

Graduate Students' Association GSA Council Meeting Minutes



**University of Saskatchewan
Thursday February 27th, 2014
5:00 P.M - 7:00 P.M
GSA Commons**

*****Attendees:**

Hafiz Faizan Ahmed, David Bennett, Nicole Callihoo, Manuel Chavez-Ortiz, Rajat Chakravarty, Heemel Datta, Ranjan Datta,, Seth Dueck, Priyangi Edirisinghe, Andrew Frank, Philip Garvey, Layla Gould, Amanda Guy, Kristian Hermann, Nicole House, Daniel Karran, Roanne Kelln, Laura Larsen, Kayla Lindenback, Kendra Merier, Stephanie McMillan, Nathan Pham, Isaac Pratt, Natalie Preston, Martin Prusinkiewicz, Sarah Purdy, Fedir Razumenko, Christine Rosser, Fred Sage, Sarah Sangster, Kumar Selvaraj, Cindy Sherbac, Austen Smith, Balazs Toro, Zixuan Zhao

*****Please note that as the sign-in sheet for alternate councillors was misplaced, those that attended this meeting are not included in this list.**

Executives:

President, Ehimai Ohiozebau
VP Student Affairs, Reanne Ridsdale
VP Operations and Communications, Kiri Staples
VP Finance, Mohammad Rafati
Aboriginal Liaison, Omeasoo Butt
VP External, Steve Jimbo

Regrets:

VP Academic, Izabela Vlahu

1.0 Call to Order 5:08

2.0 Approval of Agenda

Motion 1 - to add item to agenda

Motioned by Laura, seconded by Christian

WHEREAS all members of the TransformUS committees, including the representatives for the graduate students of the University of Saskatchewan, were required to sign confidentiality agreements which inherently prevented the process from being fully transparent, thus requiring graduate students to wait for the finalized TransformUS reports and public consultation process to get a fully developed perspective on TransformUS and

WHEREAS students and others are continuing to raise questions about the TransformUS process, indicating a need for additional time to discuss TransformUS and

WHEREAS TransformUS at the University of Saskatchewan was initiated as a response to a projected budget deficit and the University of Saskatchewan administration and financial services have not clearly explained how this projected deficit has occurred and

WHEREAS the TransformUS process did not evaluate programs based on quality, as specified on page 5 of the Report of the Academic Program Transformation Task Force, which is likely to result in severe damage to the reputation of the University of Saskatchewan including all graduate programs, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the graduate students of the University of Saskatchewan, as represented by their Academic Councils and elected Executive of the Graduate Students' Association, have lost confidence in the TransformUS process and no longer support TransformUS.

Discussion

- Undergrads and USSU have discussed TransformUS and we encourage graduate students to join this discussion
- Think that there is a better way to promote debate on this issue
- Think it's important to discuss this now because we don't have graduate students represented in the next phase of the TransformUS process

Motion fails

3.0 Approval of last GSA Council Meeting Minutes

Motion 2 – to approve previous GSA Council meeting minutes

Motioned by Reanne, seconded by Rajat

4.0 Presentation - Studentcare

Motion 3 - to move formality

Motioned by Fred, seconded by Seth

- Action plan created two years ago – point of this was two things: to look at the financial model of the plan and to look at the actual service being provided
- First part of this action plan was to take plan to market to ensure it's not being over-quoted, etc.
- Negotiated a reduction in premiums
- Second part of plan was to ask users what was important to them via a survey – there was strong support for the plan in general, but there were areas identified for improvement
- This year GSA added \$250 to the dental portion of the plan and \$125 towards glasses and contacts
- From here we will continue to review the usage and assessing the benefits
- Plan fees over last seven years has stayed the same
- However in the past, claims were not as high as we expected, so there is some room for improvement
- There has been a 19% increase in claims since this time last year – vision category in particular, 59% increase in dental claims
- The more claims that go onto the plan, the more the plan ends up costing – quotes are given yearly based on financial analysis, this analysis started recently
- Current plan fee per member is \$340.51 – difference between the fee and premium is to provide reserve for ups and downs in market, prices, etc.
- Based on the increased usage, premium will increase – if fee doesn't increase, difference will be taken from reserve fund
- Role of Studentcare is to ensure plan is sustainable – recommend small increase (5%) and subsidize the effect on reserve fund

Discussion

- Question: Just to clarify, the increase has been in the past few months, so everything going forward is just projections?

- We do our own calculations, and insurance is doing theirs, so when we come to the table we are able to bring them down to our level when we meet at the table
- Things could go down, but they could also go up
- Question: You mentioned that fee was flat over past several years, was this because the claims weren't as high?
 - Yes – we do have to make our best guess as to what the claims will be, and in the past they haven't been as high as we expected, so now that they are increasing, the insurance company needs to make its profit
 - There are areas that are more underused, but the things that drive the cost of the plan are the areas that are more well-used – don't want to talk about benefit-saving now though, because we have asked graduate students about this and they would prefer fee increase than changing the plan
- Question: What percentage increase would cover the entire difference?
 - It would be enough to have to go to referendum
- Question: Can you clarify how the fees are set?
 - The model you have with the insurance company is insured – if they are at a loss, they can't take that money from you
 - Their calculations are made to ensure that they don't have a loss
 - Don't want premium to surpass the fee, because that is when you have to start changing benefits
- Question: Who is maintaining the reserve fund? Why isn't it gaining interest?
 - The GSA maintains it – it is in a standard chequing account, so if you want to make a motion next month you can move to change it to a low risk interest based account

5.0 Presentation - University Library Researcher Workshop

- We have nine presentations this year
- Our first three lecture series have covered a diversity of topics, such as comprehensive literature review, government documents, patents, etc.
- Average of 17 people participating in the session

- Wanted to address topics that we knew were of interest to graduate students and faculty, but faculty may not have time to let the library present
- One is how to do a comprehensive literature review – we feel there is a real need for this
- We want feedback from you on whether we are on the right track with these topics and if there are holes remaining
- Some sessions we try to keep because they have high attendance
- We have also tried to experiment with time to ensure as many people as possible can attend
- Any ideas for topics that you would like to see?
 - Citation management software?
 - This is worth your while in the long run
- What is the best ways to communicate sessions like this?
 - PAWS announcement
 - Mass e-mail
 - For others, mass e-mails are just ignored
 - Including this in orientation day would help
 - Posters
 - USSU tv ads
 - Branding could help – a lot of people think they should already now this
 - ISSAC website
 - Changing timeframe to around noon might help because many TA's start in the afternoon
- Website – www.libguides.ca/LibraryResearcherSeries

Motion 4 - to return to formality

Motioned by David, seconded by Rajat

6.0 Ratification of new Academic Councils - School of Public Health Student Association

Motion 5- to approve new academic councils

Motioned by Rajat, seconded by Ehimai

7.0 Ratification of new Academic Representatives

William (Andrew) Bonner (School of Public Health), Thepikaa Varathavajan (School of Public Health), Natasha Sebastian (School of Public Health), Karrie Hammond-Collins (School of Public Health), Vithusha Ravirajan (School of Public Health), Kim Davy (School of Public Health), Jessica Ratcliffe (English)

Motion 6 – to approve new academic representatives

Motioned by Rajat, seconded by David

8.0 Ratification of new Social Groups

9.0 Executive Reports

9.1 VP Student Affairs Report (Report attached)

- Two job postings (in report)
- Reminder to purchase Gala tickets
- Childcare expansion project – board of directors project has expressed concern that they don't want to fund new capital project, but President wants to see this built during her time
- If you want to come to me with ideas we can bring to the board, let me know

9.2 VP Operations and Communications Report (Report attached)

- Overview of Referendum communications
- Encourage students to send items related to student events for our website

9.3 VP Academics Report (Report attached)

- Overview given by President

9.4 VP Finance Report (Report attached)

- Attended several meetings
- Received deadline from fee review committee regarding GSA fees, but had to get extension (until tomorrow)
- In the revenue section of the budget – we have surpassed expectations for bookings, so I recommend we use this surplus for equipment
- Need to approve budget in AGM – if any of you have suggestions for next year, let me know

9.5 Aboriginal Liaison Report (Report attached)

- New chair was unable to make it tonight, but she has been very busy

- In effort to recruit people for next year, we offered free Gala tickets to Aboriginal students who are continuing next year – still have one or two more tickets
- Aboriginal Student Centre fired manager last year, so they are now looking for someone with a new vision and have had a lot of applications
- Looking for separate space within the student centre for Aboriginal graduate students
- Aboriginal achievement week starting March 10th – many different events, we are hosting a screening of the 8th Fire series

9.6 VP External Report (Report attached)

- Interactive workshop on internationalizing teaching and learning – tomorrow at ISAAC offices, if anyone wants to attend let me know
- Organizing second annual GSA Awards Gala – had a lot of nominations, committee went through these, and awards will be presented at Gala – tickets can be bought from GSA Executives or at GSA Commons
- In Ottawa attending the National Graduate Caucus AGM – discussed childcare, student fees, etc.

9.7 Presidents' report (Report attached)

- Less than half of course councillors have bought tickets for GSA Gala – encourage you to come and enjoy the night together

Motion 7- to extend meeting by 30 minutes

Motioned by Sarah, seconded by Reanne

9.8 Questions regarding Executive Reports

- Question: Could you clarify – you say students are represented on all governing bodies, but we don't have student representations on PCIP?
 - I don't consider PCIP a governing body – today I advocated at University Council that graduate students be represented within all PCIP
- Question: Why hasn't TransformUS been brought up at GSA Council since December? What is its' position?

- I haven't said that the GSA supports TransformUS, I expressed the conviction that I represent the interests of graduate students, and based on my best judgements I would support a process that doesn't affect the pockets of graduate students
- Question: There is a contrast between the President's report on TransformUS and VP Academic's report on the roundtable meeting. The President supported the TransformUS process at the University Council meeting. Why was this done without consultation?
 - The President voted against non-confidence at the University Council – this is different from supporting the process
 - Any concerns that the GSA members have, once approved by the Council, I will bring forward
- Question: Why did you state that TransformUS supports graduate students there were graduate student programs that were in low quintiles?
 - Preamble of TransformUS Report states general support for more graduate student funding
 - If cuts that affect graduate students go to Council, I will oppose that
- Question: has the audit been conducted? Has the timeline been reassessed?
 - They are still requesting information from us
 - No specific time period, but delays were expected – don't expect it
- Question: Is there part of the transition plan that will make sure the audit continues in the future?
 - Because this is the first time this has happened, it will take a long time – cost won't be so significant in the future
- Comment about President's report: states that graduate students are represented in all governing bodies, but we aren't represented on Senate or Board of Governors. Regarding the TransformUS process, no students have representation on PCIP. We had to fight to get involved in TransformUS in the first place, and fact that they haven't come to us for input makes me wonder why we should support it.

- Need to clarify facts – I am member of Senate. In my report I said students (not graduate students) were represented in all governing bodies.
- Not true to say that we weren't consulted – I am a member of several committees that has implications for financial management of University
- Point of information: previous speaker mentioned PCIP is going to be making decisions based on TransformUS recommendations. PCIP is going to look at recommendations from TransformUS and any changes they decide on will go to University Council. There is also a motion to
- Can the President correct me if I'm wrong – graduate students aren't represented on the Board of Governors.
- Point of information: once you're in the Board of Governors, when that majority vote is made, you're no longer to speak about who voted for what or why. This means the GSA is associated with any decision that the Board makes, and we lose our autonomy. This is something the GSA could revisit in the future though.

10.0 Standing Committee Reports

10.1 Budget Committee (No report)

10.2 Bursary Selection Committee (Oral report)

- Winter term bursary call for applications was open for over a month
- Committee met on February 24th – 2 volunteer academic councillors and 2 executives were on the committee
- Over 60 applications were received – a range of departments were represented, as well as both international and non-international students, and PDG, Masters and PhD students
- 15 will receive the bursary – these recipients will be notified by the end of the week
- There are a number of issues with the application and selection forms that were raised – these changes will be incorporated in the future

- Recommend looking into the cost of Adobe Acrobat so as to make application forms easier to fill out (and consequently easier to read)
- Will also be recommending that the number of volunteers required to sit on this committee be increased in light of the volume of applications
- Recently learned that we have received funding for the GSA Bursary from CGSR and will be able to give out more money in the future – given the number of applications that we receive, this is great news

10.3 Elections and Referenda Committee (No report)

10.4 Constitution Revision Committee (No report)

10.5 Code of Ethics Committee (No report)

10.6 Gala Committee (Report attached)

10.7 Questions regarding Standing Committee Reports

- Point of information on Gala report – Studentcare and others bought tickets for GSA Council, which will go to those who have represented us on committees, but if President forgets to e-mail you, please get in touch

11.0 Special Reports

11.1 U-Pass Report (Report attached)

- 66% of eligible students picked up UPASS
- 195 persons opted out
- Have dates set for next term

12.0 Old Business

13.0 New Business

13.1 Motion 8 - regarding approval of approval of Studentcare fees and contract renewal

WHEREAS Policy 4.2.1.3 gives the GSA Council powers to approve the health and dental fees and insurance provider;

WHEREAS the GSA Council (then called Course Council) voted to approve Studentnet.care as the official GSA Health and Dental administrator in 2009;

WHEREAS the GSA Executive Council unanimously voted in January 2014 to renew the five year contract with Studentcare.net;

WHEREAS the GSA health and dental fees have remain the same for the past 4 years;

WHEREAS the GSA has over \$100,000 in the health and dental surplus account;

WHEREAS the GSA has increased health and dental benefits to its members at no additional cost to graduate students;

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the GSA Council approves the 2014/2015 health and dental fees to be at the same amount as the 2013/2014 fees;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the GSA Council supports the decision of the Executive Council to renew the contract of Studentcare.net.

Motioned by Moh, seconded by Reanne

Friendly Amendment by Moh: BE IT RESOLVED THAT the GSA Council approves the 2014/2015 health and dental fees to increase at 5%;

- Studentcare presented numbers around increases in claims – we can cover the extra expenses for this year, but if we want to maintain this plan for the next year, we won't have enough money
- There are two options – to increase the fee by 5% or reduce/change the plan

Discussion

- Presentation earlier, those were projections so we don't actually know if it will cost that much and there is enough money in that reserve fund to cover this year, so we could reassess next year.
- It's a risk if we decide to change the plan later because we won't know how much money we will have next year.
- To me the numbers don't add up – it is a lot of money to get from students, plus we have the reserve.
- Points of information: student fees haven't changed in five years, yet normally the things we pay for as consumers increase 1% a year; there was already identified a 60% increase in claims; just because we have a reserve, doesn't mean we should tap it out in one year. Students asked for more funding, etc. and students used it because claims increased, so is this not giving them what they want?
- Why can't we see what other companies offer?
- Studentcare isn't our insurance provider, they work for us to look for the best deal

- I am opposed to any non-principal increase in fees, but this decision has financial implications
- I think we should wait for a more full analysis to decide on this
- The dental office on campus was opened in September – maybe there is a cause and effect
- Shouldn't the VP Finance have more time to gather information on the percentage increase?
 - I have spent several days coming up with this number
- If we use our reserves now, what happens when costs increase again the following year? We would have to go to referendum
- Do we have to decide it now? The idea is to represent the students in our department, so it would be good to discuss this with our members.
- We just got the estimation of value recently, and the deadline is tomorrow. If we don't approve the fees now, we should later sit with studentcare and try and change the plan.
- Do you have an idea of the percentage of the surplus would be needed for next year to cover the same rate?
- Projected fee increase would bring in \$76,000 dollars to subsidize what we take out of the reserve
- Studentcare recommended an increase, but she didn't say that it was dire. I think there's an error in the calculations we are making.
- When the studentcare presenter made it the recommendation about it being dire, that was in reference to changing our plan, not the fee increase
- If we don't approve the fee, yes, we would be diminishing the surplus form last fiscal year and this fiscal year

Motion to extend meeting – Sarah, Reanne

- If we can do a 5% increase this year, we can cover part of the costs of next year to avoid referendum
- Access to healthcare is a fundamental human right, and 5% seems reasonable since we haven't increased the fees in five years
- Encourage us to discuss in the future the possibility of a referendum for fee increase in the future

- Are the fees set by academic year or fiscal year?
 - By academic year

2 abstentions

Motion passes

13.2 Motion 9 - regarding tuition waiver program (see attachment)

PREAMBLE

In Saskatchewan when foster children reach the age of 18, they often are released and unable to secure funding for University. Currently the Government of Saskatchewan and the University of Saskatchewan have a program in place to pay for tuition of these students. The Government currently transfers money to the university to pay for these students. Wards of the Crown are granted tuition but are not offered housing, textbook subsidy and meal plans.

WHEREAS The University of Winnipeg has a program that waives tuition, covers fees and textbooks. The monies received from the government goes towards a meal plan, secured shelter and a monthly stipend.

WHEREAS The University of Saskatchewan Students' Union (USSU) is strongly advocating the adoption of the tuition waiver program for the University of Saskatchewan. The USSU has recommended immediate action for implementation.

WHEREAS the USSU has raised their voice in solidarity with the GSA in many issues such as the Graduate Retention Program (GRP)

BE IT RESOLVED That the GSA raises its voice in support of the tuition waiver program with the USSU.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED That the GSA recognizes the support of these students could potentially become members of the Graduate student community.

Motioned by Christian, seconded by Reanne

Friendly Amendment by Sarah – remove: BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED That the GSA recognizes the support of these students could potentially become members of the Graduate student community. To just read: BE IT RESOLVED That the GSA raises its voice in support of the tuition waiver program with the USSU.

2 Abstentions

Motion passes

13.3 Motion 10 - regarding GSA membership fee (see attachments)

WHEREAS the inflation rate based on CPI (Consumer Price Index) for Saskatchewan in 2013 was 2.3%,

WHEREAS the GSA has increased its businesses in the past year to provide a better service to its member and plan to improve those services,

WHEREAS the estimation of the budget for the next year shows more than 5% increase,

WHEREAS the membership fee is the main source of income for GSA,

WHEREAS the GSA Course Council is allowed to approve an increase in 5% of the GSA membership fee (section 4.3.3 constitution),

WHEREAS any changes to the fee should be submitted to the university by the end of February

BE IT RESOLVED that the GSA membership fee for the 2014-2015 school year be increased by 5% from 32.04 to \$33.64 for the fall and winter terms (\$67.28 in total)

Motioned by Sarah, seconded by Reanne

Friendly Amendment by Moh – “for full time students and \$18.35 to \$19.27 for the fall and winter terms (\$38.54 in total) for part-time students.”

Friendly Amendment by Ehimai – BE IT RESOLVED that the GSA membership fee for the 2014-2015 school year be increased by **5% of 2013-2014 fees**.

Discussion

- Do we know how much surplus we are going to get from this year?
- This is not about the surplus, it's about the operating budget
- Did we not raise the student fees by 5% last year?
 - We have done this every year for the past 5 years
- According to Statistics Canada, with regards to additional compulsory fees, the highest increase between this year and the previous year, the highest increase was in Saskatchewan
- There is no way we can maintain the current budget without increasing by 5% - if the fee isn't increased, there will be a cost when it comes to budget review

Quorum is lost, meeting is adjourned: 7:51PM

***Attendees at end of meeting:

Hafix Faizan Ahmed, Manuel Chavez-Ortiz, Rajat Chakravarty, Heemel Datta, Priyangi Edirisinghe, Philip Garvey, Layla Gould, Amanda Guy, Daniel Karran, Natalie Preston, Sarah Purdy, Christine Rosser, Fred Sage, Sarah Sangster, Austen Smith, Balazs Toro, Ehimai Ohiozebau, Reanne Ridsdale, Kiri Staples, Mohammad Rafati, Steve Jimbo

***Please note that as the sign-in sheet for alternate councillors was misplaced, those that attended this meeting are not included in this list.

Motion 13.3 and 13.4 are tabled.

13.4 Motion to address Graduate Student concerns regarding the TransformUS feedback and implementation stages.

WHEREAS the TransformUS formation and task force stages included Graduate student involvement and Graduate Student membership on the task forces; and

WHEREAS the students are stakeholders in the University of Saskatchewan (U of S); and

WHEREAS the Graduate Student Association (GSA) represents the Graduate Students at the U of S; and

WHEREAS the TransformUS process has passed the feedback stage and is entering the planning and implementation stages;

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the GSA Executive draft a letter regarding student concerns about the TransformUS feedback process

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the GSA Executive appeal to the Provost and President for Graduate student participation in the implementation process including Graduate student seats on the Provost's Committee for Integrated Planning, and the Board of Governors.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT comments and concerns regarding the TransformUS feedback stage should be submitted to the GSA Executive within ten days of this motion passing (Feb 27, 2014).

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT submissions shall be Carbon Copied to the Chair of the GSA Council, for transparency.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT all submissions, and the draft letter be presented to GSA Council for approval at the next GSA Council Meeting.

14.0 Next GSA Council Meeting: Thursday, March 27th, 2014

February 27th, 2014

Executive Reports

1. VP Student Affairs Report

University Child Care Update:

- Verbal Update as meeting is this week.

Friendly Reminder to Purchase your Gala Tickets!!

Job/Volunteer Opportunities:

- The University Learning Centre is starting to recruit PAL (Peer Assisted Learning) peer mentors for the 2014-2015 academic year. www.usask.ca/ulc/pal before March 23rd, 2014.
- The Mitacs Globalink program is hiring undergraduate, graduate, and post-graduate students to be Globalink Mentors. For the full GM job description please go to: www.mitacs.ca/o/2014/02/globalink-mentor. After reading the job description, please email your resume and cover letter to globalinkhire@mitacs.ca. Application deadline is Monday February 24, 2014.

2. VP Operations and Communications Report

Committees and meetings

- The bursary selection committee will be held on Monday February 24th, 2014. An oral report will be given during GSA Council meeting.

Communications

- Most of the work around communications has been related to the UPASS referendum. My role has been to work with the President and CRO to ensure that students receive all of the information they need to make an informed decision and encourage students to vote. The communication strategies have included:
 - Information on the GSA website
 - Ads on the USSU TV's around campus
 - Several e-mails to all graduate students
 - Hosting of an information session at the GSA Commons
 - Information in the January newsletter
 - Announcement on PAWS

Website

- The website continues to play an important role in communicating with our members. I encourage students and councilors alike to stay up to date with our website and send me any information about their events that they think would be relevant to the site.

Other

- Selling tickets for the GSA Gala

3. VP Academics Report

Graduate Research Conference “Curiosity”

Over the last month, the Graduate Research Conference preparation has made substantial and concrete progress and is ready to launch as scheduled on 6th to 8th of March. Presenters, audiences, and special guests are all in place to make this event flourishing. The number of registered attendees for the event hit 130, with 71 student speakers. Remarkably, the College of Engineering is participating in a creative and meaningful competitive approach with the great help of Cinnati Loi, who secured a prize pool of \$1,000 as well as judges for a competition within presenters of the College of Engineering. The best three presenters from the College of Engineering will be awarded cash prizes of \$500, \$300, and \$200 respectively. Here I would like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank Cinnati Loi for this special achievement.

Moreover, we are honoured to have Senator Lillian Dyck, Dr. Howard Woodhouse, and a representative from the Canadian Federation of Students as our distinguished keynote speakers to celebrate the GRC "Curiosity" with all participating faculty and students. Our conference booklet is ready to print. This booklet contains the greeting messages from the organization team, the GSA President, the U of S President, and Dean of CGSR; the bio of keynote speakers; and abstracts of presentations.

Dinning has been arranged to achieve quality while spending wisely. Breakfasts will be catered by Great Canadian Bagel for three days throughout the conference to make sure that all participants will start their presentation day properly energized, while Thursday and Friday lunches will be catered by EMCO Finer Foods so that our honoured guests may indulge in delicious food. The Social Night on Thursday will be held at the University Club by invitation only. We have purchased drinks and food that can be easily prepared and served by our volunteers for conference breaks, the Wine and Cheese Night on Friday and the Closing Gathering on Saturday.

As part of the conference infrastructure, we bought some electronic equipment – a projector, two microphones and receivers, and a channel mixer. This investment is not only to meet our conference needs, but also sighted far in that the GSA can reuse the equipment for future events, and potentially rent to individuals using the commons for their events.

Now the convention date is not far. The presenters are submitting their PowerPoint presentations, and we are close to an end with the preparation work "on the macro level," that is, the program and the structure. More "on the micro level" will be done with the joint effort from the organizing committee and our volunteers.

As a token of gratitude, the 10 most involved volunteers will be given a ticket for the Graduate Awards Gala.

TransformUS Round Table Discussion

A roundtable discussion was held on Feb 7 with 10 attendants including 2 professors and 8 students. Several questions arose during the discussion, the most prominent ones being what TransformUS is, and the meaning of program prioritization. Questions and concerns were highly focused on the source of the deficit, the proof of the deficit, and the unclear meaning of program prioritization of TransformUS.

Attendants questioned the claim of the deficit because the campus community has not been provided with sufficient information, namely a detailed budget, showing where the deficit derives from. The group discussed the fact that there currently lacks a detailed budget and cost information ever since 2000 when the budget books became online. One faculty member attending the discussion had requested for a detailed budget (expecting the administration would have it considering the projected deficit). His request was denied under the explanation that to grant it would demand significant amount of resources and his request is of "low priority" compared to TransformUS. The group felt that it was irresponsible of the administration to claim a projected deficit without a detailed budget that was supposed to be of highest priority even before TransformUS began.

The rhetoric of "program prioritization" was also much debated. The definition and meaning of this "prioritization" was unclear as there were inconsistencies in what "priorities" meant from one program to another. For example, one program was described as a high quality program but ranked low only because the graduation time was longer compared to other programs.

A great concern in “program prioritization” is that the quality of programs was a low priority and the group was not convinced that the Task Forces’ recommendations would indeed save money. The group noted that 20% of the programs were placed in the fifth quintile, meaning that they were recommended for elimination. The allocated budget corresponding to those programs is only 3%. On the other hand, only 3% of all programs were placed in the first quintile, that is, they are to receive enhanced funding, but their current funding comprises of 21% of the operating budget. The group felt that to eliminate 98 programs for the sake of 16 seemed very irresponsible and would significantly hurt the reputation of the University of Saskatchewan, thus the reputation of all of its programs. In addition, investing in already very expensive programs did not justice the “resource saving exercise.”

According to the feedback of the student representatives at the round table discussion, the graduate students lack awareness of the deficit situation and the TransformUS process. The group felt that the GSA could and should do more to raise the awareness.

4. VP Finance Report

VP Finance attended the fee review committee on February 21. In that committee some application about changes in different fees (such as Athletic and Recreation fees and application fees for grad school) are reviewed for new changes. GSA should submit any changes to the committee in February.

GSA Budget in 2013-2014

Information provided in this report shows the revenue and expenses from May 2013 until the February 17. Items presented in the tables are defined in the GSA website under the budget section.

GSA Business Budget 2013-2014 Fiscal Year			
Revenue	Estimated Value	Value To Date	Amount Remaining
GSA Fees	\$186,000	\$87,173	\$98,827
GSA Conference Ad Sales	\$1,000	\$0	\$1,000
Commons Booking	\$3,500	\$4,850	-\$1,350
CFS Handbook Ad Sales	\$2,000	\$713	\$1,288

Orientation Contributions	\$1,500	\$2,555	-\$1,055
CGSR Bursary Contribution	\$20,000	\$20,000	\$0
UofS Cold Beverage Agreement	\$9,000	\$9,000	\$0
GSA Award Gala sponsorship	\$18,000	\$9,000	\$9,000
GSA congress sponsorship	\$20,000	\$20,000	\$0
Total Revenue	\$261,000	\$124,290	\$136,710

Highlights:

GSA fee for the winter semester is not included in the table. Usually university sends the cheque in February. We are yet to receive the cheque.

The revenue from the commons booking exceeded the estimated value. Due to some equipment shortage for the commons it is recommended to use this surplus for the equipment replacement.

Different units inside and outside the university have sponsored gala. GSA has received most of the sponsorship money, but the total value is not updated during providing this report.

Office of president sent the sponsorship money for GSA conference in February.

GSA Business Budget 2013-2014 Fiscal Year				
	<i>Expenses</i>	Value	Used to date	Amount Remaining
1	Office Staff Salary	\$70,000	-\$48,582	\$21,418
2	President Stipend	\$6,397	-\$4,798	\$1,599
3	Executive Stipend	\$33,265	-\$24,949	\$8,316
4	Academic (Course) Council Funding	\$8,000	-\$2,794	\$5,206
5	Annual Audit	\$1,500	\$0	\$1,500
6	Comprehensive Audit*	\$13,500	\$0	\$13,500
7	Bank Charges	\$300	-\$173	\$127

8	CFS Handbook Printing	\$2,000	\$0	\$2,000
9	Commons Insurance	\$3,500	-\$3,691	-\$191
10	<i>Commons Renewal and Repairs (Equipment)</i>	<i>\$6,500</i>	<i>-\$4,664</i>	<i>\$1,837</i>
11	Conferences (External)	\$5,000	-\$4,899	\$101
12	Entertainment/Refreshments	\$2,500	-\$1,861	\$639
13	Executive Discretionary Fund	\$3,500	-\$2,761	\$739
14	Grad Student Club Funding	\$5,000	-\$3,980	\$1,020
15	GSA (CGSR) Need-Based Bursary	\$40,000	-\$25,000	\$15,000
16	GSA Awards Gala	\$25,000	-\$4,776	\$20,224
17	GSA Conference	\$25,000	-\$4,776	\$20,224
18	GSA Fall and winter Orientation BBQ	\$7,500	-\$7,406	\$94
19	GSA Travel Grant*	\$10,000	-\$9,050	\$950
20	Office Supplies	\$2,800	-\$2,710	\$90
21	Operating Costs	\$3,200	-\$2,411	\$789
22	UofS Student Travel Award Contribution	\$6,000	-\$6,000	\$0
23	UofS Cold Beverage Agreement	\$9,000	-\$7,592	\$1,408
24	TransformUS Service	\$4,490	-\$4,490	\$0
25	Legacy Fund*	\$60,000	\$0	\$60,000

26	Upass Salary*	\$15,000	-\$11,477	\$3,523
27	GSA Handbook	\$8,000	-\$7,519	\$482
28	UPASS Printing Cost*	\$2,132	-\$2,132	\$0
29	GSA note takers	\$2,000	-\$174	\$1,826
	Total Expenses	\$361,084	-\$164,930	\$196,154

* Items are from GSA surplus which is not part of yearly GSA budget.

The reason for the difference between total revenue and total expenses are coming from the items from surplus.

GSA budget committee will have a meeting in March to decide on the budget for upcoming year. Any recommendation and suggestion in this regard can be sent or shared with VP Finance sooner.

5. Aboriginal Liaison Report

My name is Dana Carriere. I am a graduate student with the Native Studies Department and I am the new AIGSC Chair and GSA Aboriginal Liaison.

Gordon Oakes Red Bear Student Centre Subcommittee

The committee represents Aboriginal leadership and input on the development and vision of the Centre. At the first meeting attended we reviewed the floor plan for the Centre. Currently there is no space designated for the AIGSC or graduate students. The AIGSC will hold a public consultation with graduate students to discuss their needs and expectations from the Centre.

Aboriginal Student Leadership Group

I attend the Aboriginal Student Leadership Group (ASLG). The AIGSC and ASLG cooperate on many different initiatives, including campaigns in support of changing the Bedford Redman mascot and the need for a Metis flag in convocation hall. The ASLG was invited by the President to discuss what students think is respectful consultation, the first session was on February 14th, and the next session is on February 28th. A representative from AIGSC will be in attendance at these meetings. Furthermore, the ASLG is committed to support the AIGSC in our efforts to engage and recruit more Aboriginal graduate students.

Meet and Greet with Team Leader Candidates

As part of the interview process for the new position of Team Leader, First Nations, Metis & Inuit Student Success, each candidate is provided an opportunity to interact with student leaders, the staff of ASC, and the AVP Student Affairs. I will attend the four sessions that will be held February 24-26th

Aboriginal Achievement Week

Aboriginal Achievement Week (AAW) will be from March 10-15. The AIGSC will host two events on March 10th, 2-3pm and 3-4pm in ARTS 241. We will show the first two episodes of the 8th Fire series, which is four part CBC documentary series devoted to First Nations issues in Canada.

Men's and Women's Protocols

I attended two workshops, Men's and Women's Protocols for First Nations Spiritual Ceremonies, provided by the Office of First Nations, Metis & Inuit Relations. The workshops were very informative and there is a need for more workshops such as these on campus.

Graduate Awards Gala

I am assisting with ticket sales for the Graduate Awards Gala taking place on March 8th. The AIGSC purchased 8 tickets. 4 tickets will be given away to continuing Aboriginal graduate students who would like to become involved with the AIGSC. This is an opportunity to meet current AIGSC members and learn about the Council.

Saskatoon Aboriginal Professionals Association

The AIGSC attended a networking event, Creating Connections, in January. The event was held to support the creation of an Aboriginal Professionals Association in Saskatoon. The next networking event will be held on March 19th. Aboriginal Professional Associations currently exist in other cities across the country to provide networking and professional development opportunities for their members. This is an important initiative and the AIGSC is committed to being involved with the Association.

6. VP External Report

CFS National Graduate Caucus General Meeting

I attended the CFS National Graduate Caucus Annual General Meeting between 20th and 23rd of February. Various issues were discussed at this years AGM mostly issues that affect

Graduate students in Canada and how to resolve them. Some of the issues that were discussed included;

1. Childcare
2. Post residency fees
3. Stipends
4. Ombudsman
5. Copyright laws

This came up with a few policy changes that we will seek to talk to the governments about.

There was also an election to elect new officials of the National Graduate Caucus.

GSA 2nd Annual Awards Gala

See Gala Committee report below

7. Presidents' Report

Thank you for attending GSA Council meeting this month.

We have completed plans for GSA week. The VP Academics and the VP External will give specific reports during their presentations.

I will only add that thanks to you, about 65 presentations have been scheduled for the GSA multidisciplinary conference themed "Curiosity". The conference booklet is in print. Kindly make plans to attend most of the sessions. Meals will be provided.

GSA Award winners have been selected. We had several nominations for the Awards Gala. All categories received multiple nominations. The Advising Excellence, Research Excellence in the Sciences, and Aboriginal Research Excellence categories, had over 100% expected nominations, most of the nominations were highly impressive. Again, thank you for submitting your applications.

We have sold over 250 tickets for the Awards Gala. We hope those of you that are yet to will purchase your tickets soon.

TransformUS

I wanted to spend part of my report on TransformUS. The two task forces reports are RECOMMENDATIONS (Our members were part of the process leading to the reports). We are waiting for Provost Committee on Integrated Plan (PCIP) to develop the Implementation Plan. The plan will be ready by April 2014 and forwarded to the various decision making

bodies of the university-Council, Senate, and Board of Governors-for action. Students are represented in all governing bodies of the university. To take a decision on a plan that is yet to be developed could be considered presumptuous.

While we wait for the Implementation Plan, it is imperative to reflect on the following:

- (1) **The Burgeoning Structure of Central Administration:** Two year ago, like many organizations on campus, the GSA expressed reservation with the increasing size of the university administration. Currently, almost 100% of the provincial government's allocation (over 300 million dollars/yr) goes directly to personnel cost without direct investment on graduate students' awards and scholarships. The GSA has continuously advocated for a reduction of personnel cost, so funds can be available for graduate research, artistic, and scholarly activities. The current TransformUS reports, though recommendations, advocates for significant downsizing of central admin, in line with our position.
- (2) **Across Board Cuts:** One of the alternatives to TransformUS is across board cuts. In an environment where personnel cost is sacred, across board cuts will significantly affect devolved scholarships and stipends that graduate students currently enjoy. We rejected across board cuts as a result of the foregoing.
- (3) **Tuition Increase:** The university admin has assured us (student reps) that the current fiscal state of the institution will not translate to tuition increase. TransformUS reports did not recommend tuition increase. If transform process is stalled, I fear tuition increase may be an option.
- (4) **Advocacy for Graduate Students and Research:** I am yet to see any document on campus (including the Third Integrated plan) that explicitly advocated for graduate students and research as the task forces reports did. The reports clearly expressed the need to increase funding for graduate students and research.
- (5) **Collegial Respect:** Two of our colleagues painstakingly participated throughout the entire process of getting the reports ready. This took hundreds of hours. As graduate students, we know time is precious, yet these individuals invested their limited time to represent us. Their sacrifice should be commended.

I advise members of the GSA Council that may have concerns with the process to present them. We shall articulate these points and send a written report to PCIP as recommendations to developing the Implementation Plan.

Thanks for your understanding.

Best regards,

Ehimai

Standing Committee Reports

1. Bursary Selection Committee Report

The committee will meet on Monday, February 24th, 2014. An oral report will be given following this meeting.

2. Gala Committee Report

The preparations for this year's awards gala are in top gear. So far we have been able to do several things and everything seems on track.

1. We have secured the venue which will be Radisson and they are the ones to serve food.
2. We have gotten a Key Note Speaker through our collaboration with the ALUMNI Association.
3. We have also had calls for nomination and had an Awards committee choose the winners of this year's awards.
4. We have notified the awardees.
5. Tickets are up for sale. If you need tickets you can get them from any of the GSA Executives or at the GSA by the GSA administrator.
6. We are now in the process of printing the welcome booklet for the gala.
7. This year we managed to secure a generous funding from the CFS for the gala to the tune of \$3000.
8. We have also secured other funding from different individuals and departments within the university.
9. The Minister for Advance Education SK, sent us his personal contribution to the gala.
10. We are still trying to get volunteers for the Master of Ceremony position. If you think you can be a good MC please do not hesitate to contact me.

Special Committee Reports

UPASS Implementation Report Term 2

1. Summary for Term 2014/01 (as of Jan 30)

During term one between December 2nd and January 30th, 1625* bus passes were picked up by graduate students. This represents 66.37% of eligible students.

The GSA Office was open between 9:00 am and 8:00pm with Allison Piché and Josie Steeves on alternating days working 9:00 am - 5:00pm with a 1 hour lunch. Allison worked 3 days a week and Josie worked 2 days a week. During this time 1539 passes were handed out, Commons Coordinators working 4:30 – 8:00pm handed out 79 passes. Sherri covered lunch hours and handed out 7 passes.

We ran into some problems at the start of December as the new term Winter 201401 would not load automatically as it should have. This ended up being as a result of the machine being unable to transmit more than 200 pieces of data at a time and due to days of heavy traffic in the fall term, even though we stuck to a transmission schedule, the machine couldn't keep up. Saskatoon Transit had to come in and take the machine back to their office to manually transmit the data and once it was returned the new term loaded without issue. In the future we should keep this in mind as we will need to transmit data more frequently during peak hours and/or have transit help us with this.

Operator	Passes Sold
Allison Piche	867
Josie Steeves	672
Luan Manh Chu	55
Bassey Bassey	17
Sherri Rohovich	7
Student Affairs	4
Alana Odokeychuk	3
TOTAL:	1625

*Updated Jan. 30/2014

2. Buspass Summary

<u>Term</u>	<u>Last Feed Date</u>	<u>Eligible Students</u>	<u>Ineligible Students</u>	<u>Passes Sold</u>	<u>Sold %</u>	<u>Optout</u>	<u>Total Students</u>
201401	2014-01-30 09:14:23	2675	1892	1625	60.75	195	4567
201309	2013-12-11 09:51:40	2881	1651	1947	67.58	245	4532

3. Opt Out Summary

During term two between January 6th and January 30th, 195 individual opt-outs were processed. A number of applications received were not processed as they were to opt out under the distance education criteria, a process made unnecessary due to the University being able to identify students who were enrolled in off-campus classes and removing the fee from the students' accounts.

A majority of the opt-out applications were received the first and last week of the opt out period, with the last three days seeing a substantial upturn. Due to lessons learned from Term 1, the process of opting students out was changed. This resulted in a much smoother and timely process for both students and staff.

4. Daily Totals

Daily totals for bus pass pick up

Date	Total	Notes
December 2	1	Problem loading new term
December 3	60	Machine returned – fixed!
December 4	53	
December 5	50	
December 6	52	
December 9	69	
December 10	64	
December 11	119	
December 12	151	
December 13	179	
December 16	7	
December 17	8	
December 18	5	
December 19	2	
December 20	13	
December 23-January 3 Holiday Break		
January 6	250	
January 7	102	
January 8	83	
January 9	73	
January 10	37	
January 13	48	
January 14	32	
January 15	23	
January 16	23	
January 17	28	
January 20	20	

January 21	12	
January 22	12	
January 23	16	
January 24	12	
January 27	9	
January 28	8	
January 29	15	
January 30	8	
January 31	TBA	Last “Official” Day to pick up pass
Total		

5. Student Feedback

The majority of the feedback from students can be summarized in the following:

- Desire to opt out on a permanent or multi-term basis
- Being assessed on-campus fees when enrolled in classes offered online/off-campus
- Found the process cumbersome

6. Recommendations

It is recommended that

- Conversations be held with Saskatoon Transit to implement a multi-term opt out (if the referendum passes)
- Summer terms are dealt with in one implementation phase instead of two as the terms are structured (if the referendum passes)
- Further conversations are held with the University regarding the designation of on-campus student status for those living outside Saskatoon
- The implementation process for this summer runs as follows:
 - o April 14th: UPASS Staff start their contracts
 - o April 21st: Opt-out applications received
 - o May 9th: Opt-out deadline
 - o May 16th: Last day for UPASS Staff
- Emails should be sent to students on approximately April 1st with reactivation information and opt-out deadlines, and April 18th with more detailed information regarding the opt-out.