



University of Saskatchewan - Graduate Students' Association
Executive Meeting Minutes
March 14, 2019

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

Regrets: none

1. Call to Order / Opening Remarks

The President called the meeting to order at 5:10 PM.

2. Approval of the Agenda

The President asked if there were any additions or amendments to the agenda as circulated. The VP Finance and Operations wished to add an update for the GSA Tax Clinic as item for information.

Motion to approve the agenda as circulated and amended moved by the VP External and seconded by the VP Student Affairs.

Motion carried.

3. Approval of the February 28, 2019 Executive Meeting Minutes

The President asked whether there were any further amendments to the February 28, 2019 Executive Meeting Minutes.

Motion to approve the February 28, 2019 Executive Meeting Minutes moved by the VP Finance and Operations and seconded by the VP External.

Motion carried.

4. Items for Action

4.1 Funding Request from College of Pharmacy and Nutrition Graduate Student Council.

The VP Finance and Operations indicated that he had received a funding request from the College of Pharmacy and Nutrition Graduate Student Council with a thorough description and budget of a student BBQ event. The President mentioned that they submitted a descriptive budget proposal where the Executives can see all the details of their planned expenses for the year. The President invited the Executives to look at the BBQ event where the estimated cost is \$400. The VP Finance and Operations commented that since the BBQ is planned on campus, the majority of the attendees will be graduate students mostly from the College of Pharmacy and Nutrition. The VP External mentioned that the cost of food items is the main expense for this event. The VP Student Affairs commented that they estimated 40 participants for this BBQ, but they might have more than 40 people. The President commented that they have submitted the same funding request to their College and they are waiting for a response from them as stated in their funding proposal. The President asked the VP Finance and Operations to contact them and ask whether the BBQ is the event to which they are requesting funding.

The VP Finance and Operations corresponded by email and received a response on March 18th confirming that the BBQ event is the only event that they are requesting funding for.

The VP External moved to approve funding in the amount of \$250 to the College of Pharmacy and Nutrition Graduate Student Council for the BBQ event. This motion was seconded by the VP Finance and Operations.

Motion carried.

4.2 Funding Request from ASHRAE Social Club.

The VP Finance and Operations mentioned that he had received a funding request from ASHRAE with a thorough description and budget of the Opening event. The President welcomed Ramin, and Shitta-Bey to the Executive meeting and asked them to provide a brief description of the event. Ramin commented that the budget provided represents an academic year budget for the ASHRAE social club to start operations and organize social events. The first social event is intended to be an Opening Event of ASHRAE. In this event they are planning to invite people from the industry

and students from different fields, but the majority will come from the College of Engineering. The Opening event will be a social gathering where students can connect with people in the industry as well as attract sponsors for the ASHRAE social club. Ramin explained that during the year they will organize more workshops, visits to industry sites, presentations, etc. The VP Student Affairs asked how many students will attend the Opening and what is their estimate on food expenses? Ramid mentioned that around 50 students are expected to attend and the cost of food might be around \$500. The VP Finance and Operations asked how they are planning to advertise this event and if they already started? Ramin explained that they already started advertising this event face to face with students. Ramin added that they have already contacted the ASHRAE branch in Saskatoon, which has agreed to sponsor this event in some capacity and the president will participate in the event as a keynote speaker. Shitta-Bey added that they have already booked the GSA Commons for the Opening, although at a later date had to re-locate due to the 3MT Competition being held on the same day. The VP Student Affairs suggested they submit a budget specifically for this event instead of for the whole year to allow the Executives to evaluate better the budget and make a decision. Ramid agreed to email the VP Finance and Operations an updated budget only for this social event for the Executives to look at.

The VP Finance confirmed that he received the updated budget on March 19th at which point he circulated it to the Executives by email.

The VP External moved to approve funding in the amount of \$300 to ASHRAE for the Opening event. This motion was seconded by the VP Student Affairs.

Motion carried.

4.3 ThinkGrad

The President informed the Executives that we had received an invitation to attend the ThinkGrad Conference from April 12th to 15th, hosted at the University of Sherbrooke in Quebec. The VP Finance and Operations expressed interest in attending ThinkGrad, from the 12th to the 14th, commenting that the graduate community should have representation at this conference. The Executives would use teleconference on the 15th to ensure representation.

Motion to approve the VP Finance and Operations attend the ThinkGrad Conference in April.

Motion moved by the VP Student Affairs and seconded by the VP External.

Motion carried.

(1 abstention; The VP Finance and Operations)

4.4 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.

- Cheque 3551 on March 8, 2019 to CRA RE: 2018 T4 CRA of \$640.08
- Cheque 3554 on March 11, 2019 to CFS RE: CFS Winter of \$18,732.93
- Cheque 3552 on March 11, 2019 to Saskatoon Transit RE: Saskatoon Transit Winter of \$300,267.80

Motion to approve the above expenditure moved by the VP Finance and Operations and seconded by the President.

Motion carried.

4.5 GSA Executive and Staff Leadership Conference (retroactive motion; January 31, 2019 meeting minutes)

In order to better reflect the purpose and nature of the event of February 15th - 18th, 2019, a retroactive motion for transparency is as follows;

Motion to approve for four Executives, the previous Indigenous Liaison, and office staff (although only 3 attended) to attend the GSA Executive and Staff Leadership Conference. This motion was moved by the VP Finance and Operations, and seconded by the VP Student Affairs.

Motion carried.

Description and outcomes:

The Executives collectively identified the need to hold a retreat from February 15th - 18th, 2019. A total of eight (8) people attended and included;

- (1) The four current Executives

- (2) The previous Indigenous Liaison
- (3) The Office Manager
- (4) Two of the five Office Coordinators.

Even though there were opportunities for team building activities during the retreat and team excursions, the majority of the retreat was focused on the following;

- (1) How the GSA can become sustainable in future years;
- (2) Providing a safe and non-judgmental space for the Office Manager and the Office Coordinators to share their opinions and concerns;
- (3) How to engage graduate students in student politics and student leadership;
- (4) A reflection on the activities of the year and how to better prepare the future Executives and staff for sustainable practices;
- (5) How best to engage Indigenous graduate students, since the IGSC has been void of leadership for the past few months.

Historically, past practice has been to create a year to year transition for Executives, without integrating the Office Manager. The retreat discussions indicated that this was not best practice. For this reason it was identified that a thorough manual of the workings of the Association be created by the President, with assistance from each of the Executives. This manual was not only to include the duties of each of the Executives but also an understanding to the finer details of the day-to-day tasks. The manual would also include, if possible, suggestions for sustainable initiatives that support the well-being of our graduate students.

The retreat also identified that engagement of graduate students in student politics comes when there is a strong platform of support. With the GSA being a student-led organization, it was important to set expectations that did not prevent future student leaders from carrying-on their research activities. The hope is that the above-mentioned manual would assist in reducing any barriers. Furthermore, the importance of diversity and representation was discussed. While it will not be easy to ensure that all minorities are well represented, sharing circles and continuous hosting of events by the Diversity Committee will help address this to some extent. An understanding of respect and inclusion was discussed, especially in the context of Indigenous graduate students.

4.6 Insurance coverage issue

The President commented that she was approached by a student who had purchased a prescription drug that was not covered by insurance at the time of purchase, although later was added to the Plan 48 formulary. At the time of purchase the student was so informed, by the medical practitioners, that this would be covered by insurance. The President indicated that Saskatchewan Health has a list of prescription drugs covered, and Studentcare and Sunlife automatically cover those drugs on the list. Unfortunately, at the time of purchase, it was not part of Plan 48 so it was not actually covered by Studentcare. The student indicated that it is seeking a reimbursement.

The Executives are left to think of the following;

1. Should the GSA be covering an uncovered (at the time) expense due to the mistake of either the student, the doctor, or the pharmacist?
2. Would you be willing to reimburse all other students who purchased that same product during this time frame?
3. What kind of precedent does this set for covering prescriptions that fall outside of the covered drugs from the formulary without going through the normal drug exception process?

The Executives commented that this would be more than a single case, it would represent all the items and drugs that were not covered by Studentcare and Sunlife in that time frame. It was commented that the GSA cannot cover the cost of these items as it sets a precedent. The Executives commented that the Plan 48 formulary list is available for all the beneficiaries to consult before purchasing. The Executives were in agreement that if something was not on the list at the time of purchase, that it would be unreasonable for the GSA to cover the cost as it sets a precedent of covering all cases that followed the same scenario, whether now or in the past.

5. Items for Information / Discussion

5.1 Audit Update

The Vice-President Finance and Operations commented that the auditing process is advancing as expected and hopefully the majority of the audits will be ready by the Annual General Meeting; if not, they should be finalized during the Summer.

5.2 Budget Address

The President indicated that she received an invitation to go to the Budget Address in Regina on March 20 at 1:30 pm. In this event the provincial government provides information about the new budget, how they will allocate their resources and support institutions, such as the University of Saskatchewan. The President extended the invitation to the Executives to attend this event.

5.3 Lease Renewal

The President informed the Executives that the new lease for the GSA Commons has been signed and approved by the Board for 5 years, with potential to extend for another 5 years.

5.4 Breakfast Program

The President indicated that Culinary Services came back with prices for breakfast packages. For 30 people, the price ranged from \$2.16 per person to \$2.50 per person. The Executives commented that for the quantity of food being offered, it is a little bit expensive. The VP Student Affairs suggested to double check prices in Costco and estimate how much it would cost us to buy the items by ourselves. The President indicated that the advantage of Culinary Services is that the storage and delivery on site, which is convenient. It might be worth seeing if we can store extra bread in case of emergency. The VP External commented that this would be a good community engagement activity that involves both colleges / schools / units on campus and community partners.

5.5 Tax Clinic Update

The VP Finance and Operations indicated that he has been recruiting volunteers for the GSA Free Tax Clinic, which will take place next month, and is hosted in association with the Canada Volunteer Income Tax Program (CVITP) a program of the Canada Revenue Agency. The potential volunteers are receiving all the information needed to get registered with the CRA as volunteers for the GSA, and training information to provide this service. The VP Finance and Operations commented that the GSA Tax Clinic will be free for graduate students and their families provided they meet the following criteria:

- They are not self-employed and have no employment expenses.

- They have no rental income.
- They have no capital gains or losses to report.
- They have not filed for bankruptcy.
- They are not filing on behalf of a deceased person.
- They have an income LESS than \$50,000.

Graduate students attending the GSA Free Tax Clinic will be required to have valid government identification which includes a photo. They will be required to file a consent form from the GSA and a TIS60 form from the Canada Revenue Agency. They will also be required to bring all necessary documents (T4, T4As, T2202a and any other tax form for the tax year) with them. It is helpful if the student is able to bring their own laptop as well. The VP Finance and Operations indicated that the dates and times of the tax clinic are April 3rd, 5th, 10th, 12th, and 17th from 4 PM to 7 PM each day.

5. Other Business

The President invited the Executives to attend:

- University Council on April 18th from 2:30 PM to 4:00 PM.
- Senate on April 27th from at least 9:00 AM to 12:00 PM.

7. Confidential Session

8. In Camera Session

9. Adjournment of Meeting

The President asked whether there was any other business arising. Seeing none, the meeting was adjourned at 6:15 PM.