



## University of Saskatchewan - Graduate Students' Association

### Executive Meeting Minutes

May 15, 2019

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

**Regrets/Absent:** None

**Guests:** Nirajan Niroula

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

The president called the meeting to order at 6:03pm.

The president mentioned that this was the first executive meeting for the year and asked about how each officer's experience had been during the first 15 days as executives of the GSA. Chiamaka mentioned that she was busy between taking classes and attending meetings. Wajih and Alejandra mentioned that it has been busy but that they have learned a lot. Mery congratulated each executive for standing for this position and she hopes that each executive maintains high levels of enthusiasm and dedication throughout the year. She mentioned that the Robert's Rules of Order will be followed in the meetings and requested everyone to be familiar with it. She also added that she welcomes everyone to come forward with any questions/concerns.

#### 2. Approval of the Agenda

The president asked if there were any additions or amendments to the agenda as circulated. The president requested to add item 5.5: Meeting with ISAAC and the VP Finance and Operations asked to add item 5.6: Use of discretionary fund to agenda.

*Motion to approve the agenda as amended moved by the president and seconded by the VP Finance and Operations.*

*Motion carried.*

#### 3. Approval of the May 04, 2019 Executive Retreat Meeting Minutes

The president asked whether there were any further amendments to the executive retreat meeting minutes held on May 4<sup>th</sup>, 2019. None were mentioned.

*Motion to approve the retreat minutes moved by the VP Student Affairs and seconded by the VP External.*

***Motion carried.***

#### **4. Items for Action**

##### *4.1 Funding Request NepaliNite-2019*

The VP Finance and Operations indicated that he received a funding request from the Nepalese Student's Association for NepaliNite-2019 with a thorough description and budget requirement. The president welcomed Nirajan to the executive meeting and asked him to briefly describe the event.

Nirajan mentioned that the Nepalese Student's Association has been doing this event every year and it fosters the relationship between different communities. Although the name is NepaliNite, people from all other organizations will be invited. This event will help promote co-operation between different student organizations on-campus. The Nepalese Student's Association also has a plan to invite alumni from different student organization/social groups to further build the relationship. He also mentioned that it will be a free-entry program this year which will foster maximum participation. There will also be a donation box and the money raised will be donated to the people affected by recent tragedy in Srilanka.

The president asked if other executives had any questions. The VP Finance and Operations asked if they have any other financial sources to fund the program. They mentioned they do not have any other approved funding as of yet. President asked if they have applied for other funding. They have asked alumni and other organization but they have not heard back yet. The VP Finance and Operations explained that the GSA can support up to \$500 per academic year depending upon the program. The VP Student Affairs asked if there will be alcohol in the program. Nirajan replied that this is a child-friendly program and alcohol will not be served. The VP External mentioned that she is happy that Nepalese Student's Association is organizing a program where most graduate students can take part in a program outside of the school academics. She asked how many graduate student association are going to get involved and if other students who are not part of Nepalese Students Association have been invited or not. Nirajan mentioned that there will be a cultural program as well where performers from other social groups are invited. He also mentioned that they are expecting more than 100 attendees for the program.

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. Nirajan agrees to add GSA logo (found on the website) on posters and advertising material. The president indicated that we would like to support all the activities but the decision is based on the budget and not on the

event. The President thanked Nirajan for providing the proposal and further information. The decision will be made and it will be communicated via email.

*The VP External moved to approve funding in the amount of \$500 for this event. This motion was seconded by the VP Student Affairs.*

***3 in favour, 1 abstention for conflict of interest (VP Finance and Operations)  
Motion carried.***

#### *4.2 72<sup>nd</sup> Semi-Annual National General Meeting in June, Canadian Federation of Students*

The president mentioned that we are members of the Canadian Federation of Students, as such we participate on meetings such as the 72<sup>nd</sup> Semi-Annual General Meeting of the Canadian Federation of Students and Canadian Federation of Students-Services that will be held on Kanata, Ontario, on June 8 –11, 2019. The president mentioned that this is an excellent opportunity to interact and network with other students and it is important to engage in discussions of motions that are brought in this meeting, and usually the VP External represents the GSA in these type of activities. The president suggested that the VP external should attend the meeting. Alejandra asked if we need to wait for council approval at the council meeting to either approve or not the participation of the VP external in the 72 semi-annual national meeting, to which the President replied that the participation of one executive to this event will be approved by GSA executives and does not need approval from the council.

*Motion to approve that the VP External participates in the 72<sup>nd</sup> Semi-Annual National General Meeting held in June, Canadian Federation of Students. Moved by the VP Student Affairs, seconded by the VP Finance and Operations.*

***4 in favour  
Motion carried***

#### *4.3 Cheque remittance*

The president indicated that the VP Finance and Operations will bring this item forward at every Executive Meeting, or as the need arises.

*Whereas GSA bylaws 5.4.4 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 USSU in the amount of \$4597.42 on May 13, 2019 for administrative fees relating to winter 2019 UPASS stickers.
- Payment to Canadian Federation of Students in the amount of \$1909.36 on May 13, 2019, for 2019/2020 membership.
- Payment to the Crisis Aid program for graduate student assistance in the amount of \$7250 on May 13, 2019, for membership dues for 2019 / 2020 academic year.
- Payment to the University of Saskatchewan in the amount of \$8250 on May 13, 2019, for the GSA Student Travel Award contribution for 2019 / 2010 academic year.
- Payment to City of Saskatoon in the amount of \$ 4968.46 on May 13, 2019 for remaining remittance of UPASS Fees for the 2018/2019 Fall and Winter terms.

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

***Motion carried***

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

### *5.1 Residence Issues*

VP Student Affairs, Alejandra brought forward some issues that students are having in regards to the university residence and the services provided by their staff. She mentioned that she has been receiving complaints related to the residence fees. The students living in the residence are required to pay in advance rent for September, meaning in early May, even if they are old residents, and because of this, some of these students are mentally stressed and financially anxious, therefore it is affecting their academic achievement. Alejandra also added that she had already spoken with the previous VP Student Affairs, Edgar Martinez-Soberanes, who advised her to take action talking directly to the University Administration instead of talking to the University Residence Office. It was also mentioned that the residence has been dealing with these type of issues case-by-case until now. Therefore, Alejandra asked the president if this can be added as an item to be discussed with the Vice Provost on the next meeting to which Mery agreed.

Mery further added that a meeting with the Director of Student Affairs and Services at University of Saskatchewan, Peter Hedley and with the Vice-Provost, Teaching, Learning and Student Experience, Patti McDougall, will be requested and these issues will be discussed with them. Wajih added that in those meetings we can also ask about justification, rationality behind the increase on fees as well.

Mery thanked Alejandra for bringing this up and encouraged all executives to attend these meetings.

### *5.2 Ideas for Orientation Event*

This year fall orientation is scheduled to be on September 05, 2019. The VP Student Affairs asked all the executives if they had any ideas/suggestions to make for the fall orientation to be successful. All executives brainstormed ideas related to the orientation. Some of the ideas were to:

- Try to bring external sponsorship. The executives need to make a shortlist of potential person/organization to contact.
- Chiamaka added that the orientation can be more diverse, inviting social groups to participate.
- Wajih added that cultural programs can be arranged which would help new and existing students know about different services that occurs on campus.
- Wajih also added that it was important to make the event food friendly (Vegetarian, non-vegetarian or halal options can be added).
- It was also mentioned that different vendors can be contacted who might be interested to fund for pizzas or ice-cream. The VP student affairs will work with the GSA Office Manager to contact these vendors.
- The VP Student Affairs will decide on Swags at a later date.

President Mery thanked all executives for all the wonderful ideas that they brought to the table and looks forward to a successful orientation this year.

### *5.3 Dates for the year events*

The VP Student Affairs proposed the following dates for 2019/2020 events:

Fall, Wine and Cheese = September 27<sup>th</sup>, 2019

Halloween Social = October 31<sup>st</sup>, 2019

Holiday Party = November 29<sup>th</sup>, 2019

Winter Orientation = January 16<sup>th</sup>, 2020

Graduate Research Conference = February 13-14, 2020

3MT competition = March 6<sup>th</sup>, 2020

Annual Gala = April 4<sup>th</sup>, 2020

Mery asked if any of the executives had conflicts with those dates and all agreed that they are available to participate on the mentioned events.

#### *5.4 June GSA Council Meeting*

The president mentioned that we have regular meetings with GSA council where the GSA chair is in charge of the meeting and that all executives are required to provide a page description about their goals for the upcoming year. The report should be about 200 words and each executive can speak up to 3 minutes. Mery asked everyone to check the deadline and be prepared. If anyone cannot submit the report by the deadline, they should ask the chair for an extension. Mery also emphasized that it is important to attend all the meetings because it enhances the credibility of the GSA. Everyone should try to read the agenda before going to the meetings so that they are well-prepared.

#### *5.5 ISSAC Meeting*

We met the executives of International Student and Study Abroad Centre (ISSAC) on May 15<sup>th</sup> at 1 PM. We came to know more about ISSAC's executive team and the president hopes that we can work closely with them in the near future so that the graduate students can enjoy a friendly and safe environment on campus. ISSAC asked if they can get some low price preference when booking the GSA commons. The executives decided that it would be unfair to other organizations if ISSAC is given special preference. Therefore the executives decided that ISSAC will be treated equally to other GSA collaborative organizations.

#### *5.6 Discretionary Fund*

The VP Finance and Operations mentioned that the discretionary funds are to be used for circumstances that are for the betterment of graduate students and not be used for personal expenditures. He further requested all executives to be careful and transparent when using discretionary funds. He also asked the executives to keep the receipts of the expenses to be successful in the reimbursements. The president thanked Wajih for clarifying and reassuring transparency on the use of funds.

## **6. Other Business**

### *6.1 Important Dates*

Mery emphasized that it is important to attend and participate in all the meetings that each executive is assigned to attend because this improves the credibility of the GSA. If unforeseen circumstances arise, the expected executive attendee should not forget to send regrets.

### *6.2 Graduation Powwow 2019*

It was decided that Alejandra and Chiamaka will participate in this event.

### *6.3 Meeting with Provost*

Chiamaka met with the provost and informed the executives about planning a meeting with him in the near future. The president advised that we will need to have clear ideas and goals before scheduling a meeting through his secretary. We need to be structured and organized before going to the meeting and we will contact him soon.

### *6.3 Other Events*

Chiamaka proposed to have a plot event this summer where graduate students will be trained on gardening. The organization provides all the equipment as well as ingredients that will be required for successful planting. The results of the gardening will go to food bank. All executives encouraged Chiamaka to proceed with this idea. She is also planning to organize outdoor soccer activities close to the residential building.

The president thanked everyone for the great discussions and ideas provided in this meeting.

## **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 meeting was adjourned at 8:12 PM.