



University of Saskatchewan - Graduate Students' Association

Executive Meeting Minutes

July 17, 2019

**Present:** Mery Mendoza (President), Mohammad Wajih Alam (VP Finance and Operations), Alejandra Fonseca (VP Student Affairs), Chiamaka Ezekwesili (VP External).

**Regrets/Absent:** None

**Guest:** Mary Bajomo (VP finance of Engineering Graduate Community Council)

**1. Call to Order / Opening Remarks**

The President called the meeting to order at 6:04 PM.

**2. Approval of the Agenda**

The President asked if there were any additions or amendments to the agenda as circulated.

*Motion to approve the Agenda as amended moved by the President and seconded by the VP Finance and Operations.*

***Vote All in Favour, Motion carried.***

**3. Approval of the June 12, 2019 Executive Meeting Minutes**

The President asked whether there were any further amendments to the June 12<sup>th</sup> Executive Meeting Minutes.

*Motion to approve the June 12, 2019 Executive Minutes moved by the VP Student Affairs and seconded by the VP External.*

***Vote all in Favour, Motion carried.***

## 4. Items for Action

### *4.1 Fall/Winter Executive Meeting Dates*

The President wishes to confirm the Fall/Winter Executive Meeting dates. Proposed final dates for GSA Executive Meetings are:

- September 9<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup>
- October 7<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup>
- November 4<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup>
- December 9<sup>th</sup>
- January 13<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup>
- February 10<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup>
- March 9<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup>
- April 13<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup>

*Motion to approve the GSA Executive dates, as listed above, moved by President and seconded by VP Student Affairs.*

**Vote all in favour, Motion carried**

### *4.2 Fall/Winter GSA Council Meeting Dates:*

The President wishes to confirm the Fall/Winter Council Meeting dates. Proposed final dates for GSA Council Meetings are:

- September 24<sup>th</sup>
- October 15<sup>th</sup>
- November 5<sup>th</sup>
- December 3<sup>rd</sup>
- January 28<sup>th</sup>
- February 25<sup>th</sup>
- March 17<sup>th</sup>

- April 14<sup>th</sup> (Potential AGM)

Proposed election dates in between March 30<sup>th</sup> to April 3<sup>rd</sup>.

*Motion to approve the GSA Council Meeting dates, as listed above, moved by President and seconded by VP Student Affairs.*

**Vote all in favour, Motion carried**

#### *4.3 Funding request*

The President mentioned that we received a funding request from Engineering Graduate Community Council (EGCC). The document, presented by EGCC, had a clear budget description for two proposed events and was shared with all executives. The President welcomed the VP of finance of EGCC, Mary Bajomo, via Conference Call and asked her to briefly describe the proposed events. Mary explained that they are planning two events, the Engineering Graduate Research Conference to be held on September 12, 2019 and Orientation Day for new Engineering graduate students to be held on September 20, 2019. The research conference targets engineering students from all disciplines to showcase their research work. The audience for this event will be from both, industry and University and around 400 attendees are expected. Posters will be judged and prizes will be distributed for best poster presentations. For the orientation event, Mary explained that this well-structured event expects around 100 people and this is a way to welcome students to the University.

The President opened the floor for questions. The VP External asked how the GSA will be promoted if the posters are already done for the research event. Mary mentioned that GSA will always be mentioned at the event and the logo will be added in any future posters related to this event. The VP Student Affairs asked what miscellaneous means on the funding request. Mary replied that it includes cost such as: transportation, logistics and some unforeseen circumstances. The president asked where the event will be held and Mary replied that it is planned to be in the College of Engineering. The President mentioned that when the GSA sponsors an event, the GSA logo is expected to be on the posters and an announcement should be made at the event. Mary agrees to add GSA logo, found on the website, on posters and

advertising material. The President indicated that the decision is based on the budget and not on the event. The President thanked Mary for providing the proposal and further information. The decision will be made and it will be communicated via email. The president mentioned that GSA can only sponsor up to 500 CAD per academic year but since EGCC represents all the engineering groups at the University, the executives can go above the amount.

*The VP External moved to approve funding in the amount of \$800 for this event. This motion was seconded by the VP Student Affairs.*

**3 in favour, 1 abstention (VP Finance and Operations due to Conflict of Interest)**

#### *4.4 ThinkGrad*

The President mentioned that as part of the GSA's affiliations with ThinkGrad, Executives attend these conferences every year. As per role, the VP External usually attends these meetings unless otherwise indicated, and because of budgetary constraints, for this year only one individual will be attending to any meetings, conferences, etc. held outside Saskatoon. During the executive retreat held on May 4<sup>th</sup>, 2019, the executives decided that:

VP External will attend CFS conferences,

VP Student Affairs will attend Student Care Conferences,

VP Finance and Operations will attend ThinkGrad conference in August and

The President will attend ThinkGrad conference in April next year.

The President hopes that, the VP Finance and Operations, has a good learning experience and brings valuable information from ThinkGrad conference held this August in Montreal.

*Motion to approve the participation of VP of finance and operations in the first ThinkGrad conference held in August 2-3, 2019. Moved by VP External and seconded by VP Student Affairs.*

**Vote all in favour, Motion carried**

#### *4.5 Newsletter Content*

The President mentioned that a procedure for content and dates needs to be followed when sending the GSA newsletter. The executives agreed that GSA events will be given priority followed by any information that directly or indirectly impacts graduate students. The newsletter will be sent the first and third Tuesday of each month.

September to November: twice per month

December: Once per month, the first Tuesday of the month.

January to April: twice per month

The newsletter should be ready at least 3 days before the programmed date. Each executive can send newsletter content to the president who will evaluate and then forward it to the Office Manager. In unforeseen circumstances, an extra email can be sent to graduate students. The VP Finance and Operations asked if we are allowed to send more than two emails per month. To which, the president replied if it satisfies the criteria, they can be sent.

*Motion to accept this procedure and approve the dates for newsletter, moved by the VP Finance and Operations and seconded by VP External.*

**Vote all in favour, Motion carried**

#### *4.6 Student Forum Representatives*

The president mentioned that this committee provides a venue in which students can discuss important issues of the day so that university administration, governing bodies, and representatives of the university's key stakeholder groups hear and consider the perspective of students on institution wide issues that affect the nature and quality of the student experience at the University of Saskatchewan. Student Forum meetings for 2019-2020 would most likely be four per year, with a fifth sometimes scheduled (there has been for the past three years) that focuses on GSA related items only. Membership includes two GSA executive members, and those two members are typically the ones who attend the Student Forum Executive meetings where the agenda for the next Student Forum meeting is planned. The GSA also appoints two graduate Course Counsellors, each year, to form part of Student Forum. It was agreed that the VP External

and the VP Student Affairs will sit on this committee on behalf of the executives. The two councillors will be selected in September.

*Motion to move the VP Student Affairs and President to form part of the student forum representatives. Moved by VP Finance and Operations and seconded by VP External.*

**Vote all in favour, Motion carried**

#### *4.7 Cheque remittance*

Whereas GSA bylaws 5.4.3 restricts expenditure amounts above \$500, of any budget line, with the exception of salaries and Executive honorariums, without a majority vote of the Executive.

BIRT that the following expenditures be authorized:

- Payment to Canadian Federation of Students in the Sum of \$2836.05 issued on July 02, 2019 for handbook deposit.
- Payment to Chip Bookkeeping Services Inc. in the sum of \$1679.94 issued on June 14, 2019 for bookkeeping services.

*The VP Finance and Operations moved to approve the above expenditures. Seconded by the president.*

***Vote all in favour, Motion carried.***

#### *4.8 Sexual Assault Awareness Week*

The GSA was invited to partner with the USSU Women's Centre to organize the Sexual Assault Awareness Week. Since the VP Student Affairs worked close to organize this event last year, the executives decided that Alejandra, VP Student Affairs, will be representing the GSA in the organization of this event. This event is scheduled to occur from September 12<sup>th</sup> through September 18<sup>th</sup>. The President attended the first meeting at which she proposed to have a movie night on September 17<sup>th</sup> at 5:00 PM at the GSA commons, with popcorn provided for attendees. The VP Finance and Operations asked what kind of movies we are planning to show.

The VP External showed interest in selecting the movies and suggestions will be send to the VP of student affairs.

*Motion to decide to partner with the USSU and organize the above events. Moved by the President and seconded by the VP Student Affairs.*

**Vote all in favour, Motion carried**

## **5. Items for Information / Discussion**

### *5.1 Gala Preparation*

The VP External mentioned that she has been working towards booking the venue and looking at ways to ensure maximum participation from students, executives, and faculty members of the University. She contacted Krystal, the decorator of the event, and discussed future steps for this event as well as the use of the Remai Modern museum as a possible venue. She also added that she has plans to introduce buffet as a meal this year. The President thanked the VP External for taking care of the event and for updating the executives about it. The executives will work together for a successful event.

### *5.2 2019 Spring/Summer Bursary Awards*

The VP Finance and Operations mentioned that, with 72 applicants, the demand for the 2019 Spring/Summer Bursary was outstanding. The GSA Bursary Selection Committee identified 10 beneficiaries based on financial need, community involvement, and academic performance. This year the VP Finance and Operations also sent an email to the unsuccessful applicants encouraging them to apply again next term. The president congratulated the VP finance and Operations for the outstanding job that has been done.

### *5.3 Ongoing Volunteer Opportunities*

The VP External was happy to report that the Adopt a Plot Program has been very successful with many volunteers enthusiastically participating on the event. The executives were really happy with

how this program turned out and a volunteer appreciation event will be organized. This will be discussed in future executive meetings.

#### *5.4 CFS discussion*

The VP External added that students in Ontario now have an option to opt-in/opt-out of their graduate student organization and that many items were discussed, including the Student Choice Initiative which has brought concern to all organizations.

#### *5.5 StudentCare*

The President, the VP Finance and Operations, and the Office Manager had a meeting with Katrin, the StudentCare representative in which they discussed the Health and Dental Plan provided to graduate students. The Health and Dental Plan provider gave an introduction and general information about the use of the plans with an opportunity for questions. Many items were discussed including the possibility of increasing the StudentCare vision network. The VP of finance and operations asked about the reasons why international students are covered everywhere but are not covered when visiting in their home country; Katrin assured that she will get back to the executives with this information. Sponsorship for future GSA events were discussed and will be followed with the President through email.

#### *5.6 Conflict engagement and management*

The President mentioned that the GSA, in collaboration with the University Secretary's office, the office of the Vice-Provost Teaching, Learning, and Student Experience and the college of Law, have created the Conflict Resolution & Advocacy workshop aimed at students who have leadership, advocacy, administrative and other conflict-management roles on campus and will be held on September 28 and 29. It has a cost of \$25.00 and there is a limited number of spots. All GSA executives will be participating in this workshop and they should register as soon as the President forwards the invitation. Some Councillors will be invited to participate in this workshop and future details will be discussed soon.



### *5.7 Communication between executives*

The President reminded the executives that it is important to keep a continuity in the communication in a timely manner, that way, we all work as a team and continue providing the services to members of the GSA.

### *5.8 Part-time office co-ordination position*

The GSA will be hiring a new office co-ordinator this fall. The Office manager is going on vacation, however, she will do the pre-selection of candidates. August 10<sup>th</sup>, the President and the VP Finance and Operations will decide a date to interview possible candidates. The VP Student Affairs asked if past executives can apply to which the President replied that they are not eligible to apply.

### *5.9 CGPS Funding request letter*

The President received the funding request letter response from the Dean of CGPS indicating the financial commitments during the 2019-20 academic year as follows: \$28,000.00 for the GSA needs-based bursary, \$10,000.00 for the Awards Gala, \$3,500.00 for the 3MT and conference with an additional of \$2,000 with purpose of prizes and \$3,000 towards the Good Breakfast initiative. This would be a total financial commitment of \$46,500 which is still pending discussion from GSA. CGPS will also consult the Student Finance and Awards office with regards to the Crisis Aid Program to see if a matching contribution could be made.

### *5.10 Student engagement with community*

The President explained that the professional success of our graduate students depends not only on their skills and academic abilities, but also on the experiences they receive through their participation in initiatives, such as the exchange of cultural knowledge and community engagement. Many graduate students do not have the opportunity to experience multiculturalism, community connection, and involvement in Saskatoon. The GSA wishes to offer graduate students the opportunity to participate in discussions, held once per term at the GSA Commons, to develop awareness of the local culture and various communities, and to promote many organizations around the city for the students' benefit. The GSA hopes that this opportunity

enhances the experience of our graduate students at both the University of Saskatchewan and the City of Saskatoon, and that it enriches our graduate students and community in general. The GSA will start planning those events and future discussions on this will be done.

#### *5.11 Meeting with Dean of Library*

The President and the VP Finance and Operations have met with the Dean of Library to discuss future partnership and collaboration with the library. Organization of some workshops at the GSA commons that promote the GSA commons and the participation from graduate students, were discussed. The dean informed the GSA that there will be a selective renewal of journal subscription starting from January 1<sup>st</sup> 2019 for which, graduate students and faculty members of the University of Saskatchewan will be receiving an email survey so that the library can have statistics so that they can do their best to retain the journals that the community uses. The VP Finance and Operations mentioned that it is unfortunate that this is happening but it is very important for all graduate students involved in research to fill this survey and have their voice heard. The President mentioned that it is very unfortunate but she is confident that they will find ways to make this situation less stressful for graduate students and also mentioned that she wishes that all students are aware of this situation so they can participate on the survey. Communication with the library will be continued.

#### *5.12 Meeting Saskatchewan Student Coalition*

GSA representatives from various students' organizations from different Universities across Saskatchewan had met on July 16<sup>th</sup>, 2019 to discuss the future of Saskatchewan Student Coalition (SSC) group. The President and the VP finance and operations from the GSA-USASK were present and were the only ones representing graduate students and, since graduate student' needs are different from undergraduate students, the President suggested that each executive should be present in future meetings. The SSC has volunteered some executives of member organizations to work on the initial draft on mission of the SSC. Next meeting was scheduled for August 15, 2019.

### 5.13 TEDx

President mentioned that TEDx event is organized at the University of Saskatchewan by some members of the university community and the President has been contacted by one of the members of TEDx committee to support the event. The President proposed to provide free space (GSA Commons) for dinner and promote the event through social media. The TEDx committee was asked to put GSA logo on the banner whenever possible as a sponsor. The President mentioned that this collaboration is still under discussion. Executives showed interest to participate as volunteers/participants in this event, which will be held in September 7<sup>th</sup>, 2019.

### 6. Other Business

### 7. Confidential Session

### 8. In Camera Session

### 9. Adjournment of Meeting

The President asked whether there was any other business arising.

*Since there were none, the VP Finance and Operations moved to adjourn the meeting, Seconded by the president.*

*Vote all in favour, Motion carried.*

The meeting was adjourned at 10:00 PM.