

# The University of Saskatchewan Graduate Students' Association Inc.



## Council Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, October 18, 2016. 5:00 P.M. onwards

### GSA Commons

**Executives:** Ziad Ghaith (President), Kusum Sharma (VP Finance), Carolyn Gasper (VP External), Shailza Sapal (VP Student Affairs), Ali Kiani (VP Academic), Nafisa Absher (VP Operations and Communications), Mylan Tootoosis (Aboriginal Liaison).

- 1 Call to Order:** GSA President call the meeting to order at 5.07 PM.
- 2 Announcements**
  - 2.1 Quorum**
    - Quorum is present. 25 out of 43 registered GSA Councillors are present.
- 3 Approval of Chair**
  - Robert Henderson is nominated as Chair by GSA executives.
  - Robert introduces himself to the GSA Council.
  - Council approves Robert Henderson as permanent chair for Academic year 2016-2017.
- 4 Approval of Agenda**
  - Addition to the agenda
    - a) Addition of Item 6.2, GSA Councillors' Orientation.
    - b) Addition of Item 8.3, approval of ISA.
    - c) Item 9 to be dealt in camera.
  - Moved by Ziad and seconded by Councillor Daniel Karran.
  - **No further discussion on the agenda.**
- 5 Approval of Council Minutes**
  - 5.1 September 27<sup>th</sup>, 2016 Council Meeting (Attached [here](#)).**
    - Moved by Ziad and Seconded by Shailza.
    - 1 abstention.
- 6 Invited presentation**
  - 6.1 StudentCare**

Colten informed:

    - He introduced himself as a Program manager at StudentCare. He has background in student governance and served as President for an undergraduate student association at U of Alberta.
    - StudentCare is the broker of the health & dental plan for the GSA.
    - Did general orientation about health & dental plan and talked about plan fee.
    - Introduced StudentCare. It is a company operated from Montreal and founded by student executives in 1996.
    - Over 700000 students belonging to 75 Student associations are being served by StudentCare all over Canada.
    - The Health & Plan is here since the year 2001 and was installed through student referendum.
    - Last year, over 600000 dollars worth claims were made by students. Also, last year 2700 students were enrolled in the plan.
    - He explained the benefits of group health & dental plan as compared to

individual plans. More number of students means more affordable plans and benefits.

- It does not discriminate between students having chronic illness and students have regular health issues. Both pay same plan fee.
- He informed that prescription drugs, dental fillings and surgeries, root canals and gum treatments, chiropractors, eyes exams, contact lenses and glasses, laser eye surgery are covered and travel coverages are provided.
- People think that StudentCare is an insurance provider but it is more of a broker. It does two roles. First is consultant and second is administrator.
- As a consultant, we work with SunLife who is insurance provider for U of S students and negotiate the plan with SunLife on behalf of students.
- As an administrator, we have member services office in Montreal, that provides over the phone services to the students, operates website and mobile phone application. We have team of 100 people there.
- A new exciting feature provided by StudentCare is student email addresses. U of S does not allow StudentCare to have students' email addresses. Now, we can email students directly through these new email addresses for sharing information.
- On campus office is at Place Riel.
- We do advertisements through campus newspapers and did an interview for Sheaf recently.
- Online integration related to GSA and U of S websites has been done and [www.studentcare.ca](http://www.studentcare.ca) is the official website.
- List of medical practitioners with whom we work in Saskatoon and across Canada is available on our website and they provide students additional discounts who make claims there in return of StudentCare doing advertisements for them.

What happened in the last year and what are we doing moving forward?

- 63% of the claims in last year were for the pay direct drugs.
- Medical practitioners, services and equipment took significant space in claims.
- Dental claims break downs into 1/3<sup>rd</sup> for diagnosis, periodontics & endodontics and surgeries like fillings each
- Annual claims show that health and dental claims are consistently increasing over time as students are using it more and more and also due to inflation.
- Cost of dental services is increasing and number of students using those services is also increasing and hence, cost of the plan is increasing.
- Plan premium is the cost that SunLife charges to students for plan. Plan fee is the charged by StudentCare health & dental plan and GSA.
- We have kept plan fee steady for first 4 years of the plan. Last year, we did freeze on the plan fees but plan premium got increased.
- We took some money from GSA reserve fund and we subsidized the plan. Our plan fee is less than the plan premium.
- We have taken some decisions for this year. We subsidized the plan by \$12.11. We don't want to subsidize more than this. We have three levers which will give us the ability to match the plan premium with plan fee. First lever is plan fee increase. GSA council has the ability to increase plan fee by up to 5% 5 each year without going into referendum. Second option is reserve fund subsidies. This could cover for may be 1 or 2 years. Third lever is available ad benefits cuts. Usually not popular but is can be used for decrease the cost of the plan.
- Any combination of these three can be used to help.
- GSA Council can debate and decide which option is best for students.
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Q: Councillor asked about 5% increase in plan fee, do we know how already how much that will be in total?

A: 21 dollars increase.

Q: Councillor asked for clarity: Fee was frozen last year and are you subsidizing the fee?

A: We built up the reserve fund from health & dental plan money. There is enough for few years of subsidy. If we keep on subsidizing 12.11\*2700 (2700 students joined plan last year) dollars every year, we will exhaust the reserve funds soon. So, we will increase the fee.

Q: Kusum asked that what does eye care coverage covers?

A: 125 dollars every 2 years for contact glasses and up to 75 dollars for 2 years in eye checkups.

## 6.2 GSA Councillors' Orientation

- Chair explained to GSA Councillors about student governance, Robert's rules, GSA constitution, By-laws and other important procedures.
- General advice given to read constitution, By-laws and policy manual.

Role of council:

- Chair informed that this Council is unique as it is both a council and a board.
- The goal of council is to debate and decide issues which are relevant to graduate students. In the eyes of university, councillors speak for all graduate students on the campus.
- Councillors are caretakers of the corporation which is the role of the board.
- Councillors performs the role of director of board. Councillors are the members of the boards. Role of director is taking responsibility for the business of GSA. Student money of quarter million dollars flows thorough GSA. Councillors must take care of it.
- Making decision as a director you are representing the interests of corporate stuff and not the department. Suppose you have student members on the board and board wants to increase the tuition. They must think of the best of the university and think of corporation's interest.
- Reading the agenda packages, asking questions and making informed decisions. Hold the GSA executives accountable for their decisions. It is their job to oversee the decisions.
- As a director, a councillor is personally responsible to carry out their duties.
- Bring issues from your departments and be aware of what is going in the university. You must attend the meetings and if you miss two meetings you can't vote anymore.
- Chair explained the general structure of the GSA council.

Q: What is the liability insurance?

A: Chair asked Ziad to answer the question. Ziad told the council that he cannot answer this question. Liability insurance for GSA executives happened last year.

Q: How are the committees formed?

A: There is membership for each committee listed in the GSA By-laws. We are going to talk about committees, take nominations and fill the committees. New ad-hoc committees can be formed to solve new issues. Chair can make ad-hoc committees and can be dissolved after the issue is solved.

Chair explained Robert's rules of order. It avoids chaos.

Important points of Robert's rules of order:

a). Agenda: List of items to be taken in the meeting and in what order. New business can come on the floor at the end of the meeting. Agenda is adopted by motion. Meetings are run by the chair and he/she has the authority to run. If things get out of hands and then chair can divert decisions to avoid disorder. If you have to speak you have to be recognized so that it can be recorded. Questions are asked through the chair. Chair does not vote and does not debate until unless somebody else takes up the Chair position.

b). Motion: Main: Introduce new items for discussion.

Subsidiary Affect main motion

Privileged: Raise and urgent unrelated matter

Incidental: Question procedure

c). Minutes: For official records, what ever happened at the meeting is recorded. It is customary

to have to approve this record.

- d). Reports: Submitted to council from officers and committees.
- e). Special Orders: Items of business that take precedence.
- f). Unfinished business and general orders:
- g). New or Other business: Typically, at the end of the meeting. Bring items of concern to council.

Questions can be asked about how meetings are run and agenda is set. Send emails at [gsa.chair@usask.ca](mailto:gsa.chair@usask.ca).

## 7 Executives Reports

### 7.1.1 VP Finance Report (Attached [here](#)).

- Tech venture challenge: We have loan agreement done with the help of Robert Thomas from International Liaison office. Agreement is signed and we have released \$8000 to Tedrich Soh. Rest \$2000 will be released upon satisfactory examination of all the expenses during this tenure. This will be a loan amount for the time of 3 years.
- GSA Visa card: We faced quite a lot of problems with amount which GSA Visa card holds and we have increased it.
- GSA Credit card policy: We have also implemented GSA Credit card policy and is posted on GSA website. It explains who can use the card, what amount and the circumstances in which it can be used.
- Health and Dental plan- GSA paid \$77182.25 to health and dental service providers from Health and Dental Reserve funds. GSA is left with 79000 dollars for next year.
- All the GSA financial transactions are available on GSA website.

### 7.1.2 VP External Report (Oral report).

- Involved in survey committee run by Student Affairs VP. In final stage of compiling the survey and hoping to launch in the end of November.
- Working with CFS for day of action.
- Explained about day of action. Day of action starts at 1 PM tomorrow till 4 PM. We will have DJ and food in the bowl.
- Eat your debt tomorrow event will happen tomorrow in the Arts tunnel. We will give cupcakes to students.
- We are advocating to the Saskatchewan government is a 50/50 model of cost sharing including a federal transfer of about 140 million dollars to eliminate tuition fee for post secondary education in the province.
- Going to Regina tonight to lobby with govt to reduce fees for graduate students.
- Working with sexual health clinic to promote STI testing world record day. Encouraged students to participate.
- Started working on planning the Gala.
- Will have executive meeting for Gala next week.

### 7.1.3 VP Operations Report (Oral report).

- In September, took part in an initiative called Sexual orientation week and in react campaign we held a consent culture workshop here at GSA
- Took part in panel discussion with Vice Provost of Teaching and Learning.
- Represented graduate students in several committee meetings and maintained the communication of GSA to our members.
- Helped in the process of finding the chair for GSA.
- We have a new service at the GSA which is Notary public commissioner of oaths. Our office manager got trained and is currently providing notary services free of charge to our members.
- Also, working with FMD to see if there is a possibility of creating a sort of like a comfort room here at GSA for graduate students' parents.

- Currently, coordinating the GSA fall bursaries. Thanks to CGSR, we have \$25000 dollars allocated for the fall bursary applications.

#### **7.1.4 VP Academic Report (Oral report).**

- Meeting with students regarding their academic problems.
- Attended meetings for library master plan, academic scholarship committee and GSA executive meetings.
- Represented GSA at the university council meeting.
- Working with student application registration with two another council members.
- Planning to have a workshop next month.
- Will have meeting with Campus legal service about students and their problems.
- Next week blanket exercise happening at GSA on Oct 27<sup>th</sup>, at 4.30 PM. Snacks will be provided. It is about aboriginal people, their history and issues. Invited students to attend it.

#### **7.1.5 VP Student Affairs Report (Oral report)**

- Wine and Cheese was great hit. Thanked students for coming to the social event.
- Currently working on the graduate student survey. We are in process of doing an ethics approval form. Going back and forth to SSRL lab, to talk regarding ethical and political questions which we have to work on. Hoping to be done by first week of November and launching the survey by second week of November. Survey will be open for students for 3 weeks to complete.
- Halloween party will be held at GSA on Oct 29<sup>th</sup> and it will be +19 event and we will be showing a horror movie.
- Planning a next workshop related to internationals students' issues.

#### **7.1.6 Aboriginal Liaison Report (Oral report).**

- Currently working on behalf of the GSA, building the capacity and our relationship with indigenous students.
- Gathering inputs from indigenous students.
- Supporting GSA surveys. Gathering data specifically about indigenous graduate students and how better to incorporate them in GSA.
- Looking at the current active councils and committees on campus trying to better situate ourselves as GSA Indigenous students in those committees and taking the concerns of graduate students.

#### **7.1.7 President Report (Attached [here](#)).**

- Congratulated Robert for being selected as Chair.
- Working for Graduate student's representation on the board of governors and university council.
- Met with Saskatchewan Human Services Caucus Policy committee to address the importance of improving the representation of the graduate students.
- U'15 website. We are the only one having no representation on board of governance. They set up the tuition and strategic planning for the institution. It is the biggest academic council on the campus. We have only 1 seat as compared to 8 seats of undergrads.
- Day of action- thanked VP EXTERNAL, goal of this is to make post secondary education accessible to everyone.
- Invite all to come to Day of action event. Share the email with academic council members.

#### **7.1.8 Q&A**

Q: Councillor asked for more details about \$10000 loan given as part of tech venture challenge award?

A: 10000 loan is given to winner of tech venture challenge award. A student Tedrich Soh from U of S won this award and is given this award. Loan amount is valid for 3 years

and the student has to pay back to GSA. We have taken care of it, if student is not able to pay money back.

## **8 Approval of Social Clubs**

### **8.1 Focus Club**

- Last council meeting, a councillor had asked to Focus club representative to come and speak to council.
- Ziad informed that the president could not come due to other commitments and the Focus Club secretary being in China.
- Councillor Lindsay said that they have fb page and not have a website. She read out the description from their fb page. This fb page has a ministries website.
- Ziad mentioned that in our by-laws we don't have any rule about which group to ratify or which not.
- Discussion regarding moving to next meeting, Vita said that President will not show up and make decision today.
- Councillor Lindsay ask to table it next time and motion made by Councillor Naheda and seconded by Councillor Ilora Danon.
- 5 opposed to push and 1 abstained to push to next meeting.
- Councillor Vita said previous GSA meeting we had tabled this and the fact they have not sent any representative from their group says a lot. We should refuse them instead of tabling them.
- Chair added that GSA bylaws are vague about ratification.
- Ziad said one we approve any social club, we will be responsible for their activities.

### **8.2 Tox on Tap**

- It is a toxicology graduate students group.
- We bring in experts in the area of toxicology and environment science to give short presentations. This year we have 6 hours' spot on Shaw cable to get out to public in terms of education.
- Moved by Ziad and seconded by David.
- One abstention and the re-ratification of the Tox on Tap is approved by the council.

### **8.3 India Students' Association (ISA)**

- Ashish Kopargaonkar, president of ISA introduced himself to the council.
- ISA is one of the largest ethnic body on the campus which strives to promote and share the values and traditions of Indian culture among the community members.
- ISA has been very active in engaging the different student groups.
- We help new students to settle in the campus.
- We constantly strive to organize academic, cultural and sports events to promote overall well-being of the student members.
- ISA is not a religion based organization and encourages students from all various faiths and beliefs to come under one umbrella to promote friendship and understanding.
- There is no fee to join ISA and is open to both undergraduate and graduate students.
- We believe in sharing food, music and friendship will bring people together.
- Best thing about ISA is that we embrace diversity. No matter our cultural, linguistic, ethnic and religious backgrounds, students are motivated to work together to build a strong, cohesive and prosperous student community.
- We hope to get ratified by GSA and continue our association with GSA to build a cohesive student community.
- Our ISA website is regularly updated with minutes of meetings and has a membership form. Fill the membership form to be ISA member. We also post about events and post their photographs.
- We have information for new students which we can help new students to settle down and navigate their way in the university smoothly.
- Election updates are put on website too.

- We welcome all to join the club.

Q: Councillor asked is it open to all grad students?

A: Ashish said that it is open for all the students registered at U of S and membership is free of cost.

- Moved by councillor Jamie and seconded by councillor Lindsay.
- Two abstentions by Kusum and Shailza.
- ISA re-ratification approved by the council.

## 9 Old Business

### 9.1 Motion: GSA Budget (Carolyn Gasper/Ziad Ghaith) (In-Camera)

Preamble

The University of Saskatchewan Graduate Student Association (GSA) attends GU15 conferences as an informal sharing body of best practices. In August 2016, 7 out of 9 school attendees at the GU15 conference voted for incorporation.

The new name of the incorporation is “ThinkGRAD” (Graduate Research and Development), the first graduate think tank in Canada. This think tank will expand its memberships to other universities with strong research vigour and try to understand the Canadian graduate student experience through research.

The incorporation of “ThinkGRAD” is to hold schools accountable for their duties and to help graduate student lobby internally within the UofS administrative for students’ matters on campus and nationally with supporting data.

The GSA will play a historical part of “ThinkGRAD” by hosting the first “ThinkGRAD” conference in April 2017.

This motion is a reaffirmation of the GSA’s commitment to the GU15 conference.

WHEREAS incorporating “ThinkGRAD” will help our association to work and cooperate with other Graduates associations in Canada

WHEREAS The incorporation of “ThinkGRAD” is to hold schools accountable for their duties and to help graduate student lobby internally within the UofS administrative for students’ matters on campus and nationally with supporting data.

BE IT RESOLVED the GSA Council allocate \$1100 dollars from the unallocated fund revenue budget line toward this incorporation

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED the GSA agrees, in principle, to levy a student fee of up to \$.50 per member, per term (Term 1 and Term 2 of the UofS academic year), to be paid to the “ThinkGRAD” membership fees as an on-going financial contribution to participate in future conferences.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the final decision to approve or disapprove a levied fee shall be made through a referendum, pursuant to Section 4.18.8 of the GSA By-laws, held during Term 2 of the 2016-2017 U of S academic year;

- Went in camera
- Moved by Nafisa and seconded by Ziad.
- Motion above was deferred indefinitely at the request of the VP External.

## 10 New Business

### **10.05 Presentation by President (In Camera)**

- After this presentation by President, out of Camera

## **10.1 GSA Standing Committees**

### **10.1.1 Finance and Audit Committee**

### **10.1.2 Bursary Selection Committee**

- Ziad informed that to form the Bursary Selection Committee, we need GSA VP Academics executive, GSA VP Finance executive and 3 GSA Councillors.
- There are 3 meetings in total a year. First was in Summer 2016, second is in November, 2016 and the last meeting is in February, 2017.
- 25 bursaries will be given in each of the Fall and Winter terms.
- Ziad informed that committee has access to names of the students participating in bursaries.
- Volunteers are Lindsay, Ilora and Naheda.
- Ziad asked volunteers communicate with GSA VP operations executive.
- Moved by Vita and seconded by Daniel.
- Carried unanimously.

### **10.1.3 Governors Committee**

### **10.1.4 Health and Dental Committee**

### **10.1.5 Gala Committee**

### **10.1.6 Code of Ethics and Discipline Committee (require non council/executive members)**

### **10.1.7 Election Referenda Committee (require non Council members)**

- Chair asked the councillors to send email to the chair to send nominations to fill rest of the above-mentioned committees.

## **11 Student Forum**

- Ziad informed it is an university forum for under graduate and graduate students.
- Two GSA executives and 2 GSA councillors are required to form this forum.
- Councillor Isaac Pratt informed that he has served earlier on this forum.
- He further added that this forum talks about sexual assault policy, student care, indigenous student issues, etc.
- Ziad informed that Student Forum meets 4 times a year. He requested 5th meeting for discussing issues of Graduate students.
- Robert and Vita volunteered.
- Moved by Isaac Pratt and seconded by Nafisa.
- Motion passed. Carried unanimously.

## **12 Q&A.**

No Questions asked.

## **13 Next GSA Council Meeting 29 of November 2016**

## **14 Adjournment**

- Meeting adjourned at 7.40 PM