

**Graduate Students' Association
Executives Meeting Agenda**



**University of Saskatchewan
Graduate Students' Association
GSA Executives Retreat Meeting Agenda**

January 23rd, 2011

Queen's House Retreat & Renewal Centre

Agenda Items:

Mission Statement

Roles and Responsibilities

Ad Hoc Projects

Communication

Course Council Scribe

Executives' Office Computer

Bursary

U-Pass

Childcare Spaces

Ombudsperson

Housing

Staff, Manager, & Executives Pay

Transition Plan/Policy

Clubs

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Present: Sarah Masood, Jania Chilima, Omaesoo Butt, Eamon McDermott, Steve Jimbo, & Sunisha Nepune.

Call to order at 10:00 am

Group Agreement:

- Confidential
- Procedural not Personal
- No rushing
- Action
- Respect
- Speak one at a time & no talk over each other

Group Warm up exercises

Round table discussion:

Mission Statement:

GSA's mission statement should be changed to fit what GSA visions.

Current Mission Statement:

The purpose of the Graduate Students' Association shall be to:

- (i) cultivate a positive experience for graduate students;
- (ii) advocate for the unique needs and concerns of graduate students;
- (iii) foster a cohesive graduate student community;
- (iv) build positive relationships with other organizations

Proposed Mission Statement:

The purpose of the Graduate Students' Association shall be to:

- (i) Ensure graduate students have access to quality services that support their academic success;
- (ii) Advocate for the unique needs and concerns of graduate students on and off campus;
- (iii) Build a cohesive graduate student community;

Roles and Responsibilities:

All executive duties will be revised due to the redundancy, overlap, and unfair assignment. A committee list will be created in the next executive meeting and each executive will be assigned to represent the GSA on these committees considering the work load included in their position.

The GSA executives and staff will meet once each term.

Ad Hoc Projects – More Clear Reporting:

Ad Hoc Projects and tasks performed by executives will be documented considering the following points:

Type of project or issue

Procedure followed or actions taken to solve the issue

This will give future executives a draft or an idea of how to deal with the issue in a timelier manner if it arises again. Future executives will also be able to consider new actions in case old executives failed to tackle the issue with their actions.

Communication:

Everyone should be responsible to communicate in a clear manner.

If a task is assigned to a staff member by the manager (executive), executives will only communicate with the manger (staff) to follow up on the assigned task.

Staff and executives should be replying with a deadline they expect a task can be accomplished by.

The office manager should be added to the graduate students' University list. CGSR doesn't reply to confirm that an announcement is being forwarded to graduate students and the manager has to ask students if they got the announcements.

CGSR should be able to forward newsletter to Grad Students as the GSA is allowed a quota of 3 e-mails per month. Even though the manager was sending newsletters to CGSR as links but still CGSR wasn't forwarding them. The GSA President will talk to CGSR about this issue.

When forwarding the newsletter, the message will need to include the table to contents so that students will know what the issue includes and they won't need to open the link in case there is nothing of interest for them.

Course Council Scribe:

All documentation of minutes will follow Robert's Rules. Writing minutes is a very time consuming task. Course Councilors will be asked in the next Course Council Meeting if they agree that documentation of minutes should follow Robert's Rules or do they find that method ambiguous and if they need more clarification.

Executives Office Computer:

Eamon will try to fix the mother board of executive's office computer. For now, Sunisha can use the GSA laptop.

Bursary:

The executives thought that the amount paid in bursary to graduate students every year isn't sufficient as the GSA receives lots of applications each term and most people who apply are eligible for the bursary. The executives would like to consider the following options to increase the bursary allowance:

Cut travel awards

Consider increasing GSA fee

Fund raising

U-Pass:

GSA's x-President, Nicholas Fraser, took over the task of lobbying with the City Transit for a pass that can be bought by staff, post docs and all grad students. GSA's current VP External, Eamon McDermott, is waiting for Nicholas Fraser's report about the issue. Terms and conditions of the U-Pass agreement for grad students may defer in terms of charges, ability to opt out, etc than the one offered to under grad students. Once information are available, a multiple point referendum will be promoted that will include the U-Pass issue as one of the items.

Childcare Spaces:

See appendix A to review the document presented to the attendees for in depth review and comparison of the current childcare situation at the University of Saskatchewan and other Canadian Universities.

Discussion Output:

In light of the above model, the GSA will seriously consider getting reserved Child Care spots for Graduate Students with the University of Saskatchewan. In order to accomplish this, the GSA will have to increase its fee.

Ombudsperson:

See appendix B to review the document presented to the attendees to decide on whether the GSA should consider hiring an Ombudsperson depending on the Graduate Students needs and how much pay should be set aside for this position.

Discussion Output:

Considering the facts in the available document, the GSA would like to consider assigning an initial budget ranging between \$10,000 and \$15,000 a year to hire an Ombudsperson. The decision of whether the GSA would like to increase this amount will depend on future executives and their willingness to support this cause.

Housing:

The GSA is thinks that the unavailability of affordable housing for grad students is a major issue and the GSA is willing to take an initiative to take a first step to solve this problem on a beginner's level. In order to accomplish this, the GSA is looking into the following options:

Co-op housing

Buying a house with GSA's liquid assets.

Staff, Manager, & Executives Pay:

Commons Staff are being paid enough in accordance to the tasks and duties they are being performing. The pay rate for the Commons Staff should be kept as it is (which is the University of Saskatchewan Grad Pay rate).

A pay increase for the GSA Manager will be considered. The manager's pay should be a professional position pay. The wage should be increased in comparison to equal positions. The career center or HR will be able to assist in how much the pay increase should be depending on duties, experience, education, and length of employment with the GSA. A pay increase between \$45,000 and \$60,000 should be feasible. The GSA is not contributing towards any benefit programs like pension plan etc. for the current Manager. The GSA compensated the manager onetime for an amount of \$225 towards the health and dental plan since 2008.

Everyone also agreed that the GSA executives are being putting too many hours towards GSA work. Fair executives' compensation will make their position more attractive for future candidates and will also make them more accountable for their duties. The following options were considered:

Honorarium for each executive should be increased to \$750/month.

Executives should be paid approximately Grad Student rate per hour. This will result in assigning office hours for each executive.

GSA President should be paid \$20,000/yr. All other executives including the President should be able to get their tuition fee waived.

Transition Plan/Policy

Transition plan will be delayed till next election. This will ensure a smooth transition between old and new executives.

Clubs:

The potential to use increased fees to encourage the growth of GSA involvement through course councils was seen positively. We would like to allocate \$1000 per club in addition to their GSA Course Council allowance, plus provide more for campus clubs and course councils to apply to for their events. The total expenditures would be approximately \$60,000-\$80,000.

Adjourn 6:00 pm

Appendix A

Models and Management of University Childcare

The Albertan Arm's Length Model

University of Calgary	University of Alberta
2 Facilities (164 spaces)	5 Facilities (250 spaces)
Both are non-profit affiliations	All five are non-profit affiliations

Each facility has its own separate agreement with the University it is located on.

There are no subsidies or ties between the Student Unions and the childcare provided on their campuses; all of the contracting is done through university administration.

The combined agreements of all five facilities at the U of A campus result in about 70-85% of spaces to be secured by students, staff, and faculty each year.

The University of Calgary has two facilities each with 84 spaces; one is designated purely for students and the other for staff and faculty.

Because each facility is a non-profit organization, the management is governed by a board of directors who consist of community members or parent volunteers.

Both universities are looking to increase their spaces. U of A is looking into adding another one of their 'trailer units' which houses 30-40 spaces.

The UBC Modular Model

University of British Columbia
24 separate modular childcare facilities (564 spaces)
Owned and Managed by UBC Staff

The UBC Student Association provides \$150K operating grant to the university to ensure that 40% of the childcare spaces available on campus are earmarked for students.

UBC has pledged to spend \$3.1M over the next 5-10 years in order to increase their number of spaces by an extra 500. This includes new builds and even renovating old or poorly used spaces all over campus.

Due to UBC's isolated campus, providing ample childcare is a large priority.

The children from students, staff, and faculty are all mixed together at each facility to avoid 'ghettoization' of any of the groups on campus.

All of the current and future spaces are managed by a central unit.

Winnipeg's Expansion Model

University of Winnipeg
1 Facility (112 spaces)
Owned and Managed by the Student Association

The University of Winnipeg recently combined its two University of Winnipeg Student Association (UWSA) facilities into one large new space increasing their numbers from 64 spaces to 112; including 16 Infant spaces.

The new facility cost just under \$2.5 million, funded through a Government of Manitoba grant (\$400,000), UWSA (\$1.1 million) and the University (\$1.1 million)

The spaces are distributed with 50% going to students, 25% to faculty and staff, and 25% to the community.

The Facility's Board of Governors are comprised of parent volunteers and community members.

Queen's Perimeter Model

Queen's University
1 On-campus Facility (95 spaces)
20 facilities within close proximity, 28 more farther out
Combined Admin, AMS, and volunteer BOG

Queen's website supplies in-depth information on all the childcare facilities within range and even miles and miles away. The reasoning is to allow the university community to drop off their children along the commute. A summer student is hired to keep the list current.

Their board of directors consist of 50% parent volunteers, 2 assigned through Human Resources and Student Affairs, 1 from the AMS, and 1 from the graduate association.

Saskatchewan Mixed Model

University of Saskatchewan	University of Regina
2 Facilities (110 spaces)	2 Facilities (90 spaces)
Contracted through the USSU and Admin	Contracted through U of R Admin

Both universities have Childcare Board of Governors comprised of parent volunteers and members of the community.

The U of R Student Union provides around \$12K per year to childcare in order to ensure that at least 50% of the spaces are reserved for students. Although they have two facilities, one is not on campus and is designated mostly for staff and faculty.

The U of S Daycare is a Parent Co-op, with the agreement that all spaces must go to students, staff, or faculty. The USSU daycare provides spaces only for Undergraduate students.

Appendix B

Perspectives on Ombuds and Advocacy

The Ombuds Offices and Advocacy Offices at Canadian universities work together to assist students in conflict with the University. Both offices deal with issues of academic misconduct, academic standing, and also deal with non-academic issues such as housing, financial aid, harassment and parking, to name a few.

“Ombudsman” is Swedish for “agent”, that is, a person who represents the interests of another. The Swedish Constitution of 1809 created a Justitieombudsman to ensure the legality of official actions and to protect the public from official wrongdoing. All modern ombudspersons derive from this one. All Ombuds have at least one thing in common, an approach to supervising large institutions with the goal to make a positive contribution to ethics. The functions of the Office of an Ombudsperson are:

- To ensure that students and other members of the University community receive fair and equitable treatment within both the University and the Students’ Union
- To listen carefully and on a confidential basis to the concerns and ask questions of the client to help clarify his or her concerns, to gather all of the relevant facts of the case, and to make inquiries on behalf of the client
- To advise the client about how to access appropriate decision makers, refer the client to another appropriate agency if necessary, and to inform the client of relevant academic regulations or appeals procedures
- To guide the client through the preparation of an articulate and informative case to help the decision maker come to a fair resolution
- To mediate or negotiate with the client and other parties and to explore options with the client, regardless of the outcome of the case
- To examine all of the relevant evidence and make recommendations regarding solutions when appropriate
- To remain objective, independent, accessible, confidential and fair

An “Advocate” by definition is someone who speaks for or acts on behalf of someone else. A student advocate normally serves as a primary contact and interface with students, ensuring that due process is followed and a student’s academic rights are not violated. The Student Advocate is involved with formal academic appeals, non-academic appeals, grievances, conflict resolution, facilitation of misconduct allegations, and mediation of issues for students. Examples of situations in which an advocate may be of assistance include:

- Appealing a specific grade
- Requesting a re-read on an exam or paper
- Facilitating deferred or supplemental exams for special reasons
- Addressing problems with a professor
- Defending against alleged misconduct
- Dealing with harassment
- Consultation around academic dishonesty issues

Comparison of Role and Functions

Generally, an Ombuds Office acts impartially and deals with student issues that require informal resolutions within faculties. An Advocacy Office typically operates from a pro-student perspective and generally handles cases where students are involved in a formal university process such as a faculty level appeal or where students require representation at formal proceedings, such as before a committee on student discipline. At many campuses the Advocacy role or office rests within the students' representative body (e.g. Vice-President of Student Affairs of Students' Union). Thus, a Student Advocate represents individuals, whereas an Ombudsperson does not. An Ombudsperson is an advocate for fair procedures but not necessarily for specific individuals. Investigating individual complaints or systemic issues does not imply taking anyone's side. The ombudsperson seeks to find a solution which is fair to all concerned. Most ombudspersons in Canadian post-secondary institutions have terms of reference which address at least the main features of an ombudsman office: confidentiality, impartiality or neutrality, and independence. A Student Advocate, by virtue of how that position is designed, may not be impartial.

An Ombuds Office is founded on the principles of independence, impartiality, confidentiality, informality, the ability to investigate and accessibility. The Ombudsperson can perform a variety of functions: providing information, referring inquiries to the appropriate individuals or Offices, offering advice, intervening to facilitate a resolution, investigating concerns, recommending fair resolutions to individual cases and publishing reports on University-wide issues.

Two things that all ombudspersons do is: receive complaints from individuals who feel they have been treated unfairly; and investigate those complaints and seek a fair resolution. They have timely access to all relevant records. Independence, that is, freedom from official interference, is basic to ombudsing.

A Student Advocate typically does not have the same access to information or authority. Within the students' representative body an Advocate would assist students who have academic problems, representing an individual problem to the appropriate university bodies when necessary. For non-academic issues (e.g. financial aid) the advocate would operate in an advisory capacity, providing information services about policies and procedures within its mandate, advising students of their rights and responsibilities, and informing them of appropriate courses of action or directing them to the proper resources. Ultimately, an Advocate's main objective is to ensure that the student's rights are maintained.

The Ombuds Office is normally independent of any student or administrative body. Thus, the Ombuds Office is in a position to investigate student complaints against the Students' representative body itself. The Advocacy Office typically is not independent of the Students' representative body and is therefore not in a position to impartially investigate its own practices.

There is a secondary function of ombudspersons that can benefit an institution and that is to attempt to address systemic problems that create unfair circumstances. It is important to focus on creating an environment where fairness is promoted and considered in a proactive manner. Fairness cannot be present unless it is a factor in decision-making. The similarity exists between what needs to be present to promote fairness, and what is considered good "customer" service. Whether our "customer" is our students, our staff, our faculty, or all of the above, we need to encourage decision makers to consider taking steps to create an environment where fairness and ethics are a prominent concern.

Comparison of structure and funding

Based on data obtained from the Canadian Medical-Doctoral Universities, 10 out of the 15 (67%) institutions have Ombudspersons. Three out of these 10 are Student Ombudspersons acting as a neutral third party to ensure that students can navigate the university policy infrastructure in a fair manner. The other seven institutions have University Ombudspersons that investigate and respond to complaints and queries from faculty, students and staff. This may vary but generally includes the provision of referrals, information, fact-finding, informal mediation, facilitation of conflict-resolutions, discussion of options and approaches available to the individual, investigations and recommendations.

Where institutions have a University Ombudsperson, the position reports to the Governing Council of the University and the funding for the position and office come, in most cases, from the University's base budget (two of the 10 have joint funding between the University and the Student Association through student fees/levy). The offices have at least one full-time Ombudsperson and anywhere from a 0.5 to 1.0 FTE in administrative assistance. The University of Alberta has a very extensive Ombuds Office with a graduate student ombudsperson, two ombudspersons from the Students' Union and two University ombudspersons who are both academic policy officers.

The five Canadian Medical-Doctoral Universities that do not have an Ombuds Office have some Student Advocate or Director of Student Advocacy whose role most often rests in the Students' representative body or society and reports to the President of that body. In these cases funding for this position is generated from student fees. The exception to this is the University of Manitoba where there is a Director of Student Advocacy who reports to the Vice-Provost of Student Affairs and whose office houses the Director, three full-time advocates, two part-time student employees and a secretary. In this instance the budget is University based except for subsidized funding for the student employees.

Current model: University of Saskatchewan

The University of Saskatchewan at present has an Academic Advocacy Office within the USSU (Vice-President of Academic Affairs) to assist students with academic and non-academic appeals. There is also an advocacy role within the job profile of the Director of Student Retention, Support and Development of the Student and Enrolment Services Division. Although this role has historically been referred to as an Advocate, it actually functions more like an Ombudsperson, as this individual tries to ensure that fair and equitable process are followed when dealing with student concerns. It is important to note that the Director of Student Retention, Support and Development deals only with students in the informal resolution of situations, mediation issues, in addition to assisting negotiate formal processes.

There are challenges that exist within the current model. First and foremost is the fact that this Director has an association with a particular unit, and this has the potential to create a perception of bias. Concerns and complaints from within the Division or unit may potentially demonstrate a conflict of interest for the Director. A second area of challenge surrounds the time commitment to the advocacy function, which at present is 25 – 30%, and constitutes only a small portion of that person's responsibilities. This could present a problem as the advocacy role expands. A third challenge is that the Director/Advocate only represents students, leaving no provision for the advocacy needs of faculty and staff.

Over the past two years (September, 2002 to August, 2004) the Student Advocate within Student and Enrolment Services has dealt with 107 cases which can be summarized as follows:

- 49 cases involved an appeal process (12 before a formal committee)
- 10 cases involved alleged harassment
- 9 cases of illegal substances
- 8 cases involved alleged assault
- 8 cases of mischief/willful damage
- 8 cases of disturbance (3 were domestic)
- 6 cases of fraud (mostly parking passes)
- 5 cases of academic dishonesty/plagiarism
- 4 cases of theft

The incumbent for this Directors' position has been hired effective April 1, 2005. The proposal is to continue with this current model for one year and then review the arrangement at that time.

General Comparison of Ombuds Model and Advocacy Model

	Ombuds service Model	Advocacy model
Mandate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - investigates complaints of unfair treatment in an impartial and objective manner - concerned with rights of every person to be treated fairly - power to recommend solutions when complaints are well-founded - when complaints are unfounded, explains why - acts as a source of information and advice on rules and procedures - helps to identify systemic problems and weaknesses in institutional policy and practice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - receives complaints and grievances and helps to address them through formal channels - provides general information to students regarding rights and responsibilities - assists students in the resolution of any problems or concerns - refers students to other services or resources - may assist students by representing them or speaking on their behalf when requested to do so by the students - generally handles cases where students are involved in a formal university process and require assistance in presenting themselves or their case/argument

Principles/Perspectives Adopted	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - independence - impartiality - confidentiality - informality - ability to investigate - accessibility - non-adversarial, i.e., does not pick sides, more oriented to ensuring due process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - confidentiality - formality - representation - accessibility - recognizes power imbalances between students and university - partial = entirely pro-student perspective - adversarial, i.e., picks sides and it is always the side of the student
Rationale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - conveys the institutions commitment to being fair - promotes a constructive approach to conflict resolution - may help avoid long and costly litigation - helps formal processes run more smoothly - provides a user-friendly source of information about policies, rights and avenues of redress - helps identify policy weaknesses and gaps in the system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - conveys, typically, students' associations commitment to assisting students - power imbalances do exist and students are the often hold the least power - students need representation regardless of nature of conflict - provides a user-friendly source of information about policies, rights and avenues of redress
Examples	University of Manitoba, University of Western Ontario	USSU, UBC Alma Mater Society, U of A Student Legal Aid

The Student Advocacy Network is a collection of staff and students who, as part of each member's independent work responsibilities, advocate for individual students upon request, for student issues more broadly, and for fairness in the experiences of students at the University of Saskatchewan. Representation includes USSU Executive, USSU Centre Directors, USSU Academic Advocacy Officer, Campus Chaplains, Residences, Discrimination and Harassment Prevention Services, University Secretary's Office, Disability Services for Students, Student Health & Counselling, Aboriginal Students' Centre, and Open Studies Advising. Attendance at meetings is open to any interested groups or staff members. Members of the Network assist students with non-academic and/or academic matters to varying degrees, depending on their portfolios. The group meets approximately monthly from September to May and is chaired by Susan Bens, Director of Student Retention, Support and Development in SESD.

In 2007-2008, members of the Network have worked on three main projects: (1) update a brochure about responding to aggressive religious recruitment on campus, (2) joint promotion of advocacy-related services to students for 2008-2009, (3) development of a recommendation to the University that a model of "ombuds-service" be established.

Draft Job Description for Students' Ombudsperson

Primary Purpose: The Students' Ombudsperson (SO) provides a visible, cross-institutional central contact for students and those assisting students with questions of fairness and due process. The SO communicates the University of Saskatchewan's commitment to a positive student experience and to treating students fairly and with respect. The SO leads the way in making this vision real at an institutional level.

Nature of Work: The Students' Ombudsperson reports to XXX (possibly the University Secretary, or to the U of S President and USSU and GSA Presidents?). The SO seeks guidance from an advisory council consisting of representatives of student governments, senior leaders of academic and administrative units (to be defined). The work is independent, often dealing with highly sensitive situations and confidential information. While the SO provides some direct interpretation and advice to students, s/he also draws on a vast array of professionals from across the institution with responsibility for aspects of the student experience. As a central resource at arms length from academic and administrative units, the SO identifies systemic issues in the university environment that are defined to be unfair to students and seeks to mitigate or remove those concerns using thoughtful approaches of mediation and communication.

Accountabilities:

- Ensures familiarity and knowledge about policies and practices across the university and of human rights legislation and related laws and best practices
- Acts as consultant or advisor as policies and procedures that affect students are being developed or revised
- Interprets policies and procedures for students; advises students of their rights and options in given situations
- Creates and leads networks of professionals with advocacy and mediation responsibilities and skills who can be drawn upon to play advocacy and/or mediation roles in situations involving students
- Educates the campus community on the principles of natural justice and effective mediation approaches and informal complaint resolution
- Promotes effective ways for academic and administrative units to gather feedback from students and appropriate ways to respond to complaints
- Identifies cross-cutting systemic issues and develops ways to address them in collaboration with others
- Refers students to internal and external services and agencies
- Mitigates and manages risk associated with failure to deal with students' concerns fairly
- Decides whether detailed investigations are required about specific matters, working with others (such as senior management, advisory council, professional networks) to determine processes and outcomes associated with investigations

Experience: 5-7 years work experience working in situations involving the principles of natural justice is required. Some experience conducting needs and outcomes assessments and facilitating small groups, including chairing meetings and designing and delivering workshops is preferred. Progressive leadership experience in postsecondary educational settings and/or settings that required attention to confidentiality and good judgment in dealing with sensitive issues will be considered an asset as will a graduate degree in a human services related field such as student and judicial affairs, social work, legal education, adult education, social justice etc.

Skills: Mediation training/certification; outstanding communication and analytical skills that allow gathering of complete understanding of complex situations from others; comfort interacting with multiple levels of the university and with multiple stakeholders; highly effective oral and written skills.

Draft 18-month Work Plan to Advance Ombuds Model

3-4 months prior: (unclear who is responsible for this phase of development)

- develop preliminary Advisory Council model
- recruit and select Students' Ombudsperson
- determine location of office (Place Riel?)
- determine reporting structure, mechanisms to achieve "independence" and "authority" of role
- obtain commitments for communications support (UA or SESD communications units)
- establish preliminary clerical support (SESD support on an interim basis)

0-3 months:

- meet with each Assistant/Associate Dean and Advisor in the Colleges
- meet with each member of the existing Student Advocacy Network
- develop promotional campaign for new role
- become familiar with all policies and procedures relevant to students' experiences
- connect with professional bodies, attend professional development event
- conduct multiple student focus groups
- establish ongoing clerical support needs

3-6 months:

- design “complaint” mechanisms
- articulate clear referral system to and from SO for campus community
- revamp Student Advocacy Network model to include those working primarily with academic issues
- determine initial campus-wide training needs
- develop centralized file system
- determine ongoing Advisory Council terms of reference
- define confidentiality policy
- define risk management and crisis response roles

6-18 months:

- respond to complaints, test system, modify as needed
- identify common issues for coordinated response or systemic review
- adjust and learn