



University of Saskatchewan - Graduate Students' Association

Executive Meeting Minutes

Nov 06, 2021

The GSA operates on Treaty 6 Territory and the Homeland of the Métis Nation. We pay our respect to the First Nations and Métis ancestors of our gathering place and reaffirm our relationship with one another.

Present: Rifat Zahan (President), Ehsan Moradi (Vice-President Finance and Operations), Devin Cherneski (Vice-President External Affairs), Mostofa Kamal (Vice-President Academic and Student Affairs)

Regrets/Absent: None

Guests: Huzzatul Khan (BASUS president)

1. Call to Order / Opening Remarks

The meeting was called to order at 6:04 PM by President Zahan.

2. Approval of the Agenda

President Zahan asked whether there were any amendments to the agenda as circulated. There was no amendment.

Motion: To approve the agenda with the proposed amendments.

Moved: VP Indigenous Engagement

Seconded: VP Finance and Operations

*Vote: All in Favour,
Motion Carried.*

3. Approval of the last Executive Meeting Minutes

The President mentioned that due to the resigning of executive members, there were no meetings for the two existing members of the executives, and the last meeting minutes with the full executive committee in the month of August was already approved.

*Vote: All in Favour,
Motion Carried.*

4. Items for action

4.1. Bangladesh Student Association at the University of Saskatchewan (BSAUS) proposal

The GSA President asked the BSAUS President, Huzzatul, to present BSAUS's funding request proposal. The BSAUS President thanked GSA Executives for the invitation to present their funding proposal and Q & A's. According to the BSAUS President, their proposed event "is an event that is about reception of freshers and also farewell to the graduates". The event is scheduled for November 13th from 6 to 10 pm. This event includes a reception to the first years, which usually consists of the introduction of BSAUS to the students who are newcomers and then introducing them to the Executives of BSAUS and other student organizations or associations present at that event. He continued on to what BSAUS does, and how they can be reached out to by students and

help connect with other resources for the university during their student life. BSAUS President explained that the next part would be a farewell to the graduates, and they will be recognized for recently completing their degrees from the University of Saskatchewan. The BSAUS event also includes multi-cultural performances, including Bangladeshi and western music, on-stage dramas, etc., followed by dinner for all attendees. Although the BSAUS program is designed to welcome first years from Bangladesh and recently graduated Bangladeshi students, the cultural program is open for the greater USask community. The BSAUS President clearly stated that they will advertise their event across different social media platforms, including GSA's social media. The BSAUS President indicated that they are organizing this event to promote networking opportunities for the graduating class and the first years and introduce Bangladeshi culture to the greater University of Saskatchewan community. Thus, this event will strengthen their bonding in a social gathering, which will also help them get through this challenging time i.e., COVID-19 pandemic.

The GSA President thanked the BSAUS for their presentation and asked GSA Executives if they had any questions. The VP External Affairs asked if the BSAUS organized a similar event last year or not. The BSAUS President answered that a virtual event was organized last year. VP Finance and Operations asked if there had been any changes to the BSAUS proposal since sending the proposal last time. The BSAUS said that the only difference is that the venue is changed. The VP Academic and Student Affairs asked if BSAUS had prepared a budget for the event? The BSAUS President shared an approximate budget on his screen and explained the budget in detail. BSAUS also sent the budget by email to GSA President and VP Finance and Operations. The VP External Affairs asked about the cost of attendance to the event for each participant. The BSAUS President said that the cost is \$15 for adults and \$10 for kids. The VP Academic Affairs asked if BSAUS was looking for a certain amount of financial help from the GSA? The BSAUS President explained that they are looking for the maximum possible financial assistance from the GSA. The GSA President told BSAUS that we would decide on the proposal and we would let them know. BSAUS thanked GSA and invited the executives to join their event. The VP Academic and Student Affairs asked the BSAUS President about COVID-19 protocol and health & safety standards during the event. The BSAUS President confirmed that they would follow all the protocols and policies imposed by the Saskatchewan Health Authority (SHA). He also mentioned they would sell approximately 250 tickets in a follow-up question, but the program hall's capacity is 750. Therefore, the attendees will be able to sit and enjoy the program with sufficient physical distancing.

After the BSAUS President left the meeting, the GSA President asked Executives' ideas about the proposal. The VP of Finance and Operations mentioned that the event could be an example for other social groups, and he suggested that the GSA support the BSAUS event. The VP External asked the maximum amount that GSA can help with this event, and the GSA president mentioned that due to our budget, we could help a maximum of \$500. The VP Academic Affairs said that he has been advocating for this kind of registered council event for a long time, and he will continue his support in the future. The VP Academic Affairs also mentioned that he thinks this type of event

will help students in many different aspects, and the GSA should promote such events if the opportunity arises. The GSA President mentioned that GSA can support academic councils and ratified social groups according to the budget limits. The President also noted that there was only this proposal since our tenure. The GSA President called for a motion to approve \$500 aid for the BSAUS proposal. The VP of Academic Affairs stated that he wants to abstain from this motion since he is a member of BSAUS. Motion carried by positive votes from all other executives.

Motion: To approve the BASUS proposal to support by \$500.

Moved: VP External Affairs

Seconded: VP Finance and Operations

Vote: 3 in Favour, 1 Abstain

Motion Carried.

4.2 Winter Orientation

The GSA President said that we have only \$800 budgeted for the winter orientation. She added that winter orientation falls under the VP Academic and Student Affairs portfolio, but all Executives will work as a team. The President explained that we distributed over 500 bags during fall orientation, which we planned to distribute only half of it during fall and another half during the winter, but due to the high demand of students, GSA Executives decided to give away all the 500 swag bags during fall term. Therefore, the budgeted winter orientation money may only cover snacks for the winter orientation and for swag items we need to request from College of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (CGPS) and Studentcare. The GSA President asked Executives to propose items that we can prepare for the winter orientation. She also mentioned that we had a good number of participants for the fall orientation because of our good promotion. GSA Executives agreed to do the same for the winter orientation. VP Finance and Operations mentioned that we spent more than \$5000 for the fall orientation, and still, we needed more, so preparing swag bag items would be hard with the budgeted \$800 for winter term. VP Moradi added that he thinks giving students a gift like a mug would be nicer than a small number of food items. VP Academic and Student Affairs asked if we should keep affordable items to distribute among more students, which VP Finance and Operations mentioned that we could afford the food items only with the existing budget. The President said that by limiting food items and asking for swag items from CGPS and Studentcare we may be able to prepare a good number of the swag bags. The VP Finance and Operations mentioned that we spent over \$1200 on the food items only during the fall term. VP Academic and Student Affairs said that only \$800 for winter term would be hard to manage. The President proposed that we can use our discretionary funds to help this budget.

The President asked VP Academic and Student affairs if he had a specific date for the winter orientation. VP Kamal and President Zahan proposed January 12, 2022 for the orientation and January 14th, 2022 for the swag bags pickup. VP Moradi asked if GSA could give swag bags to

new students only? The President explained that since we do not have in-person plans like BBQ parties, concerts, or other gatherings, restricting swag bags to new students only would not be a good idea. GSA wants to be inclusive of all graduate students. The President asked to move the motion to approve virtual orientation to be held on January 12, 2022 at 1 pm, and Swag Bag Pick Up on January 14, 2022 at 12 pm.

Motion: To approve the winter orientation dates.

Moved: VP Finance and Operations

Seconded: VP External affairs

Vote: All in Favour,

Motion Carried.

5. Items for Discussion/Information

5.1 Graduate Student Research Conference (GSRC)

President Zahan requested an update from VP Moradi about the GSRC, which falls under VP Finance and Operations' portfolio. VP Moradi mentioned that he is planning the event and contacting keynote speakers. He also designed posters to invite students to the conference. He also noted that the event would be held virtual. VP Moradi informed the Executives that he wants to have different committees from different departments to have a better and faster judging process about the researchers.

5.2 Holiday Hangout

The President opened discussion about a holiday hangout for all graduate students. President Zahan added that we need financial support for the refreshments for the holiday hangout event. She then said that Student Affairs and Services may help us with some expenses. The President proposed that we can provide food like curbside pickup to avoid delivery charges as they can get expensive. President Zahan explained that a holiday hangout is very important for helping students' wellness and mental health. She added that we would have a meeting with the Director of Student Affairs and Services to go through the event's details and the amount of financial support he would provide. VP Kamal said it might be better to wait for the meeting to see how much we get financially to understand the plans better moving forward.

5.3 GSA Common reopening

The President went to the next item, which was discussion about GSA commons reopening. She mentioned that all executives should attend the GSA commons to cover weekdays, as it is a requirement. Executives had a conversation about covering hours to see if they could cover the 8 hrs per day for five days per week. VP Kamal mentioned that the university would be entirely in-person next semester. But due to the President's ongoing health condition and VP Cherneski living outside of Saskatoon and with the COVID-19 guidelines, Executives decided to defer the decision to another meeting.

5.4 GSA Chair honorarium

The President started the conversation regarding the next agenda item, which was GSA chair honorarium. She explained that she received some suggestions about increasing the chair honorarium. Then the Executives explained that we have to keep the honorarium fair for the whole GSA team, so considering GSA Executives with a large workload, GSA cannot have a chair honorarium close to the Executives'. VP Finance and Operations supported that idea and mentioned that we have to increase all payments, if the Chair's honorarium increases, which is a lot of extra expense for the GSA. The President added that increasing GSA Executives' or Chair's honorarium means increasing students' fees, which will be burdensome for graduate students. The VP of Academic Affairs said that the Chair's workload increases during the election season only, therefore, he suggested that we increase the Chair's honorarium during the election season only. VP External Affairs mentioned that he was the GSA chair before. He acknowledges the GSA Chair's workload, so he said expanding the honorarium could make attractions for the future for interested candidates to apply for the position, and VP Cherneski supports the idea of increasing the honorarium of the Chair. VP Finance and Operations mentioned that we have to compare the amount of work with the Executives' in that situation. Therefore, not increasing Executives' honorarium would not be fair. Also, VP Moradi mentioned that keeping the honorarium as it is makes interested people join GSA who are not thinking about the money only, but also the experience the person will gather by serving GSA as the Chair. Therefore, VP Moradi suggested that we can use our discretionary fund to have a short-term increase in the Chair's honorarium during the election season, which is optional for all Executives.

5.5 GSA Office Manager salary

The GSA President mentioned that the GSA Office Manager requested an increase in her salary. Executives discussed the matter, and they decided to have the decision in a Board of Governors meeting.

6. Closed Session

7 Adjournment of Meeting

Motion: To adjourn the meeting at 7:45 PM

Moved: VP Finance and Operations

Seconded: VP Academic Affairs

Vote: All in favour,

Motion Carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:45 PM