



**University of Saskatchewan - Graduate Students' Association**

**Executive Meeting Minutes**

**October 8, 2020**

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

**Regrets/Absent:** None.

**Guest:** Jesus Corona Gomez, Vice-President of Finance from the Multicultural Student Association (MSA).

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

The President called the meeting to order at 4:05 PM and informed the Executives that the VP of Finance from the Multicultural Student Association (MSA) will be joining the executive meeting today to present the MSA's funding request proposal.

**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 Academic & Student Affairs and seconded by the VP External. Vote: Passed.*

**4 in Favour**  
**Motion Passed.**

**3. Approval of the September 10, 2020, Executive Meeting Minutes**

The President asked whether there were any further amendments to the September 10, 2020 Executive Meeting Minutes. There were none.

*Motion to approve the September 10, 2020 Executive Meeting Minutes was moved by the President and seconded by the VP Academic & Student Affairs. Vote: Passed.*

**4 in Favour**  
**Motion Carried.**

**4. Approval of the September 24, 2020, Executive Meeting Minutes**

The President informed the Executives that the meeting minutes from September 24, 2020 would be finalised this week, and asked to delay the approval of the meeting minutes until the next Executive meeting.

*Motion to delay the approval of September 24, 2020 Executive Meeting Minutes until the next Executive meeting was moved by the VP Academic & Student Affairs and seconded by the VP External. Vote: Passed.*

**4 in Favour**  
**Motion Carried.**

**5. Items for action**

**5.1. Multicultural Student Association Funding Request**

The President welcomed Jesus Corona Gomez, the VP of Finance from the Multicultural Student Association (MSA), and asked him to share the MSA's funding request and events proposal with the GSA Executives. Jesus introduced himself and stated that the MSA is planning to conduct two virtual events to engage graduate students this term. There are no

prizes for the first two events. However, the MSA is planning to provide prizes for future events that they have planned for 2020-2021 in order to increase student engagement. It is for that propose that they seek funding from the GSA, the funding will go towards prizes that they will be giving out to students at their social events. Jesus added that these events were created to promote cultural diversity and inclusivity, especially for international students who may be facing culture shock when arriving in Canada. The President asked whether MSA's social events were open to all graduate students or if they were only for MSA member. Additionally, the President stated that if these events were for only for MSA members, then what strategy will MSA be adopting to reach out to all graduate students. Jesus replied that these social events were open to all graduate students, though it is predicted that the majority will be MSA members. Some of the social events include contests, the MSA is planning to upload contest materials to their Facebook page, and people need to follow their page to like posts in order to vote. The President raised the concern about the fairness of voting to ensure that everyone is given a fair chance to win prizes, and asked how the MSA is going to make sure votes are submitted fairly. Jesus replied that they may use SurveyMonkey and ask for students' NSID to ensure that only USask students are voting. The President further asked that because of COVID-19 it might be difficult to give out prizes to students who are not in Saskatchewan, how would the MSA handle this situation. Jesus admitted that they have not thought of this scenerio, but he will discuss this matter with the other executives of the MSA. The President also asked Jesus to include the GSA logo on their events' poster, and that these posters would need to be sent to the GSA Executives prior to the event for approval, should their funding request be approved. The VP Academic & Student Affairs asked whether the MSA is willing to change the wording of their December event name from "Chrstimas" to "Holiday" as not everyone celebrates Christmas. Jesus responded that the MSA would be happy to re-word the event name to be more inclusive. The VP Finance asked if the MSA was receiving funding from other sources or whether this option has been looked into by the MSA. Jesus stated that the MSA had not looked at other sources of funding at this time. The President thanked Jesus for presenting MSA's funding proposal and taking the time out to attend the GSA Executive

meeting. The President informed Jesus that the Executives would discuss the MSA's funding proposal and relay their decision to the MSA via email.

After Jesus had exited the GSA Executive meeting, the GSA Executives discussed the funding proposal and found MSA's funding request appropriate for the events they had planned. However, there were some issues around fairness of voting for some of their events, which needed to be cleared up before those events could take place. Additionally, as the GSA Commons is closed right now there was the issues of providing reimbursement to the MSA in-person, or the cheque would have to be mailed. The VP Finance stated that according to the GSA policies, the GSA can provide reimbursement for social events once the event has already occurred, and he also raised concerns on the funding amount that is available for mailing purposes in the budget as this expense has increased during the pandemic. The President stated that she understood those concerns, but due to COVID-19 there are limited options available as not everyone can come to the GSA to pickup their cheque. The VP Academic & Student Affairs stated that perhaps we could provide a lump sum to the MSA for their events and they could submit another proposal. The President said this was a good idea, and the VP Finance agreed that this may work as well. The Executives agreed that a firm decision could not be made yet regarding MSA's funding proposal as there were some issues that needed to be cleared up.

*Motion to delay the decision on providing funding for MSA social events until further information is received was moved by the President and seconded by the VP Academic and Students Affairs. Vote: Passed.*

**4 in Favour**

**Motion Carried.**

5.2. *Search Committee for Vice-Dean Academic and Vice-Dean Research for the College of Arts and Science*

The President was contacted by the College of Arts and Science to assign two graduate students from the College of Arts and Science to serve on the search committee for Vice-Dean Research, Scholarly & Artistic Work, and Vice-Dean Academic.

*Motion to approve graduate students Andrea Wishart to serve on the College of Arts and Science search committee for Vice-Dean Research, Scholarly & Artistic Work, and Douglas Fansher to serve on the College of Arts and Science search committee for Vice-Dean Academic. Motion moved by the VP External and seconded by the VP Finance. Vote: Passed.*

**4 in Favour**

**Motion Carried.**

### **5.3. Faculty Council for College of Engineering**

The College of Engineering contacted the President and requested that the GSA assign two graduate student representatives to serve on the Faculty Council for the College of Engineering.

*Motion to approve graduate students Shahab Minaei and Azar Khorsandi to serve on the Faculty Council for the College of Engineering was moved by the VP External and seconded by the VP Finance. Vote: Passed.*

**4 in Favour**

**Motion Carried.**

### **5.4. Cheque Remittance**

As per the GSA bylaw 5.4.4, the VP Finance put forward the following expenses above \$500, to be approved by the Executive team:

*Motion to approve the expense of \$2,343.90 to the Canadian Federation of Students (CFS) for the student handbook under the budget code of 52340, was moved by the President and seconded by the VP Academic & Student Affairs. Vote: Passed.*

**4 in Favour**

**Motion Carried.**

*Motion to approve the expense of \$867.81 for Chip Bookkeeping under the budget code of 52650 was moved by the VP Academic & Student Affairs and seconded by the VP External. Vote: Passed.*

**4 in Favour**

**Motion Carried.**

**5.5. Participating in the Graduate National Trivia Championships.**

The VP Academic & Student Affairs stated that the Graduate National Trivia Championship would be held on November 25, 2020 and each University can send up to ten teams with each team consisting of five people. It is the GSA's discretion as to which students will make up each team, and there is a \$150 registration cost to enter the championships. The President stated that although this is a good initiative to engage graduate students from all across Canada, however, we would need to ensure that we have 50 participants to enter the competition before we can make the decision to pay the \$150 registration fee. The President stated we could provide this funding if we could have ten teams attending. The President asked the VP of Academic & Student Affairs to create a social media post for this event so we can get graduate students to participate and formulate teams.

*Motion to delay the approval of the \$150 registration fee for the Graduate National Trivia Championship until 50 students have signed up to participate, was moved by the President and seconded by the VP Finance. Vote: Passed.*

**1 Abstain due to conflict of interest, and 3 in Favour**

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

### *6.1. Fall 2020 Social Events*

The President asked the VP Academic & Student Affairs about the progress of the bi-weekly “Coffee Afternoons” event. The VP Academic stated that the event has had very little student turnout, with two Executives and two graduate students attending the last event. She also added that some students may not follow the GSA Facebook page and are likely not aware of the events we are holding. The President suggested that the VP Academic post the GSA events on PAWS to garner more student attention. The President also asked all Executives to seek input from other Executives before making any posts on PAWS.

The President asked the VP Academic when she wants the social media poster for the “Halloween Costume/Facepaint Contest” to be published on the GSA social media platforms. The VP Academic stated that she would send the poster on October 14 for uploading.

In regards to the “Halloween Trivia Night” event, the President asked if there would only be one winner for each session. The VP Academic confirmed that there would be only one winner for each trivia night session. The President also asked how much money the VP Academic wants to spend on prizes for these events, considering that the available budget for social events is \$500 for the entire academic year. The VP Academic stated that we could do \$100 in total for each event. The Present proposed the following amount for each prize:

- a. Cultural event: 1<sup>st</sup> place winner would receive a \$75 gift card, 2<sup>nd</sup> place winner would receive a \$50 gift card, and 3<sup>rd</sup> place winner would receive a \$25 gift.
- b. Halloween Trivia Night: one prize of \$75.
- c. Halloween Costume/Face paint Contest: 1<sup>st</sup> place winner would receive a \$75 gift card, 2<sup>nd</sup> place winner would receive a \$50 gift card, and 3<sup>rd</sup> place winner would receive a \$25 gift.

The President stated that we have a budget constraint for the Halloween trick-or-treat bag event, and we might need to reach out to ISSAC for sponsorship or find other forms of funding. She also said that it was possible that we may not be able to organize the Halloween trick-or-treat event due to the lack of funding. The VP Finance mentioned that since this is going to be a new event by the GSA, considering the current situation of COVID-19, we might be able to take out money from the GSA new initiative budget.

#### 6.2. *3MT Competition 2021*

The President asked the VP Academic & Student Affairs about the organization of the 3MT Competition for 2021 and what progress was being made. The VP Academic stated that currently there were no updates to report, but she will inform the Executive as information becomes available. She also informed all Executives that the 3MT Competition will be taking place virtually next year.

#### 6.3. *Health Chat Events*

The President asked the VP External for an update about Health Chat events. The VP External stated that they had the Yoga Nidra night recently, and unfortunately, there was not a considerable turnout, and the GSA needs to promote events further in order to engage more students. The President then asked the VP External about the “Mental Health Monday” seminars that were to be organized and the VP External was communicating with the Student Wellness Centre regarding this. The VP External stated that he had not received any further responses from the Student Wellness Centre, even though he had followed up with them. The President suggested reaching out to the Saskatoon branch of the Canadian Mental Health Association for possible workshop/seminar presenters. She also said that the VP External could also implement a well-being event with prizes under his portfolio.

#### 6.4. *Fall 2020 Bursary*



The President asked the VP Finance about any updates regarding the fall 2020 bursaries. The VP Finance reported that the bursary applications were opened on October 1, 2020 and application would be submitted electronically through the GSA website due to the ongoing pandemic situation until October 31, 2020. The VP Finance stated that he would provide further updates to the Executive team at the next Executive meeting.

6.5. *Graduate Research Conference 2021*

The President asked the VP Finance whether he had started thinking about the Graduate Research Conference for 2021 as she had been advised by the previous GSA Executive team that planning of the Graduate Research Conference needs to be started early. The VP Finance stated that there is no update on this event at this time. The President asked the VP Finance to start communication with potential speakers that will be invited to this event.

6.6. *Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Nutana Stakeholder Committee*

The President stated that the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Nutana Stakeholder Committee aims to develop a good relationship between the Nutana community and the BRT project team in order to successfully implement the BRT system in Saskatoon. The President also mentioned that the VP Finance will continue his predecessor's role of representing the GSA on this committee.

6.7. *Transit*

The President brought up the issue of access to transit during the winter as bus stops had been moved off-campus during the pandemic. The bus stop issues are concerning because students do not have a warm place to stand while waiting for the bus in the winter. The President did discuss this with the USSU and was informed that unfortunately, the University will not allow re-opening of Place Riel due to the access it provides to the tunnels. Additionally, there is no way to close the second set of doors

that leads into Place Riel. The President discussed other possible solutions and said that she would bring this issue up with senior leaders at the next meeting.

**6.8. VP Academic's Report from the University of Saskatchewan Faculty Association Meeting**

VP Academic and Student Affairs provided an update from the University of Saskatchewan Faculty Association (USFA) meeting. She stated that the USFA shares the same concerns as graduate students regarding communication between students and supervisors and access to buildings on campus. The VP Academic said that attendance at this meeting is valuable for both students and faculty in order to promote a positive relationship and work collaboratively. She will continue meeting with the USFA bi-monthly to ensure transparency and active communication.

**7. Other Business**

The President asked if there was other business to discuss. There was none.

**8. Confidential Session**

**9. In-Camera Session**

**10. Adjournment of Meeting**

The President asked for the adjournment of this meeting.

*Motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:30 PM was moved by the VP Finance and seconded by the VP Academic and Student Affairs. Vote: Passed.*

**4 in Favour**  
**Motion Carried.**