

Graduate Students' Association



**University of Saskatchewan - Graduate Students' Association
GSA Executive Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, October 14, 2015 - GSA Commons 4:00PM – 6:00PM**

Present: D. Bennett (VP Finance), R. Chakravarty (President), Z. Ghaith (VP Operations and Communications), H. Shahadu (VP Student Affairs), N. Terekhova (VP External)

Absent: D. Carriere (Aboriginal Liason) , J. Chapola (VP Academic)

- 1. Call to Order.** The Meeting is called to order at 4:12PM. The Chair regrets the meeting has started for late and encourages all to arrive on time.
- 2. Approval of Chair.** The President asks if anyone wishes to be chair. Seeing no volunteers the President volunteers. Moved by VP Ops. Seconded by VP External. All in favour. President will chair the meeting.
- 3. Approval of Minute Taker.** The VP Finance volunteers to take minutes. Moved by President. Seconded by VP Ops. All in favour. VP Finance is appointed minute taker
- 4. Approval of the Agenda.** VP Student Affairs wants to add item 6.12 Student Forum Representation. President wishes to add item 6.13 Update on Legal Sub-Committee Negotiations. VP Ops wishes to remove item 6.5. VP Student Affairs wishes to add GSA meeting on childcare as item 6.14. So moved by President. Seconded by VP Ops. All in favour. Agenda is so adopted.
- 5. Approval of the Minutes of GSA Executive Meetings on September 23, 2015.** No corrections or amendments brought forward. Moved by the President. Seconded by VP External. All in favour. Minutes are adopted.

6. Items for Actions/Information

1.1. Three Minute Reports

[Execs]

All appended at the end of this document.

1.2. Update on Discretionary Funds

[D. Bennett]

The VP Finance notes that the Bylaws of the GSA indicate that the VP Finance, under the guidance of Council and the Budget and Finances Committee, will oversee the finances of the Association. The annual operating budget of the GSA has been constructed in such a way that each GSA Executive member has been allotted a discretionary fund of \$400.00. He notes that there has been some confusion about the purpose and procedures in regards to these budget lines. The intent of said funding is to allow Executive members to support initiatives under their portfolios that benefit the membership of the Association including but not limited to conference travel, planning and hosting of symposia and academic events as well as non-academic and social events. In the past Executive Discretionary funds were all under one budget line and were used in a very inequitable way (i.e. entirely by certain Executive members to the absolute exclusion of others.) hence the creation of individual lines for each Executive.

The VP Finance notes that allocating money from Executive Discretionary Funds (even nominal amounts and even with an exec. vote) contravenes the spirit and the letter of the GSA bylaws (section 5.2). Of course, the collaboration of Executives is to be supported and the combining of funds from two or more individual Executive discretionary lines is to be encouraged but it requires the consent of each Executive member whose discretionary funding is being used or a two-thirds vote of Council as it is a substantive budgetary motion regardless of the amount. The VP Finance provided an updated list of amounts spent thus far to the Execs.

The President noted that he finds the current structure was leads to 7 different executives running 7 different agendas and he finds it creates friction. The VP Ops notes that all initiatives belong to the GSA as a whole and individuals ought to support

joint initiatives. VP Student Affairs notes that the Budget Committee did great work but took a somewhat reactive approach to the idea of discretionary funding. He suggests one common pool with percentage limitations per individual executive.

The VP Finance will bring this up with the Budget Committee and thanks all for the constructive feedback.

1.3. Positive Spaces Workshop for all GSA Executives and Staff [D. Bennett]

The VP Finance notes that he is the representative of the GSA on the Provost's Advisory Committee on Gender and Sexual Diversity. This Committee advises the Provost on matters related to gender and sexual diversity on campus. Part of this is accomplished through policy work. In previous years the University updated its policy to protect community members by banning discrimination based on a person's gender identity, two spirit identity, or gender expression. Jack Saddleback, Craig Friesen, Joel Fonstad and many others deserve thanks for this policy success. In addition to the policy work another area is in educational opportunities. Members of this Advisory Committee put on Positive Space seminars throughout the year. To that end, members of the Provost's Advisory Committee for Gender and Sexual Diversity alongside Pride Centre volunteers have been putting on seminars that include learning what different terms mean, discussing privilege and showing participants how to use their language and actions in a sensitive and inclusive way. A Positive Space is essentially a place where individuals can express their gender and sexuality without fear of judgment or harassment.

The VP finance is working to arrange for a special Positive Spaces Training to happen at the GSA Commons (time and date TBA, likely selected via doodle-poll) and is hoping that all Executives and staff members will attend. VP Finance notes that he will discuss later with the VP Operations about making it mandatory for staff (that means we would have to pay them). Obviously scheduling for the Executive is challenging but for those that do take the time to attend (it's 90 minutes or so) are really showing their

commitment to inclusive leadership and the VP Finance will be widely disseminating that to the membership.

President and VP External wants to find a way to bring in more GSA members into this initiative. VP Finance will talk with his colleagues at PACGSD and find out more details.

1.4. GSA social events

[Z. Ghaith]

VP Ops notes that the GSA has resources that we are not using to their fullest extent. He brings up the issue of the camera and using GSA coordinators to try and maximize our expenditures.

The VP Student Affairs that the Orientation Budget had been developed and circulated. He noted that based on personal experience finding volunteers or staff members to be photographers is challenging as people are often unreliable. VP Student Affairs notes that he negotiated a major savings from the original asking price of \$800

VP Ops and all present note that the coordinators worked very hard during the wine and cheese event.

1.5. GSA fall bursary updates

[Z. Ghaith]

VP Ops notes that tomorrow (October 15th) is the deadline. 65 complete applications have been submitted. The bursary committee will meet on 28th October and the meeting will last approx. 2 hours. As there is an exec. meeting scheduled on that day the starting time for the exec. meeting should be pushed back to 5:30PM.

All were in favour of the Executive meeting starting at a later time.

1.6. Meeting protocols/Meeting expectations from CGSR [R. Chakravarty]

President notes that at the CGSR Council meeting it was communicated to those GSA execs who were present that certain committee responsibilities are not being fulfilled as certain GSA executives haven't attended all the meetings that they are supposed to. President urges all to make sure to attend all meetings that they are to be at.

VP External notes that there are overlaps or confusion between CGSR and Uni. Council committees.

President suggests if members are unsure to contact the Secretary to the Dean of CGSR. He further notes that we must check our RSVPs in Calendar.

The VP Finance states that all GSA execs must be professional and attend meetings as were under a microscope due to last years events and we have a responsibility to represent the members of the GSA.

1.7. Dean Search Committee Nominations [R. Chakravarty]

Dean Arts and Science: VP External (who has background in this college) has responded to the email wants to sit on this search committee. All in favour.

Dean University Library: VP Ops has agreed to sit on this committee but notes this is because no one else is doing this and it is outside his portfolio. All in favour.

Dean of CGSR: No initial replies to this email were received. As such President Rajat, VP Student Affairs Hardi and VP Ops Ziad are all under consideration or have expressed some interest or been suggested. As VP Ops Ziad will serve on the Dean of Library Committee, VP Finance is doing a Vice-Provost search committee and the Aboriginal Liason is on several search committees and the VP Student Affairs has expressed interest in this opportunity he will sit on this committee. All in favour.

The VP Ops notes that we must reply to emails so it doesn't lead to confusion.

1.8. Hiring GSA Gala and conference coordinators

[R. Chakravarty]

The President notes this discussion is challenging without the VP Academic present as she is in charge of the conference and this process needs to start soon.

An inquiry is made into the hours status of the Orientation Coordinator. The VP Student Affairs notes that she is supposed be logging her hours. President notes that each VP is responsible for logging hours of the coordinators they hire.

A brief discussion on the need for an inventory, checking off packing lists and better inventory control occurs.

VP Ops suggests that we use the fluid surveys platform to receive applications for the job. To make his job more efficient he needs access to the special coordinators we hire.

VP External will finalize job description and contact VP Academic to do the same this weekend.

President insists that this be done by the next meeting at the very latest.

1.9. Ideas for October Social / Halloween

[R. Chakravarty]

President suggests holding a social event in October and suggests a board games night with a Halloween costume prize. He further notes we have inventory of beverages that are perishable and need to be used.

Along with the Aboriginal Liason he will organize this event.

1.10. Events Budget

[R. Chakravarty]

President notes that he would like to see a budget line for GSA events with a cap at \$500 per event and a total of \$2000 or so. He will present a motion to the Council.

VP Finance notes this will be included in the budget for the next fiscal year and inquires as to where this money will come from this year. President replies the Legal Contingency Fund as the outstanding legal issue has likely been solved.

1.11. Updates on Grad Student Survey and Academic Consultation [R. Chakravarty]

As VP Academic is absent there is no update on Academic/Tuition Consultation. President notes that is a priority of his as well and he may provide direct oversight of it.

VP Student Affairs notes that he plans to work on this in November. Some execs have already submitted questions for a potential survey of grad students. He suggests letting Uni. admin know that is the first time we are doing it so we should do it correctly as they have been asking about the progress of this initiative. He will start working on this the first week in November. He is still recovering from Orientation.

6.12 Student Forum Representation

VP Academic didn't attend this event.

President: Student Forum has been set up for students to talk about student issues. It is comprised of general students and student leaders. President Rajat went to the steering committee meeting today. He further notes that their terms of reference require two execs and two grad students at large appointed by Council. This year it was President and VP Academic. Last year was President and VP Student Affairs.

VP Student Affairs states that President and VP Student Affairs should sit on the exec of Student Forum and general membership of Student Forum. He further notes that is a fluid decision that can change year-by-year and is to be decided by GSA Exec. as to which GSA execs will sit on that committee.

6.13 Update on Legal Sub-committee Update

President notes that the legal Sub-Committee met the lawyer today and provided him a compelling rationale as to why the full invoice costs cannot and should not be paid by the GSA. After a period of tense negotiations. The lawyer agreed that the GSA will submit payment for all services rendered up to the period of April 1st 2015 when he was contacted by the VP Student Affairs (Rajat Chakravarty at the time) and VP External (Rahwa Osman at the time) informing him that his appointment/hiring by GSA President at the time had not been approved by the GSA.

BIRT that the GSA will pay the invoiced amount up to April 1st, 2015 including taxes and disbursements from the Legal Budget line. 3 in favour. VP Ops and VP Student Affairs abstain. Motion carries.

President commends the valiant actions of the legal sub-committee and thanks them for their diligent work.

6.14 GSA meeting on Childcare

VP Student Affairs notes that there has been ongoing discussion on childcare with Vice-Provost Teaching and Learning along with his counterpart at USSU. He notes that we need to be informed and be part of this discussion.

VP Academic raises some concerns regarding childcare with VP Fowler (University Finance) but he will take care of them as it is under his portfolio and he will initiate a broader discussion.

President asks the purpose of this discussion. VP Student Affairs notes that the new childcare facility will likely be operational by December and he wants to know the percentage of GSA spaces and how much they are going to charge.

7.Adjournment. Call for adjournment moved by VP Ops. Seconded by VP Student Affairs. Meeting is adjourned at 6:16PM.

Appendix: Three Minute Reports:

President:

President has chaired a legal sub-committee to deal with the outstanding issue of the legal invoice and notes they came up with a good strategy and most likely resolved the situation. This has been a major focus and he is pleased to resolve it in a way that saves the GSA thousands of dollars. He has been working on improving participation rates at GSA Council and has reached out to Uni Council to tell them to send their students to our Council. Several departments have been having elections and he encourages all present to get people from their departments involved. The Election Forum was successful with good turnout and engagement. He worked on newsletter and the next one will be finalized later this week or early next week.

President noted that Student Forum executive had a steering meeting. International Students will be a topic along with final exams scheduling and mental health. He had a meeting with ISAAC. Attended the Uni Council Meeting and gala and the Manning Awards. He is working on Academic Consultation with VP Academic and is also planning some social events. Campaign on provincial elections to be held in April.

VP Finance:

VP Finance notes that obviously things have been very busy but he takes pride in his work and his service for the members of the GSA. Since the previous Executive Meeting he attended a dinner meeting with the Health and Dental Plan Representative which resulted in preliminary positive news in terms of plan costs for the next year. He attended the Meet and Greet event for the Indigenous Graduate Students' Council. He further notes that he is committed to better GSA engagement with Indigenous students and complimented the hard work that Liason Carriere is doing in this area as it is obviously an area where the GSA can do better. She also deserves congratulations for her leadership of the intramural sports initiative as do the execs who have stepped up participated on these teams as a form of positive outreach to our members.

The VP Finance reports that the movie screening he organized was well received with many attendees reporting that the movie was better than the original. He acknowledges the work of President Rajat and VP Ghaith in helping him with set-up, take-down and ad hoc tech support they provided. The VP Finance had hoped for the GSA to break even on the event but with the film licensing being in American currency and the number of tickets sold that did not happen. The suggestions received include having popcorn/snacks next time. VP Finance reports that this may be possible to serve them on the outside of the room but is not technically permitted in the inside classroom. VP Finance helped to transport and set-up beverages and treats for the Federal Election Candidates Forum and the feedback from this event was positive. The GSA is obviously a non-partisan organization but we certainly want our members to be involved in the political process.

Along with the President, the VP Finance attended the announcement of the Manning Awards winners and then attended the reception representing the GSA along with the President, VP Academic, and Aboriginal Liason. It was pleasurable and we took the chance to greet MLA Norris and Mr. Michel David from the Organizing Committee. This celebration of innovation is something that the GSA has touched on somewhat in the past through sponsoring the Tech Venture / I3 Innovation Awards via venture loans (which would generate some revenue for the GSA). The uptake in that program hasn't been as high as hoped when the agreement was signed several years ago and it expires this year. VP Finance has had meetings with the ILO (Industry Liason Office) who administer this program and would certainly like to continue having some agreement with them but it needs to be modified to better suit the membership of the GSA and not so narrowly focused on STEM and also scaled back in terms of revenue commitment. This is an ongoing process that he is engaging with.

The VP Finance attended the CGSR Council meeting with the President and the VP Operations and reminded all present that they are also supposed to attend this council as they are voting members and the voices of grad students. He further notes that President will likely talk more about the ongoing attendance problem later on. The substantive discussion largely focused on the qualification level of Ph.D./Master's Supervisors. It is obviously important for all students to have qualified supervisors well being responsive to different disciplinary standards.

The VP Finance has been working on the budgeting process including having meetings with experts from Financial Services Division and doing research/reading on the processes and examining comparator organizations. There are challenges in trying to budget for things that don't exist yet or don't have any sort of policy prescriptions. VP Finance notes that it seems clear there is a need for improved student and academic advocacy but until we know what form that will take any accurate budgeting cannot be accomplished. Another initiative that may come in the next budget that he has been working on with the VP Operations is one year trial of an emergency loan system for graduate students either in cooperation with or above and beyond the current offering from the University. To that end they have had a preliminary meeting with the requisite University officials to gather more information. The idea of implementing this system is that it would go above and beyond the current system of needs-based bursary. VP Finance also notes that it his intention to expand the needs-based bursary system to benefit more students.

Along with the President and the VP Academic he attended the interim-President's Reception and thanked President Barnhart for his service to our University. His sentiments of going for calmness but not complacency strike accord with VP Finance. In addition to the Senior Leadership Breakfast he also attended the lunch meeting with VPTL Patti McDougall and her team from SEDS. VP Finance notes that he is honoured to be the GSA representative to the Provost's Committee on Gender and Sexual Diversity which is an administration-supported committee that serves to support the institution in creating a community "that embraces diversity and ensures fair, respectful, and inclusive treatment for all its members by addressing intersectional issues of gender and sexual diversity as they impact upon the campus community." One of the

issues that we are working on now revolve around university paperwork that we have all filled out at some point in our careers and the need to make sure the language regarding sex and gender is keeping up with the realities of our community membership.

VP Operations and Communications:

VP Ops notes that the daily updates of FB page, GSA website and daily meeting with GSA Commons Manager are ongoing. He has represented the GSA at the Ag-Bio Council, Uni Council meeting, USSU and GSA lunch, Leadership breakfast. He announced the bursary applications for this fall and has been organizing this on a daily basis. He also notes that he has been working very hard on a new initiative with VP Finance regarding emergency loans and met with requisite university officials.

VP Student Affairs:

VP Student Affairs notes that he is in a transition zone. He spent a great deal of time doing the orientation and been trying to catch up on his academic work. He has been representing the GSA at PCIP and Academic Programs on CGSR which meet regularly. He has been working with Vice-Provost Teaching and Learning and his USSU counterpart on issues of Campus Safety. He has been advocating on behalf of the GSA during sexual assault awareness campaign. He has been meeting with CGSR Associate Dean to talk about student advocacy and helping students deal with residence regarding temperature control issues in the residences. He is finalizing the report on Orientation.

VP Academic:

VP External:

VP External notes that she has been doing a whole bunch of stuff including Grad School Health Chats and planning these events for the whole year with approx. one per month Topics will include mental health, exercise, nutrition.

She represented GSA at the Sustainability Expo today and on Friday and has been tracking down councillors to serve on policy review committee.

Aboriginal Liason: