



University of Saskatchewan - Graduate Students' Association

Executive Meeting Minutes

May 14, 2020, 10:00 AM –12:00 PM

Present: Humaira Inam (President), Hadi Ramin (VP Finance and Operations), Carmen Marquez (VP Academic and Student Affairs), Qasim Gill (VP External Affairs).

Regrets/Absent: None

1. Call to Order / Opening Remarks

The President called the meeting to order at 10:00 AM.

The President thanks all executives for being active and committed to their roles. She also indicated that it is important for all executives to continue with some enthusiasm and dedication throughout the year as it was seen in the first one and half months.

2. Approval of the Agenda

The President asked if there were any additions or amendments to the agenda as circulated. Seeing none the President asked for a:

Motion to approve the agenda as circulated was moved by the VP Student Affairs and seconded by VP External Affairs. Vote: Passed.

4 in favour

Motion Carried.

3. Approval of the May 01, 2020 Retreat Meeting Minutes

The President asked whether there were any further amendments to May 01, 2020 Retreat Meeting Minutes.

Motion to approve May 01, 2020 Retreat Meeting Minutes moved by the VP Student Affairs and seconded by the VP External Affairs. Vote: Passed.

4 in favour

Motion carried.

4. Items for Action

4.1 Spring/Summer 2020 Bursaries

President Humaira asked VP Finance to give a report on spring/summer term bursaries. VP Finance mentioned that the call for application of bursaries will be out in early June. VP Finance presented the budget available for spring/summer bursaries and suggested that the GSA reduce the bursary amount from 1000 CAD to 500 CAD allocated to each recipient, so more students can benefit from the bursaries during this pandemic.

Motion to reduce the spring/summer 2020 bursary amount allocated to each recipient from 1000 CAD to 500 CAD. This motion was moved by VP Finance and seconded by the President.

4 in favour

Motion Carried.

5. Items for Information / Discussion

5.1 GSA Council Meetings

The President mentioned that we have regular meetings with GSA Council where the GSA chair is in charge of the meeting and all executives are required to provide a page description about their goals for the upcoming year. The report should be 300 words and under normal circumstances the executive would speak for 3 minutes, but due to the pandemic a verbal report will not be taking place. The reports will be available to council members online. Humaira also said that she will contact the GSA Chair to discuss

other online options that can be utilized for future GSA council meetings due to the impact of COVID-19.

5.2 Newsletters

President mentioned that monthly newsletters are an important way to communicate with graduate students. It was discussed that the next newsletter will be released sometime in early June and any information that will be included in the newsletter from the GSA executives shall be sent to the President a week prior to release.

5.3 Dates for the year events

President discussed the yearly events that are being planned and the dates that need to be decided. VP Student Affairs stated that due to the current situation with the pandemic it is difficult to decide on specific dates. The President agreed, and events were assigned for each month on a tentative basis.

The VP Student Affairs proposed a tentative timeline of events for 2020/2021 as follows:

- Fall Orientation = September 2020
- Wine and Cheese = October 2020
- Friendsgiving = November 2020
- Holiday Party = December 2020
- Winter Orientation = January 2021
- Graduate Research Conference = February 2021
- 3MT Competition = March 2021
- Annual Gala = April 2021

Orientation ideas were also discussed by the executives and the possibility of the event being conducted remotely. A suggestion was made for curbside pick-up of swag bags, which are normally distributed during orientation. However, as there is no confirmed orientation date yet, the GSA executives will continue to work closely with CGPS on this.

The President and VP Student Affairs also mentioned that GSA would be involved in future initiatives in collaboration with other partners on campus such as ISSAC, the Student Wellness Centre, and USSU.

President Humaira thanked all executives for the wonderful ideas that they brought to the table and looks forward to the year ahead.

5.4 Future Initiatives

The President informed executives that there will be a discussion with ISSAC about food insecurity on campus and how that can be addressed. Humaira also talked about a virtual “coffee break” initiative that will be discussed with ISSAC and the Director of Student Affairs for future collaborations. The VP Student Affairs provided an idea regarding a virtual “study time” event that the GSA could initiate, in collaboration with the Student Wellness Centre as well, to create a sense of community for students.

The President discussed the importance of mental health and how it is vital that we continue to bring initiatives to the table that will support students’ mental health and wellbeing during these stressful and uncertain times. The President also stated that more discussion is required on how to provide student learning skills workshop considering the pandemic situation.

5.3 VP External Affairs Portfolio

The VP External pointed out the potential problems that international students will face in the future after the university announced to go online for the fall term. If an international student registers in classes and continues to do courses while staying in their own country, the student could face potential problems when applying for a student visa in the future.

A meeting with ISSAC will help to clarify the university’s plan for incoming international graduate students. The President will set up a meeting with ISSAC to discuss the possible solutions of the said issue.

The VP External talked about the importance of GSA external relations and suggested that reaching out to the government is the best approach to advocate for graduate students at the national level. President Humaira asked what types of initiatives the VP External is looking forward to collaborating on with the government. She also asked the VP External to connect with the VP External of University of Regina’s GSA and update the executives on possible future collaborations. The VP Student Affairs mentioned the importance of a delegate from the University to communicate with the government, who should be advocating on behalf of all students. The President asked the VP External to do more research on the initiatives he has in mind, so the executives can get a better sense of how this can benefit graduate students and how we can move forward. VP External will communicate with the GSA at the University of Regina to see how both GSA’s can work together in external relations. He will provide further information on the topic once he has done more research on the subject.

The President asked the VP External if he wants to proceed with online Zumba for the fall/winter terms as a student wellness initiative. The VP External responded that he would like the GSA to continue offering Zumba in the future. President Humaira also

mentioned that online yoga would be a great idea and asked the VP Finance to look at the possibility of purchasing Zoom for ease of access to students for online events and GSA Council meetings. The VP Finance suggested that the GSA continue using free online platforms to minimize operation costs. The GSA executives unanimously agreed and will continue to explore other free online platforms that can be utilized by a larger audience.

5.4 VP Academic and Student Affairs Portfolio

The VP Student Affairs discussed initiatives that aim to connect ratified student organizations and GSA academic councilors to get a sense of where improvements can be made in the GSA. This will be an informal meeting to check-in and receive input from council members to provide better services for students.

6. Confidential session

7. Other Business

In the end, the President pointed out that we need to focus on initiatives that can be successfully implemented and will benefit graduate students the most. President Humaira thanked everyone for the great discussion and ideas provided in this meeting.

8. Adjournment of Meeting

The President asked whether there was any other business arising. There was none.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:20 PM.