thank you to Chair for all of her work

8.8 Questions regarding Executive Reports

- Comment about e-mail communication – because we don't know who the e-mail was sent to, we don't know if we should forward it or not. In the future we could include who the e-mail was sent to.
- Is important to have at least four people on Awards Committee because without it, we won't have the event – encourage people to volunteer.
- If you want to volunteer for the Conference, either respond to the e-mail that was sent or talk to the VP Academic
- Will determine UPASS referendum question in January – VP Operations and President will ensure proper communications is used so that when people make a decision, they are doing so with a full understanding of the issue

9.0 Standing Committee Reports

9.1 Budget Committee (No report)

9.2 Bursary Selection Committee (No report)

9.3 Elections and Referenda Committee (No report)

9.4 Constitution Revision Committee (No report)

9.5 Code of Ethics Committee (No report)

9.6 Travel Grant Committee (No report)

9.7 Gala Committee (No report)

9.8 Questions regarding Standing Committee Reports

10.0 Special Reports

11.0 Old Business

12.0 New Business

13.0 Announcements

- Pick up your UPASS

14.0 Next GSA Council Meeting: January 23rd, 2014

15.0 Adjournment

Motion 8 – to adjourn

Motioned by Steve, Seconded by Fred

Motion carried