



University of Saskatchewan - Graduate Students' Association
Board Meeting
February 14, 2019

Present: Naheda Sahtout (President), Jesus Corona Gomez (VP Finance and Operations), Edgar Martinez-Soberanes (VP Student Affairs), Somtochukwu Ufondu (VP External).

1. Call to Order / Opening Remarks

The President called the meeting to order at 6:40 PM.

2. Approval of the Agenda

The agenda was circulated prior to the meeting. The President asked whether there were any further additions to the agenda.

Motion to approve the agenda moved by the VP External and seconded by the VP Finance and Operations.

Motion carried.

3. Items for Action

3.1 Repatriation Costs (email correspondence January 4, 2019)

It is with great sadness that we were informed of the passing away of Mr. Abdullah Al Masum, a graduate student in the College of Engineering. Mr. Masum's family is back home and as a result Mr. Masum's body must be repatriated as soon as possible. Under the circumstances, health insurance does not cover the repatriation costs of his body to his home country. These costs are approximately summing to \$10,000.

As a team, we every effort to support emergency situations, such as this one, that cannot be accommodated by the Crisis Aid Program. For this reason, the Board discussed via email to see how the GSA could support the repatriation costs.

Looking at the current approved budget and expenses.

- Budget line 53302 (GSA Fall Orientation) had an approved allocation of \$7,000 as expense. The total amount expended for the Fall Orientation was only \$5,319.40.
- Budget line 53308 (GSA Workshops / Initiatives) has an approved allocation of \$950 as expense. This budget line has currently not been used.

In lieu of this information, the Board approved the following re-allocations;

- \$1,500 from Budget line 53302 (GSA Fall Orientation) to Budget line 61000 (Miscellaneous Expenses).
- \$500 from Budget line 53308 (GSA Workshops / Initiatives) to Budget line 61000 (Miscellaneous Expenses).

With these re-allocations, the Board approved funds of \$2,000, payable to the Saskatoon Funeral Home, to assist in the repatriation of Mr. Masum's body to his home country. Both the re-allocations and the approved funds were moved by the VP Finance and Operations and seconded by the President. The decision was unanimous. At the time of the Board discussion (January 4, 2019), we were unaware of the exact costs to the repatriation and therefore indicated that these motions would be in effect only if the funds were needed. A week later, we were made aware that his family and community is unable to provide such financial support and we hope this play's a small part in assisting them at this time of difficulty.

The cheque was issued on January 15, 2019, made payable to the Saskatoon Funeral Home in memo of The Estate of Mr. Abdullah Al Masum.

3.2 Canadian Federation of Students Fee

The GSA is an affiliated member, Local 101, of the Canadian Federation of Students (CFS). As a voting member on CFS and CFS-Services, the GSA has signed to act as an agent for CFS and CFS-Services, with respect to the collection of CFS and CFS-Services membership fees. Regular members of the GSA pay a CFS membership fee each semester, which is collected by the GSA and remitted to CFS. The current 2018 - 2019 Cdn Federation of Students fee is \$6.14 per semester. According to the CFS and CFS-Services' Bylaws, the membership fees are adjusted

each academic year by the rate of change in the Canadian Consumer Price Index (CPI) during the previous calendar year. CFS has indicated that the increase in CPI from 2017 to 2018 of 2.2682 %, which would indicate that the new federation membership fee is \$6.23 per semester. Any fees collected by the University incur a 1 % administration cost. Therefore, to accommodate this administration fee, the new Cdn Federation of Students fee would increase for the 2019 - 2020 academic year from \$6.14 per semester to \$6.30 per semester.

Motion to recommend the approval of an increase in the Cdn Federation of Students fee from \$6.14 (per semester) to \$6.30 (per semester) moved by the VP Finance and Operations and seconded by the VP External.

Motion carried.

3.3 Health and Dental Fees

The Graduate Health and Dental plan provides benefits that complements those made available through the provincial Saskatchewan Health Services and provides students with access to extended health and dental coverage. The current 2018 - 2019 Graduate Health Plan is \$222.51. and the current 2018 - 2019 Graduate Dental Plan is \$236.52. The insurance policies that underlie the Health and Dental Plan are one-year contracts that are renegotiated by Studentcare with Sun Life Insurance every policy year. The Plan's cost is based on the forward projection of the current year's claims, adjusted for inflation, and includes the insurer expenses, the provider's fees and the Plan's fixed costs. An overview of the projected Plan cost structure for the upcoming 2019 - 2020 policy year using Studentcare's internal projections, which are based on the Plan's historical claims experience and claims from the first four (4) months of the 2018 - 2019 policy year, does not indicate the need for any fee increases. Upon recommendation from Studentcare and the Health and Dental Committee;

Motion to recommend no change in the GSA Health Plan fee or the GSA Dental Plan fee for the 2019 - 2020 policy year such that they remain at \$222.51 and \$236.52, respectively, moved by the VP External and seconded by the VP Finance and Operations.

Motion carried.

3.4 Health Plan Drug Exception Maximum Policy

The Health Plan covers eligible prescription drug costs up to 80 % and provides students with coverage and access to drugs that are approved and covered through the Plan 48 formulary, which is based on the Saskatchewan provincial drug formulary, which is managed and regularly updated by SaskHealth. The Plan occasionally covers prescription drugs that are not included / approved as part of the provincial drug formulary. Students who wish to receive coverage for these medications must apply through the Drug Exception Process, which allows for claims to be evaluated and assessed on an individual basis. Often times these drugs are new medications, which can be high in cost and can have a significant impact on the Plan's claims experience, sometimes driving up premiums for our members. Students wishing to apply through the Studentcare Drug Exception Process should first register with the Saskatchewan Special Support Program (SSP), which is an income based program provided by the Saskatchewan government to help individuals and families manage their prescription drug costs.

Studentcare is recommending the implementation of a 'Drug Exception Annual Maximum' to control costs and standardize the Drug Exception Process based on three (3) major benefits;

- 1) Clarity: provides students with a clear-cut limit to the amount of eligible prescription drug claims (approved through the Drug Exception Process) that they can make in a policy year. This improves predictability and allows students to better plan and budget for their health and prescription drug needs.
- 2) Equality: provides students with equal dollar value coverage to the (non-provincial formulary) drugs and does not discriminate based on drug type, the student's profile, or any other factors. The Plan strives to treat every student equally and fairly and this process helps achieve that goal.
- 3) Cost Control: immediate safe-guard for the Plan, by vetting and reviewing a student's specific case and situation before allowing them to submit claims that will have a significant cost impact to the Plan. This safe-guard provides stability to the Plan and improves the overall efficacy of the Plan's prescription drug guidelines and policies. The existence of a Drug Exception Maximum also encourages students to seek and maximize any available coverage provided by the government and other public bodies to help cover the cost of their prescriptions.

The Drug Exception Maximum would be set by the GSA and each student's claim would be reviewed by senior Studentcare Member Services agents to determine that the drug is eligible and that appropriate steps have been followed. The Drug Exception Process would be fully explained to students through the Studentcare website. The number of students who claim drug exceptions greater than \$2,000 were two (2) students in the 2015 - 2016 policy year, one (1) student in the 2016 - 2017 policy year and one (1) student in the 2017 - 2018 policy year, with all those claims being less than \$1,000 over the limit. The GSA Executives, with recommendation from Council, have the authority to approve any drug exceptions that are over the \$2,000 limit in any given policy year.

Motion to recommend for approval that the GSA implements a Drug Exception Maximum of \$2,000 beginning in September 2019. This maximum would provide students with access to \$2,000 in paid claims for prescription drugs which are not included in the Plan 48 formulary moved by the VP External and seconded by the VP Student Affairs.

Motion carried.

3.5 Upgrade to Commons Equipment and Office Computers

There was a discussion on the need to upgrade the office computers, as they were quite old, and have a plan to budget for upgrades to the audio equipment in the Commons area, since it was nearing 10 years of age. It was noted that computers in the Commons area were property of the University and would be automatically upgraded once their 5-year lifetime has reached. The Office Computers would cost about \$5000 and the Commons audio upgrades would cost about \$13000. The upgrades to the audio would include podium video connections, two commercial amplifiers and an audio mixer that is standard to the University,

Motion to recommend upgrades to the Commons Equipment and Office Computers moved by the VP Finance and Operations and seconded by the VP External.

Motion carried.

3.6 Graduate Student' Association Membership Fee

There was an extensive discussion on the draft budget that was provided by the Budget and Finance Committee, which would be included in the Council agenda. It was noted that the banking fees had increased significantly and it might be worth looking into why this was the case. There was a discussion on the need for some increase to the membership fee to accommodate for the renewals and further increases to the student support programs (Needs-Based Bursaries, the Travel Awards and the Crisis Aid program). The Budget and Finance Committee has recommended a 4.9 % increase in the membership fee, and it was favorably agreed that this was a reasonable increase.

Motion to recommend to Council an increase in membership fees for the 2019 - 2020 academic year increase by 4.9 % from \$35.32 per semester to \$37.06 per semester (\$70.64 per year to \$74.12 per year) moved by the VP Finance and Operations and seconded by the VP Student Affairs.

Motion carried.

4. Confidential Session

5. In-Camera Session

6. Adjournment of Meeting

Seeing no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 7:35 PM.