

Graduate Students' Association



University of Saskatchewan - Graduate Students' Association GSA Executive Meeting Minutes Wednesday, October 28, 2015 - GSA Commons 5:30PM – 7:30PM

Present: President Rajat Chakravarty, VP Finance David Bennett, VP Operations and Communications Ziad Ghaith, VP Student Affairs Hardi Shahadu, VP Academic Jebunnessa Chapola, VP External Natalia Terekhova, Aboriginal Liason Dana Carriere

- 1. Call to Order.** The Meeting is called to order at 5:39PM.
- 2. Approval of Chair.** The President asks if anyone wishes to be chair. Seeing no volunteers the President volunteers. Moved by VP Finance. Seconded by VP External. All in favour. President will chair the meeting.
- 3. Approval of Minute Taker.** VP Finance volunteers. Moved by VP Ops. Seconded by President. All in favour. Motion carries.
- 4. Approval of the Agenda.** VP Finance moves to add item 6.7 Fee Review Deadlines. All in favour. VP Ops moves to add Motion 7. Social Group Funding from Indian Students' Association. All in favour. The Amended Agenda as a whole is adopted. All in favour.
- 5. Approval of the Minutes of GSA Executive Meetings on October 14, 2015.** The President asks if there are any omissions or corrections.

The VP Student Affairs notes that on the previous minutes Item 6.12 was voted on and passed unanimously. The Minutes will be so corrected. VP Student Affairs also noted that Item 6.14 went to a formal vote and passed unanimously. The Minutes will be so corrected. All in favour. Minutes are adopted pending corrections.

6. Items for Action/Information

6.1. Three minutes reports

[Execs]

All Appended to these minutes.

6.2. Student Advocacy

[H. Shahadu/D. Bennett]

VP Finance and VP Student Affairs have both noted this this is an important issue that was raised during the election and in our past discussions and has been an ongoing issue for years at the GSA. VP Student Affairs notes that advocacy is one of the most important things that we can be doing. He notes that the GSA has been expressing concern but doing more talking than 'doing'

Ideas: Creation of / realignment of current executive structure to include VP of Student Advocacy and Research, Office of Student Advocate / collaborative effort with Admin. and/or USSU, Focusing of current VPs on student advocacy (fulfilling advocate role) as opposed to sitting as a member of GAAC (hearing board).

President will be meeting with USSU VP Academic to discuss proposals about setting up a student advocacy centre that would likely be funded by a student levy and would offer high quality and professional services. There may be the possibility of an opt-out.

VP Academic notes that CLASSIC can provide some pro-bono legal services. President reminds us that this group focuses on legal advice that may not be beneficial to students/academic hearing cases.

Action Items: Arrange for meeting with USSU VP Academic. Submit query to Policy Review Committee about a possible VP Advocacy role. President, VP Student Affairs and VP Academic will work to bring forward a potential proposal to Council.

6.3. GSA Fall Bursary Updates

[Z. Ghaith]

VP Ops notes that is committee met today with him as the chair along with the VP Academic and VP Finance and four Councillors. There were 86 completed applications and those selected will be notified tonight and cheques will be prepared for next week. He has kept minutes and will be attaching them to the next Council agenda.

President asks if we should publicize the names of the winners. VP Ops notes that it is a matter of privacy as a needs-based bursary so we cannot. VP Student Affairs agrees with this point and the President understands.

6.4. Board Game Updates

[R. Chakravarty]

President reminds all to come to this very special event on Friday. It starts at 7PM and he could use assistance in setting up the Commons around 4 or 5PM. USSU has agreed to loan us their popcorn-machine and IGSC will provide some popcorn. The Commons Coordinator will be in charge of bar service and cash.

VP Ops notes he will be a bit late as he has another commitment. Aboriginal Liason notes that people will need to help with cleanup as well. She will pick up some pop to drink and the President will finalize the liquor licence. President will also purchase some gift cards for prizes for best costumes. Both will bring board games and paying cards.

VP Ops notes he asked President to involve events Coordinator. It was noted she is not currently available but will be in the future. Aboriginal Liason will arrive at 5PM to help set up.

6.5. Meet and Greet with USSU execs

[R. Chakravarty]

President notes that this is something he wanted to initiate. We should have done it a long time back but both groups are quite busy. We can use their help/expertise with our events like conferences, gala, etc.

VP Ops thinks that it is important that we meet with them. The President suggests that we look for ways to collaborate with them within each of our portfolios.

Action Item: President will arrange for a meeting with them. Invite them to the GSA Commons and provide them some light lunch at our expense.

6.6. Meet and Greet with the new University President

[R. Chakravarty]

President notes that this is also something he has put in his report. All present agree that this is important. It is noted will come with a relatively empty slate and we will have to tell him our priorities and tell him our vision and let him where we need help. Dependent on his schedule but the end of November or early December are suggested.

We need to meet with him as an Exec. Then invite him to a Council Meeting if he is interested.

6.7. Fee Review Deadlines

[D. Bennett]

VP Finance notes that The GSA will have to have its fee submissions prepared to submit to the fee review committee by Nov. 10th when that committee meets again. It then goes to PCIP two days later and then goes on to the Board of Governors in December. Theoretically, if there was some last minute necessity to change a fee we could push it back until November 27th, but that is cutting it really tight if there are any issues or clarifications needed.

VP Finance notes that current fees are as follows:

GSA Fee: \$33.65

CFS Fee: \$5.73

GSA Saskatoon Transit Fee: \$105.66

Graduate Dental Plan: \$185.61

Graduate Health Plan: \$225.56

All present agree with keeping the GSA fee the same. VP Finance will confirm fee with Saskatoon Transit and will ask VP External to confirm fee with CFS.

7. Motions for Consideration

7.1 Whereas the India Students' Association is a duly ratified social group and have submitted a request for event funding for their Parichay Event. BIRT that the GSA provide \$500 towards this event conditional on the ISA acknowledging GSA sponsorship at the event.

Discussion:

VP Ops notes that they had originally requested \$700 but he and the VP Finance note the limit is \$500.00. VP Academic has heard over the years that this has been a good event and is very popular with students and the ISA is a student organization that involves the wider community so we should try to get involved. President discloses that he used to be in charge of this group but he notes they are one of the largest international student clubs on campus. It is suggested that in the future they submit their request further in advance.

Five in favour. One Abstention (R. Chakravarty). Motion carries.

8. Adjournment. Meeting is Adjourned at 7:04PM.

Three Minute Reports:

President:

President has attended both University Council and the Senate Meeting with which was a very formal meeting that lasted the entire day. Of note from University Council was the desire of the University to increase TOEFL scores from 80 to 86 to better match ILETS scores (these are English Language Tests). He raised the concern that no positive correlation has been provided between higher test scores and better academic performance. The University has adopted these higher scores but it is up to the each college to accept that. Thus far the CGSR has not and the President is supportive of that decision as the higher scores disincentivize people to come and

no benefit has yet been proven.

President notes that Board Games night is coming up on October 30th and he will attain a liquor licence. Along with the VP Finance he has prepared a float for the event. He notes that Course Council recruitment is off to a great start and he will now hand that over to the VP Student Affairs to continue. Along with the Aboriginal Liason he attended the Convocation as a representative of the GSA. He has also been actively involved in the President's Transition and tomorrow he will walk around Marquis Hall and introduce President Stoicheff to grad students over the lunch hour.

VP Finance:

VP Finance note he has been finalizing the renewal of the GSA's liability insurance (this differs from the Directors and Officers policy we're waiting for a potential quote on.) The GSA carries full commercial liability coverage we have to renew this policy with updated information every year. The procedure is somewhat complex as it requires the submission of replacement values for coverage (i.e. how much it would cost to replace something) which differs from how we would report valuation in financial statements (the depreciated value). With insurance we have to balance the need to be protected while also making sure that our premiums are still affordable. VP Finance believes he has attained this balance as our premiums are within the budgeted amount but he has reported more realistic replacement values for coverage. Obviously the GSA hopes that we never have to use our insurance but it is very important to be protected as best we can. A second administrative task that VP Finance has been working on is switching the GSA Coordinators onto the paymaster system. This has now been tentatively completed and the information has been submitted and the first payments will be processed on the 9th business day of the month going forward. VP Finance will provide evaluation on the costs and benefits system going forward.

VP Finance notes that he also worked an 8 hour Commons shift. Further, he thinks that we all have obligations to put some shifts at the GSA when someone is on vacation or other special circumstances so he would hope that the everyone ends up working roughly an equal amount in the end or he feels that it ends up being quite unfair to those that are working. Covering vacation shifts is a very good financial move as it keeps GSA labour costs under control which in turn frees up funds to better support students. He notes that it isn't his role to decide when staff should or shouldn't be permitted to take vacation but he has observed when the Office Manager isn't here it negatively impacts our customer service delivery to students/stakeholders. Obviously we're doing the best we can in the office but we don't have the specialized training/knowledge to deal with all queries and telling people to wait a week until the Office Manager is back is really poor customer service. He notes that improving customer/stakeholder service delivery is something the GSA needs to work on. He has reached out and asked and the Office Manager would be more than willing to offer all execs a bit of training just to make sure we know how to do things properly in the office and don't cause any mistakes. VP Finance would also like to invest in a wireless headset system that connects to the phone that way if the Manager or

Coordinator is working somewhere else in the Commons and the phone rings they can answer it. When people call during business hours and it rings through to voicemail it makes it look like the call isn't important to us and that's not true.

VP Finance attended the meeting of the fee review committee which he'll discuss more thoroughly later on in the meeting. He served on the bursary selection committee and notes that just based on the number of applications it does seem like we need to find a way to increase the number of bursaries going forward and he is strongly committed to finding a way to do that in the next budget. VP Finance won't be available to assist at the Halloween "Spooktacular" games night but along with the President I have prepared a float for that event for bar sales. He will be attending the CAGS conference and will report back on that but he has reviewed the program and noted the heads of tri-council will be there so is hoping they'll be available for questions and answers.

The last thing VP Finance notes is that he went to the advanced positive space seminar and received his certificate (on display in GSA Exec. Office). There is still one more level of training he would need before he would be able to actually facilitate a Positive Spaces 101 seminar for this group. He is working with the Provost's Committee on Gender and Sexual Diversity to ensure that the GSA (along with all execs. and staff) help transform the GSA into a positive space. To that end the next Positive Spaces 101 is on Friday November 20 from 2:30PM to 3:20PM in Murray 102 and you can register on the Gwenna Moss Centre for Teaching Effectiveness website. November 20th is also Transgender Day of Remembrance where the those who have become victims of violence because of their gender identity are remembered and there will be an on-campus event that I will get more details on shortly but hopefully many GSA executives will attend.

VP Operations and Communications:

The VP Ops has been working on preparing for the Council Meetings and Executive Meetings. In addition to his work on the bursary committee he worked an eight hour shift at the GSA Commons and had two meetings with Office Manager to make sure things will run relatively smoothly over her well deserved week off. The VP Ops represented the GSA in the Alumni achievement award event. He updates the association website and Facebook page on daily basis.

VP Student Affairs:

VP Student Affairs notes that he hasn't started working on any new initiatives since the last meeting but he did go to the important meeting with Associate Dean of the CGSR Trevor Crowe along with VP Finance and VP Academic on the topic of academic advocacy. Has been working to arrange a meeting with VPTL P. McDougall and VPFIN G. Fowler regarding childcare/daycare on campus. Finding a time for a 60 minute meeting with VPTL is challenging

VP Student Affairs took the initiative and reached out to University Admin. and he will now sit on the childcare steering committee and he will attend a meeting on that next week. He has also been working on collating the planned survey based on some questions that have been submitted by the Exec. and he will be reaching out to suggest any improvements or seek any clarifications that are necessary. He notes that he has also been responding to many queries and

concerns from students that he receives via email.

VP External:

VP External notes that we have received a number of applications for Gala and Conference Coordinator positions. She was the key contact person and the deadline is this Friday. She notes that there are more applications for conference coordinator position than gala coordinator position.

VP Academic:

VP Academic notes she had a meeting with L. Markin from the library to work on some improvements to the Writing Centre that will be beneficial for Grad students. She notes that an important even is coming up on Oct. 30th there will be an Industry Talk organized by SECC that will take place at the GSA Commons. She has a meeting planned with Julian Demkiw from the President's Office to discuss the upcoming GSA Conference. She will meet with GSA President for advice on 3MT.

VP Academic further notes that December 6th is the anniversary of the École Polytechnique Massacre which is memorialized by the National Day of Action and Remembrance on Violence Against Women She is looking into partnering with the Women's Centre and the Canadian Federation of University Women to have an event at the GSA Commons.

Aboriginal Liason:

The Aboriginal Liason notes that Campus Rec. Soccer is now finished. Tragically the GSA Guppies didn't qualify for the playoffs. She notes that many students expressed strong interest in fielding an indoor soccer team for term two. She reached out and encouraged students to bring their friends so a few more graduate students became involved with the teams and the GSA.

She further notes that the IGSC held its AGM on October 20th and has 4 new members on its council. They planned events and initiatives for the year. The next event is the Graduate Studies Information Session, where they will meet with Aboriginal undergraduate students and encourage them to look into Graduate Studies.

On Oct. 30th she will be meeting with Graham Joseph from the Team Leader from the Aboriginal Students' Centre. Along with Dean Baxter-Jones they have agreed to hire a graduate student to look into what other universities in Canada are doing to engage with their Aboriginal Graduate Students and to help the UofS implement a strategy.

She will be attending the Building Reconciliation: Universities Answering the TRC's Call to Action National Forum on Nov. 18th and 19th. University Presidents, First Nations and Metis leaders and Indigenous Student Leaders will be at this event. Jack Saddleback from USSU has asked the Aboriginal Liason to be on a student panel to discuss Aboriginal student experiences and the vision for the future of Aboriginal students.