

The University of Saskatchewan Graduate Students' Association



Council Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, September 16, 2015. 5:00 P.M. – 7:00 P.M.

GSA Commons

Attendees:

Casey McMahon, William Judge, Nripesh Ayer, Danielle Robertson-Boersma, Jason Ho, Naheda Sahtout, Breana Anderson, Kendra Merer, Shirin Niroomand, Kiemute Oyibo, Colin McLearn, Ashton Reimer, Michelle Rose Whiteston, Kiefer Waite-Newhouse, Roland Macara, Joseph Y. Asomah, Mohammad Rafati, Shailza Suiph, Koryn Hare, Surendra Bhattaria, Raed M

Executive:

Rajat Chakravarty, Ziad Ghaith, David Bennett, Jebunnessa Chapola, Natalia Terekhova, Dana Carriere.

1 Call to Order

- Roll Call done by President
- Kin, Pegasus, English, Bio Engineering, Sociology, Plant Science, Mechanical Engineering, 4 GSA Execs. Attendance available via:
https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1jJCDi1AJ7tYDnLmd5Hx-HWo_dhFCNkUMgUj2FLPb7A/edit?usp=sharing
- Chair will be Rajat, as recommended Chair not available today. Chair calls meeting to order at 5:07 pm, September 16, 2015

2 Announcements

2.1 Quorum

- Yes – 50% +1 = 10

3 Approval of Chair

- GSA Executive in June called for Chair applications. GSA decided to put forward the recommendation of Mitchell Anderson (Edwards) to GSA Council. He is currently away at conference in TO and could not be at meeting today.
- We can either approve him as chair or wait until the next meeting to approve him when he is present
- Discussion

- Ashton (Physics) – wait for him to plead case. Asked about other candidates, who were they?
- Ziad (Exec) asked to have him approved as it's been 4 months
- Ashton (Physics) – explained how long he had been on council. Experience working with Mitchell, has a lot of experience with meetings, understanding/following rules, knows Roberts Rules. Believes he should be here to approve him, but does identify strong qualifications.
- Ziad we should vote to wait or approve.
- Chair– vote to table this agenda item. Ziad first, Ashtyn seconded. Vote Favour 10 ; Against 0; Abstained 0. Motion passes and tabled to next Council Meeting.

4 Approval of Agenda

- Chair asks if there is anything that needed to be added on to agenda or entertain a motion to approve.
 - Ashton identify that we motion to recess for 5 minutes to review agenda; Ziad second. Favour – 13; Apposed 0. Recess at 5:14 pm for 5 minutes
- Council resumed at 5:19 pm. Entertain a motion to amend or approve.
- Ashton motion to approve; Ziad second. Favour – 12; Apposed 0; Abstained 0. Motion passes.

5 Approval of July 29, 2015 Council Meeting

- Minutes have been available on GSA website. Motion to approve by Ziad. Kiefer (English) seconded.
 - Vote cancelled to have discussion on agenda minutes.
- Discussion
 - Moe (Mechanical Engineering) What does the X mean?
 - Chair – It means they had attended
 - Moe – Confusion around attendance, if possible correct it to show they were in attendance.
- Call to Question. Ashton motion, seconded by Kiefer. Favour – 14; Against 0; Abstained 0. Motion passed.

6 Executives Reports

6.1.1 President Report

- Did not submit report on time, but will attach to minutes. Orientation on September

2 (biggest event) – had about 16-1700 in attendance, with most food running out. Wine and cheese on September 12 with about 200 people. Thank you to everyone that came out. Formally started the federal election campaign. GSA will be doing more media on this. Will have information on how to vote for a Federal Election. Will also have information for CFS “It’s No Secret” Campaign. Collaborating with USSU on September 30 to have the candidates from University riding for a forum at 4:00pm. At the wine and cheese, contacted all the candidates to come talk to students, NDP and Conservative candidates came.

- Now on social media again. Join Facebook/Twitter where we will update you. With Course Council, working to get a broad representation of student colleges/departments. Seeing some very positive results with more councillors coming on board that we haven’t seen in a while. Congrats to all of you and we hope you hold us accountable.
- University President transitional committee. Will be focusing on how he can engage with graduate students. Prior to coming into office, have him do a Meet and Greet, and also a Town Hall, so we can share our concerns with him.

6.1.2 VP External Report

- Current campaigns: Working on Federal election campaign. Sexual assault awareness week, which is happening next week. It is organized with Student Health Centre. In November is University wide Mental Health Week. Received a lot of materials from CFS, which will be distributed. Working with health association about beer health too. That will be coming soon.
- Attended International committee meeting on September 1. Can’t attend future ones so will have a graduate student/past course councillor to attend.
- Organized cultural performances for Orientation and helping with handbooks and Saskatoon guidebooks.

6.1.3 VP Finance Report

- Has a detailed written report. Submitted preliminary report, but still waiting on the audit, which must be in by October 31, which will then be submitted to Council.
- Orientation costs in – Not including wine and cheese. Can see statement.
- Sponsoring Rec Sports Teams – paying for registration of graduate students, which comes from the GSA Retreat fund that was underspent. Will need to find money for

term 2. Danna will discuss more of this in her report.

- Councils receive money for 2014-2015 attendance. If you have not received yet, see David.
- GSA movie screening. Arts 241, Tickets \$5.00 advance, \$10 at the door. PhD Movie 2.
- See detailed spreadsheets for most expenses.
- Looking for 2 or 3 more councillors for Budget Committee.

6.1.4 VP Operations Report

- Social media efforts. Over August and September, working to reach more graduate students. Have reached 2500 a week through FB and website. Big achievement, given efforts started in late June.
- Ziad, David, Natalia, had meeting with Association to work on relationship/cooperation with Alumni Association.
- Bursary applications prepared and will be announced next week and open until Mid-October, where they will be looked over.

6.1.5 VP Academic Report (Report Attached)

- August and September busy with Orientation. Helping Natalia to organize cultural performances and represent GSA. Busy to publicize GSA.
- Sitting at RSAW, AB, and Building Bridges Committee.
- August 22 organized a blanket exercise targeting graduate housing. Many came out and the blanket exercise meals were covered by CBC and the Sheaf.
- Working to organize Industry Talks and for these workshops, they are looking for moderators. The dates are available on FB page. If interested, please send a note to VP Academic.
- Attended Beyond Borders, sponsored and Department of History
- Orientation organized library searching series sessions. Students enjoyed them, so there will be more coming up.
- August previous VP Academic with USSU, she did research with undergrad students to find out challenges. She will be doing a survey with our graduate students. We do not have the budget to hire someone, but if we could engage our councillors, it would be easier for the Exec. Will discuss during Q&A.

6.1.6 VP Student Affairs Report

- Not in attendance.

6.1.7 Aboriginal Liaison Report

- Gordon Oakes Student Centre, looking to be open November/December or possibly January. There will be a horse dance this Friday at 2:00 pm, where all students are invited. There will be free transportation out to site.
- Looking for Aboriginal Students to join graduate council. Meet & Greet on October 9.
- David and Danna went to a couple of meet & greets.
- Organizing the campus sport recs, including volleyball, soccer, basketball, dodge ball. All recreational so no need to have experience.
- Deans and faculty wanting more Aboriginal students in graduate studies looking into that.

6.1.8 Q&A

- Moe - How many years are we auditing?
 - David - One year is done – looking to find a smaller auditor that specializes in smaller, non-profit audits.
- Moe – How much is it costing?
 - David - This fiscal year we have paid just over \$300.00. CGSR has agreed to pay \$15000.00 towards past audits, and we have a large amount left for auditing.
- Moe – Do we have any upcoming deadlines to vote on?
 - There will be upcoming deadlines for Health and Dental and others, with information coming from David and Natalia.
 - Ashton – As soon as we have the information, can it be sent out prior to having discussions at council?
 - David – Yes.
- Education representative – Opened by speaking in her language. From Arizona, Indigenous student. Failed out of first college due to a lack of support. Looking for social support and suggesting to the first year students that they have support and such. Just wanted to bring that up and willing to help when possible.
 - Rajat thanked Councillor – willing to work with her. Natalia will work to do activities that involve healthy lifestyles and help new students feel a part of the

community.

- Moe – Bus pass service was changed to Student Services (USSU). So what is the agreement with Student Central and do you have estimation on the cost?
 - Rajat – The GSA collects money to administer the U-Pass. Take it from September to December and January to April. Clarified that it is USSU the money goes to. That contract was signed by a previous executive member(s) from the 2014-2015 Executive.
 - David – Clarified who the execs were and that current exec will stand by the contract, though they are not fully happy with contract. University takes 1% of any transaction fee. Hardy will have more information but is ill.
- Moe – Heard about CFS there is an account for Saskatchewan, but it is blocked for the U of S and the U of R. How can the GSA access that money and for what purpose?
 - Natalia – Working with CFS. SK doesn't have representatives. Should be a Chair and Treasurer that should be notified at November CFS meeting, so that will be where we should start. After that, we will work with the CFS to access the bank account
 - Moe – How much money and for how long?
 - Natalia – It's been about 3 years as there were some illegal actions done by the U of R in previous years.
 - Rajat – clarified what the CFS is and their mandate.
 - Natalie – If we don't get access to the bank account, we can still ask for money from the National Organization.
- Student (Not sure who, red shirt) Why is the undergraduate UPass cheaper than the graduate?
 - Rajat – 2006? Or so, USSU finalized a rate with the City, where GSA refused. When we did go forward with it, we were seen as a secondary group, which is why we pay more. Tried going back to Saskatoon Transit to negotiate and they were not interested
- **Committee Minutes**
 - Orientation coordinator Selection Committee Meeting Minutes

(30/07/2015)

- Executives Meeting Minutes (12/8/2015)
- Executives Meeting Minutes (26/8/2015)
- Executives Meeting Minutes (9/9/2015)
 - Ziad - Discussion around all of these minutes. All committee minutes are available for review in the agenda and there are hard copies in the office.
 - Motion to approve committee minutes. Motioned by Natalia, seconded by Ziad. Favour – 12; Against 0; Abstained 2. Motion passed.

- **Old Business**

- **Motion: GSA legal invoice** (Rajat Chakravary/Ziad Ghaith)

WHEREAS the GSA is in receipt of a legal invoice of \$8532

WHEREAS the GSA Executive has no authority as per GSA governing documents to approve this expense

WHEREAS the GSA has no access to legal expertise to appropriately respond to this invoice

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the GSA Council set up a legal subcommittee that shall investigate further into this invoice, including but not limited to ways of reducing the invoice amount or counter legal options

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the GSA President look for members of this committee

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this GSA subcommittee respond appropriately to this invoice by **October** 31, 2015 and report the same to GSA Council.

- Motion to amend to October 31, 2015
 - Moved by Jason, seconded by Ashton. Favour – 14; Against – 0; Abstained 0. Motion carried
- Be it further resolved that this legal subcommittee shall be responsible for negotiating with Scharfstein & Company with the goal to reduce the invoice.
 - Ashton moved to amend, seconded by Natalia.
 - Ashton – looking to give the committee some sort of direction, but it can be retracted.
 - Jason – With new constitution, the due process of the committee is to investigate, figure out the best options, and then bring forward as much and

the best information needed for council to make a decision at the next council meeting.

- Ashton will retract his amendment.
 - Jason – Point of order, we have to vote the amendment down. Calling it to question.
 - In favor – 3; Against - 7; Abstain – 0. Motion does not pass.
- Jason amendment to the motion
 - Be further resolved the legal subcommittee come to the council on 21st of October and present its recommendations
 - Jason moved to amend, seconded by Ashton. All in favour 10; Apposed 0; Abstained 1
- Discussion
 - Context given to students. Given an invoice where past GSA President sought advice from the lawyer and that now the GSA must pay for it. We never had a budget for this. A previous meeting he was asked to bring forward three recommendations.
 - Option 1 – Pay it and remove the possibility of being sued. Have charged \$475.00/hour, making them a large firm
 - Option 2 – Not pay them and get in to a legal fight. Will most likely go to court, and then go from there.
 - Option 3 – Reach for a settlement and try to pay something less.
 - Current GSA President went to University to ask for help, they can't pay. Asked for legal advice, and what the university has said is that they will still look into it.
 - Pros/Cons – If we don't pay this, we may get sued and we would be paying 1.8%/month.
- Debate
 - Plant Science – From her experience, pay it now, cause they will come after us. It's not about who's right and who's wrong, but we need to pay it now.
 - Rajat – if we pay, we admit guilt and we can't go after those.
 - Plant Science – we just need to pay for it.
 - Ashton – Questionable invoice, where no one had approved their hiring and they are charging us for things such as phone calls. Options are settle now or let them come after us, and then we go after the individual.

- Speaker list: Moe, David, etc.
- Moe – we need to sign a contract with the lawyer, so we need to see the contract, then it's just a phone call from the GSA and there should be no charge.
- Rajat – Me, David, and Sherry went to office to ask about contract. Lawyer was unclear about it. He said he signed a retainer in 2009, which still hasn't been provided. Then came back in to say that there is a contract from 2013. Then said they've been open for any GSA issues, but there are has been no contract produced.
- David – Personal thoughts. Morally it sucks, but we should just pay this, as it just keeps adding up. The ideal thing would reach something as soon as possible. There is some money budgeted for legal expenses. There was also a loop hole in our Constitution letting President being GM.
- Jason – If we do pay this out, what does our fiscal year look like?
- David – Budget line 6 – there is \$17212.63 with Going to a council motion, which helped to pay Frank-Wilson. It is that because with other left over expenses, they put this in.
- Chemical Engineering - In addition to this, yes we should pay it off, but what are the chances of us winning given the proof that we have? Agreed with Moe that we need to have anything on paper. Thinks we may have good chance to win as long as we have the legal proof.
- Ashton – January last year, where a motion was brought up for a lawyer for council. At the meeting, the motion put forward was to allocate \$9000.00 for legal expenses. The motion didn't pass, but was amended so that the Exec can only explore options, but not go forward to hire legal consultation. In the emails attached you can see discrepancies. Best would be to talk with lawyers, show them the information they do not have, and negotiate a new, lower fee.
- Plant Science – Agrees with David, and if we continue with this, we may lose even more money going to bursaries.
- Jason – Identified he's not a lawyer. I wouldn't be confident in out-lawyering a lawyer. If we can, it'd be great to wait on the university lawyers to see what they say, and then go forward. If the money is budgeted, we can just use it for what it is attended for.
- Kiefer – Can we not go to the university lawyers to get more legal advice for next meeting?

- Rajat – Clarifying difference between legal advice and representation. Spoke to university secretary who was a practicing lawyer and told her the situation and go to the Law Society of Saskatchewan, which would be an option.
- Will (Chemical Engineering) – Can we not contact the last President or who sought out the lawyer?
- Rajat – She can be contacted, but will not entertain. We do have the legal invoice, attached to the minutes.
- Ziad – Also not a lawyer, but would identify that this is a legal invoice, contract or not. Don't know if the lawyer would need to come here to find out if there was approval or not by consequence. We will most likely be paying this sooner or later. Today we can vote to have a legal sub-committee who would be responsible with negotiating with the lawyer.
- Jason – Clarifying the interest. On the minutes it says 18%.
- Rajat – 18% over the year, so math was a bit off on what it is a month.
- **Q&A.**
 - Mohammad ask to send an email to the councillors to form the legal subcommittee
- Next GSA Council Meeting October 21, 2015
- Adjournment – 6:50 pm. Moved by David, seconded by Natalia. All in favour 8; Opposed 0; Abstained 0. Motion passed.