

University of Saskatchewan - Graduate Students' Association



GSA Executive Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, November 25, 2015 - GSA Commons 5:00PM – 7:00PM

Present: Ziad Ghaith (VP Operations and Communications), David Bennett (VP Finance), Dana Carriere (Aboriginal Liaison), Natalia Terekohova (VP External), Jebunessa Chapola (VP Academic), Rajat Chakravarty (President).

Regrets: Hardi Shahadu (VP Student Affairs)

- 1. Call to Order** The meeting was called to order at 5:02PM
- 2. Approval of Chair** The President asks if anyone wishes to be chair. Seeing no volunteers the President Chakravarty volunteers to chair the meeting. Moved by VP Operations. Seconded by Aboriginal Liaison. All in favour. President approved as a chair for this meeting.

Motion carries.

- 3. Approval of Minutes Taker** VP Operations asks to take the minutes. Moved by GSA President, seconded by Aboriginal Liaison. All in favour. **Motion carries.**
- 4. Approval of the Agenda** Aboriginal Liaison moves to add item 6.10 **Discussion on GSA Winter Photo contest.** Moved by GSA president, seconded by VP Operations. All in favour.

Motion carries.

- 5. Approval of the Minutes of GSA Executive Meetings on November 4, 2015**
The minutes is available on the Association website. President Chakravarty asks for any discussion.

Approval of 4/11/2015 minutes moved by President, seconded by VP Operations. All in favour. **Motion carries**

6. Items for Actions/Information

- 6.1. Three minutes reports** [Execs]

VP External:

VP External updated other execs on the health chat session on 17th of November. Twenty people attended the meeting. Christine Foster from student care.net met graduate students and discussed information regarding the health and dental plan. Next health chat will take place in December.

GSA Gala coordinator has been hired, VP Terekhova will meet with Gala coordinator to discuss upcoming plans.

CFS meeting: VP Terekhova attended the CFS meeting, she mentioned that CFS has elections today. Two people will sit on the board from each university.

CFS will send out the computer to print ISIC cards, she suggested including undergraduate students.

VP Academic:

VP Chapola will help in organizing Canadian Federation of University Womens potluck. The potluck will take place in the GSA commons on December 6th 2015. VP Chapola asked D. Carriere to engage aboriginal students in this event.

VP Chapola met with Heather Lukey from CGSR to discuss GSA conference funding. Heather mentioned that funding is available as a loan, GSA would have to reimburse later.

VP Chapola met with the Conference coordinator and prepared a short plan of the conference. She asked D. Carriere to help in engaging more aboriginal students in the conference, further she asked VP Bennett to participate in a meeting with Conference coordinator to give some suggestions regarding the conference budget.

VP Finance:

I have been in close contact with our auditors and they sent a request for quite a bit of information. I have been able to compile most of what they want (with a great deal of help from Sherri in organizing things). The documents and information that I could locate and compile were sent over on Monday. Unfortunately there are some significant gaps in our records that will make it challenging for the audit process. I'm waiting to hear from our auditors on how they suggest we resolve this problem. Essentially there are some periods of time when there are no available or at least no accessible financial records. It may be possible to reconstruct some of the records based on receipts and invoices but that would be a significant amount of time and labour (reconstructing eight months at least) and it is problematic in that you're removing the ability to accurately cross-check transactions. I attended the lunch meeting with the Health and Dental Team. I'm personally pleased and I know our membership is pleased that the fees for this are not going to be increasing. The regular meeting of the Scholarship and Awards Committee was

cancelled this month due to the Truth and Reconciliation Conference. The Fee Review Committee met and the only fee change request coming from the GSA was the CPI increase of 1.8% to the Graduate UPASS. The current contract with Saskatoon Transit is structured in such a way that they are actually unable to tell us their CPI increase until well after the new fee review deadline. So, I had no choice but to submit the 1.8% based on the StatsCan data for the Saskatoon Consumer Price Index to date. I would suggest that the UPASS be directly assigned to someone's portfolio and they rectify this situation by trying to update the language in the contract as it will be happening every year going forward. The fee review committee will have one final meeting on November 27th where we will deal with CFS fees. Because of the CFS National Bylaws they tell us the CPI increase in February so until that changes or the University's fee review process changes we are going to be one year behind on our increases. It was a real honour to attend the public plenary of the Building Reconciliation Conference and to hear from renowned leaders and speakers like National Chief Bellegarde and the Honourable Justice Murray Sinclair. The conference was really privileged to have panelists like Jack Saddleback and our very own Dana Carriere as invited speakers. I also took the opportunity to attend quite a tragic gathering the Transgender Day of Remembrance Candlelight Vigil where the names of at least 231 people who were killed last year in transphobic violence were remembered. I have to say I was personally quite disappointed that I was the only GSA Executive in attendance. When only one or maybe two executive attend these very important events (like a once per year memorial) it is essentially saying we're here in a perfunctory fashion. When five or six or all seven attend these events the message we're sending out is one of solidarity, one that we as an Executive and as an Association really do care and that is an issue of engagement that matters. Everyone is busy, everyone can have excuses or reasons why they can't do things. Frankly, I'm sick of that. I'm far more interested in seeing execution and engagement from the leadership of the association. I think that all of our members deserve that. How can our members, especially our most marginalized members feel supported and empowered if the GSA isn't doing much to support them or we can't even show up at an event like the vigil.

VP Operations and Communications:

VP Ghaith updated the executives about his activities during the last couple of weeks. VP Ghaith Participated in two interview committees for Conference and Gala coordinators, he added that the hiring process was very transparent and GSA received many good applications.

VP Ghaith met with GSA chair and GSA president to improve the councilors hiring process and communications. VP Ghaith will give GSA Chair access to fluid surveys that he can examine and communicate with them for any issues. Further GSA executives will organize a workshop to encourage graduate students to run for GSA elections. This workshop will take place in February.

Besides these activities VP Ghaith will ensure to follow up every day activities in the GSA Commons.

President:

President Chakravarty was engaged in interviews committees for Conference and Gala coordinators. He mentioned that the process was very transparent and we had very good candidates.

President Chakravarty met with Dean Adam Baxter Jones to discuss with him GSA conference and Gala. The dean suggested to have graduate students week which will include the the conference and Gala events, he further suggested to if GSA have a well complied proposal this would be continues funding for the coming years.

President Chakravarty attended with VP Shahadu the Student forum, he mentioned that the meeting was good and they got good feedback. GSA was invited to chair the next meeting, the next agenda will include discussion on aboriginal engagements.

President Chakravarty met with VP Chapola to discuss the new GSA initiative regarding the tuitions and university services

Aboriginal liaison:

D. Carriere participated last week in building reconciliation forum. She spoke in the meeting about aboriginal students experience in the university. D. Carriere mentioned that the meeting was very good and they got very good feedback

GSA Guppies teams socials: D. Carriere plans Guppies social on 11th of December, this will be a good opportunity for the team members to gather for socialize with GSA executives and other students. Further she the registration for next term sport teams will start during the social event.

Indigenous Graduate Students' Council (IGSC) will have their Potluck dinner on 3rd of December, she encouraged GSA execs to participate and to invite other students.

Next Monday, D. Carriere will meet with Dean Adam Baxter-Jones to discuss scholarships for aboriginal students and some other items related to aboriginal students. D. Carriere will update GSA executive about this meeting during next GSA exec meeting.

6.2. Professional Standards, Expectations, and Dress Code for GSA meetings, events and official business **[D. Bennett]**

VP Bennett mentioned that GSA execs should consider being on time in GSA and other meeting and events, and they should try to dress formally in these events. He think that more that 60 percent of the current GSA execs are guilty in this. He added that showing on time and dress formally will give a good impression about GSA.

VP Ghaith appreciated that VP Bennett bring this for discussion, he thinks that it is an important issue and GSA execs should take this seriously. He added that all execs are students, but we should all keep the minimum standards of dressing.

President Chakravarty mentioned that he received an email from Dean Adam Baxter-Jones. The dean mentioned in his email that some GSA execs do not attend some CGSR committee meeting, further some GSA execs do not send regrets beforehand. The dean asked President Chakravarty to remind all execs with their responsibilities to attend the meetings. The dean further added that VP Shahadu indicated that the GSA wished to have more involvement in January graduate orientation but he is not attending meetings.

VP Ghaith asked president Chakravarty if he has any idea who does not attend the meetings, or how he can find out that. He added that he attends all the committee meetings and he wishes to

know more details about this issue as this will influence the GSA image. President Chakravarty will try to find out more details about this and update GSA execs, further he will forward the Deans email to all GSA execs.

D. Carriere asked President Chakravarty to send an email including all the committee meetings that we have to attend.

6.3. Signing of a letter to be sent to the Honorable Dr. Carolyn Bennett (Federal Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada) (draft letter is attached) [D. Bennett]

VP Bennet wrote a letter to be sent to Dr. Carolyn Bennett. President Chakravarty read the letter and asked if any exec would like to change or amend any part of the letter.

VP Bennett mentioned that this would be good initiative by GSA, especially after the motion that has been passed during the previous GSA Council meeting. President Chakravarty suggested to inform the Council about this letter.

Motion to sign the letter by all GSA execs, moved by GSA President seconded by VP Finance.

All in favour.

Motion carries

VP Bennett will take care of the letter.

6.4. Christmas/Holiday Cards [D. Bennett]

VP Bennett mentioned that in the past GSA sent Christmas/Holiday cards during the holidays. GSA has a distribution list that needs to be updated.

President Chakravarty would prefer to send Holiday Cards instead of Christmas Cards, as Christmas is a religion occasion. VP Ghaith and VP Bennett mentioned that Christmas is more cultural occupation, and it would be fine if we send Christmas Cards. VP Chapola thinks that Holiday Cards will be more appropriate, she asks if we are going to celebrate Christmas why we don't celebrate other occasions.

GSA agreed to send out Holiday Cards. President Chakravarty suggested VP Terekhova to design the cards, VP Bennett to find the budget line to cover the cost, and VP Ghaith to help in this process.

GSA execs will meet on 2nd of December at 4:45 to take a picture to be part of the card.

6.5. GSA Holiday Social

[D. Carriere]

D. Carriere suggested having a Holiday Social on 9th of December after the Council meeting. All execs agreed that this would be a good idea. President Chakravarty suggested to order food at 7:00 PM just after Council meeting. President Chakravarty will take care of this social activity, D. Carriere will help out.

Sandwiches and Sushi will be ordered. D. Carriere suggested decorating some sugar cookies for this social event

The social event will take place on 9th of December from 7-10 PM.

6.6. GSA Guppies Social

[D. Carriere]

D. Carriere mentioned that our league is finishing this week. She plan to bring all the teams together to meet for social activity in GSA Commons. She expect 40-50 people to attend this event. She would like to order food, snacks, and some other stuff from the dollar store for this event.

The event will take place on 11/12/2015 –GSA Commons from 7:30-10PM

President Chakravarty suggested to allocate 400 dollars from the initiative budget for GSA Guppies. VP Ghaith, suggested to allocate up to 150 dollars for this particular social event.

GSA President moved a motion to allocate up to 150 dollars for Guppies social even, seconded by VP Operations. All in favour.

Motion Carries

6.7. GSA commons during December

[Z. Ghaith]

VP Ghaith informed GSA execs that he plans to close the GSA during Holiday Season from 21 December 2015 - 2 January 2016. He mentioned that this has been a common practice in the GSA. D. Carriere asked when student finished their exams, VP Ghaith answered probably 21st of December. President Chakravarty checked the University calendar and clarified that the last day of exams is 23rd of Decembers. VP Ghaith will further look in this issue and decide when to close the Commons.

6.8. GSA Commons rental rate

[Z. Ghaith]

VP Ghaith had a meeting with GSA office manager, she suggested to increase GSA rental rate for non-member activities. VP Ghaith mentioned that GSA rental rate is less than the average in the market. VP Bennett added that he agreed to increase rental rate.

VP Ghaith and GSA office manager propose \$75.00 dollars/hour as new rate for non-member activities. President Chakravarty agreed, and suggested a decrease the rental rate for members. VP finance commented that most of the member's activities are during the working hours and they use the Commons for free.

Motion to increase rent for non-members event to \$75.00 dollars per hour. Moved by VP

Operations seconded by GSA President. All in favour.

Motion Carries

VP Ghaith mentioned as well that he would like to decrease the rental rate for students.

6.9. JSGS Prizes Donation (letter is attached)

[R. Chakravarty]

JSGS (academic council) sent a request to President Chakravarty to donate for their event which will take place on 27th of November. The purpose of this event is for students to take a well-deserved break from the demands of their courses to enjoy an evening with peers, faculty, friends, and family. As this is the Students' Association first large event of the year, we are hoping to have a great turnout.

VP Ghaith mentioned that JSGS discussed this with him, but believes that the request is very general and incomplete. However, JSGS is a new academic council and it would be good to help them out and encourage them to be engaged in the GSA.

VP Ghaith suggested to donate \$100.00 dollars for their event, this donation is conditional on giving details about how they will spend this money and to recognize the GSA donation. VP Bennett support this suggestion.

Motion to donate \$100.00 dollars for JSGS activity, moved by GSA President, seconded by VP

Operations. All in favour.

Motion Carries

6.10. GSA Photo Contest

[D. Carriere]

D. Carriere to have GSA Winter photo contest, this will be good opportunity to engage more students. Students can send photos of friends, families, animals, landscapes or anything that looks fun, interesting and wintry. The photos will be uploaded on the GSA Facebook page, pictures that receive the most likes will win a prizes

President Chakravarty, suggested receiving pictures up to December 13th and to keep the voting via likes open until January 5th, 2016.

VP Ghaith and VP Bennett suggested to offer three gift cards: first place \$50.00 dollar, second and third \$25.00 dollars each.

Aboriginal Liaison moved a motion to allocate up to \$110.00 dollars for the GSA Photo Contest, seconded by GSA President. All in favour.

Motion

Carries

7. Motions

7.1 Whereas the Local Organizing Committee of the Women in Physics Canada (WIPC) Conference is hosting a national conference at the University of Saskatchewan that will benefit graduate students in various disciplines (physics, biomedical engineering, geophysical sciences, etc. and the Local Organizing Committee is comprised primarily of U of S graduate students from the above fields. Whereas the WIPC has sent a formal request for support (to be distributed at meeting). BIRT pending ratification as a social group the WIPC Local Organizing Committee be granted \$500.00 from the GSA. BIFRT that the pending availability and operating hours the GSA offer the usage of the Commons at no charge for the hosting of any reception or colloquia associated with the conference.

[D. Bennett]

VP Bennett informed GSA execs that Women in Physics sent a request to sponsor their conference in July.

VP Ghaith mentioned that they did not send their ratification forms, so we should wait until they send their ratification.

President Chakravarty suggested to table this motion until the next executive meeting.

GSA President moved a motion to table this motion until the next exec meetings, seconded by VP Operations.

In favour: 3

Oppose: 1

Motion carries

8. Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 7:01 PM. Moved by VP Operations, seconded by GSA President. All in favour

The Honourable Dr. Carolyn Bennett
Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A6

Dear Minister Bennett,

On behalf of the membership and executive of the Graduate Students' Association of the University of Saskatchewan we are writing to express our strong support for a National Inquiry into missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls.

The University of Saskatchewan has Canada's highest enrolment of Indigenous students and has declared the week of November 16-20th Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women's Awareness Week. The U of S integrated plan calls for the University to adapt diversified approaches and flourishing initiatives in every college and school involving rigorous and supportive programs for Aboriginal student success, engagement with Aboriginal communities, inclusion of Indigenous knowledge and experience in curricular offerings and intercultural engagement among faculty, staff and students. As the official representative body for graduate students we are deeply committed to enhancing Aboriginal engagement and success in post-secondary education.

As mothers and sisters, fathers and brothers, sons and daughters, friends and colleagues the tragedy of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls is one that deeply affects us all. We believe that the renewal of the relationship between Canada and Indigenous peoples as called for by the Right Honourable Prime Minister Justin Trudeau can only truly begin with a full and open inquiry process.

On behalf of the Graduate Students' Association at the University of Saskatchewan,

David Bennett (VP Finance)

Dana Carriere (Aboriginal Liason)

Rajat Chakravarty (President)

Jebunnessa Chapola (VP Academic)

Ziad Ghaith (VP Operations)

Hardi Shahadu (VP StudentAffairs)

Natalia Terekhova (VP External)

November 9th, 2015

Re: Prizes for Winter Formal, November 27th, 2015

Dear Business Owner/Manager:

We at the Johnson-Shoyama Graduate School Students' Association are hosting a winter formal on November 27th, 2015 at St. George's Senior Citizen Centre. The purpose of this event is for students to take a well-deserved break from the demands of their courses to enjoy an evening with peers, faculty, friends, and family. As this is the Students' Association first large event of the year, we are hoping to have a great turnout.

To help incentivize participation and increase the enjoyment of the evening, we are requesting from you donations which will be distributed as door prizes for those in attendance at the Winter Formal. The incentive for you is that your business will be recognized for its donations. As well, the revenue made from the Winter Formal will be donated to the Saskatoon Humane Society. We would greatly appreciate anything that you are willing and able to donate. You can contact Colten Goertz, personally at either [insert email] or [insert phone number] or Kristina Rissling at either kar152@mail.usask.ca or 306-717-6147.

Sincerely,

Colten Goertz
President, JSGS-SA (Saskatoon)
(Saskatoon)

Kristina Rissling
Treasurer, JSGS-SA