

**University of Saskatchewan
Graduate Students' Association**

COUNCIL

Minutes from the October 26, 2017 Meeting

Attendance

Present: Douglas Fansher, Jason Ho, Katherine Raes, Carolina Malgarin, Morgan Kirzinger, Evan Poncelet, Jovey Sharma, John Bird, Michelle Wauchope-Thompson, Carmen Marques-Mellidez, Azar Khorsandi, Jose Alvim Berkenbrock, Sudipo Mondol, Mona Hamada, Bethany Thiessen, Jocelyn Blouin, Samuel Schulz, Parastoo Veisi, Rifat Zahan, Megan Poole, Caio Taveira, Federica Giannelli, Nadia Hoosain, Olivia Bird, Brittany Laing, Palash Sanyal, Nazmul Hossain, Saman Naghieh, Arinjay Banerjee, Jim Pulfer, Robert Henderson, Logan Pizzey, Ziad Ghaith , Jordan Bonkowski (left 17:30), Ali Kiani, Naheda Sahtout, Iloradanon Efimoff

Regrets: Indiana Best, Olamide Anne Oriola

Absent: Soil Science, EGCC –Chemical Engineering

Organization of Meeting: Robert Henderson, Chair of Council, took the chair, and Deidra Aitken acted as secretary. The Chair advised that due notice of the meeting had been given, a quorum was present, and the meeting was properly constituted.

OPEN SESSION

17:00

1. Call to Order @ 5:04pm
2. Introductory Remarks from the Chair and Overview of Council
 - a. Has non – as board chair had done a presentation
3. Approval of the Agenda
 - a. Mover – Arinjay
 - b. Second – Nadia
 - c. Carried

Consent Agenda 17:08

Motion: To approve and/or receive for information by consent items 4 – 6 below.

- a. Mover – Katheryn Raes
 - b. Second – Ziad
 - c. Carried
4. Minutes from the 26 September Council Meeting
5. Reports from the Executive
6. Reports from the Executive Committee

Regular Agenda 17:09

7. Business Arising from the Minutes
8. Consultation Session: Review of University Policy on Student Appeals
 - a. The University Secretary, came up to speak with the Dean of College of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
 - b. Robert opened the floor to questions and comments
 - c. A member asked if there was an accessible document that was simplified a version with less legal jargon
 - d. The University Secretary offered the GSA to put in a list of requests from the students for items such as that version mentioned
 - e. A member asked for it to state “student appealer” or “undergraduate appealer”
 - f. Dean of CGPS commented that the graduate students are included on appeals panels.
 - g. A member brought up differences between the graduate and undergraduate and some of the processes are not clear, along with the processes not being equal between the two types of students
 - h. University Secretary responded that the graduate version was written is to mirror the undergraduate, causing it to be less clear – there will be a discussion to solve clarity on the graduate version
 - i. A member asked about definitions of some wording on the document, i.e. professionalism
 - j. University Secretary responded that there will be a review of definitions and the term “professionalism” used
 - k. A member asked about the student/supervisor agreement, if that document would have leverage if the agreement is breached
 - l. Dean of CGPS was uncertain how that agreement would come into play, i.e. plagiarism, a student lacking in their studies, etc.
 - m. The same member requested the timelines to be more transparent on the document
 - n. University Secretary said a distinction between the regulations and the appeal process – you can only appeal on very narrow grounds – there was an extraneous factor that affects the contract – a procedural failing the understanding of the expectations should be agreed upon, adding in a third party to assess, that there is a reasonable result from expectations on both sides
 - o. A member asked concerns with professors, graduating, defending thesis and presenting data in their unit – the supervisors are not following their guidelines, students are concerned that if they bring forward the issues the supervisors will inhibit them from graduating
 - p. Dean of CGPS – no faculty members report to him, only the deans do – concerns should be strongly encouraged to begin the conversation with supervisor, then grad chair, department head, then to CGPS – at that point their office will have a conversation with that particular college’s professors. Dean of CGPS clarified that it is the academic unit that allows students to be accepted to their programs, it becomes their job to find a new supervisor for the student (and the necessary resources to continue their education)
 - q. Robert recommended a flow chart document that could feed into the appeals policy to clarify where students should begin their appeals process
 - r. University Secretary encouraged the counselors to step forward and help support their fellow students who are dealing with this

- s. A member asked about students allowed legal counsel and the concern if the supervisor could have legal counsel and the student not be able to support legal counsel for themselves
 - t. University Secretary said yes and no, the university does not cover the cost of private legal counsel, legal counsel are quite unheard of at these meetings – the USSU has a group of law students that can provide legal advice to help students figure their way through the appeal process
 - the members are understood that if a student does not have legal counsel, there is a support for that, it's not overly formal to make it more comfortable for those who aren't able to afford legal council
 - u. Dean of CGPS spoke that if a student is appealing, the respondent does not engage with a lawyer unless the student does – typically legal counsel are not at the hearings
 - v. Ziad asked to accommodate a member who is of CGPS?
 - w. Robert asked for further questions and suggestions to be emailed to gsa.secretary@usask.ca
9. Classification of Graduate Student Stipends [*Dean, CGPS*]
- a. Employment income to scholarship income
 - b. A member asked why/how was this decision made? The university was outside of guidelines, comment on the process to making this decision
 - c. Dean, CGPS - here is some evolution, backing up two months we did not have a collective agreement between PSAC and the Graduate students where the students would not be treated as an employee – definitions were unavailable, Trevor paraphrased: “students receiving funding in support of their pursuit of an academic degree those funds should be received as a fellowship” If they are not doing tasks directly to their studies, they are considered employees for their work – this is all in agreeance with CRA regulations, as opposed to the agreements
 - d. A member asked about the collective agreement aligning with this decision
 - e. There are different employment categories and if a student should be appointed to those categories and the description of the activities the student will be doing
 - f. A member asked if these changes are on par
 - g. Dean, CGPS – not certain, but expected that all universities are following the rules of CRA and shared a story of a disgruntled student who came forward challenging, hence the changes
 - h. A member asked about EI benefit claims for students
 - i. Dean, CGPS- Determined on their classification of a job, they cannot change from one to the other
 - j. Member – line of communication that the university seemed to not want the graduate students to know about it, and where in the hierarchy the decision came from
 - k. Dean, CGPS – the decision to create the category was decided with payroll, financial services, and financial records-type folks and that was in part with the collective agreement, they struggled to provide numbers of how many grad students they had on file (lack of good data on the back end) and categorized in conjunction with the CRA
 - l. Dean, CGPS– characteristic our academic system – dependent upon the department, understanding that the lack of having the three categories defined was not an excuse to communicate it to the students
 - m. Member – will there be a better flow of communication?
 - n. CGPS – the SBA will be part of how the roll-out will go and that they are being trained on what the advice and decisions to be made, consistency with colleges and the messages said
 - o. A suggestion was made to send a email draft as many students had no idea that it has happened – when such a critical message is needing to be delivered to all students – as the GSA's students, only one college (to the GSA's knowledge) only went out to one college

- p. Dean, CGPS – senior financial officers in each department, all those leaders received the same memo, but they know more than they did 1st of Sept, as this was communicated to the departments, but not specifically to the students
 - q. Students are encouraged to discuss with their units in regards to the lack of communication
 - r. A member asked to have someone in finance come speak at a meeting that they could directly answer
10. Report of the Chair: GSA Council Committees and Appointments
- a. Appoint 3 councillors on the bursary selection committee
 - i. Troy Shapley
 - ii. Doug Fansher
 - iii. Carmen Marquez
 - iv. Mover – Iloradanon Efimoff
 - v. Second Ali Kiani
 - vi. Carried
 - b. Listing the rest of the committees that require students to sit on them
 - i. Taking interest by email – list your top three choices
 - ii. Look through the list of committees, and send your choices to the gsa.secretary@usask.ca by Sunday November 5th elections will take place should there be discrepancies
 - iii. Add in the Sustainability Committee to the selection
11. Report from the Executive Committee
- a. Work plans for 2017-18
 - i. Iloradanon Efimoff spoke about her roles and plans – sports campus rec teams, sustainability committee, surveying the entire student body to build improvements, social media, health chats, graduate student achievement week, social events as they come
 - ii. Ali Kiani – academic and non-academic issues, social events, workshops for graduate students, advocacy for graduate students in meetings, hearings, etc.
 - iii. Neheda Sahtout – increasing the visibility of the GSA on campus and in the community, health and wellness, annual awards gala and awards committee, maximizing student benefits, ThinkGrad
 - iv. Ziad Ghaith is speaking on behalf of our VP of Finance – a new bookkeeping system, finish historical audits this year, creating a graduate student email list (the university screens our communications) – please say yes to the request to join the communication list, update the visual systems in the GSA commons
 - v. Ziad Ghaith - student supervisor agreement in place, grad student presence on the board of governance
 - b. Q & A Period with the Executive
 - i. This item will appear on every agenda
 - ii. No questions from the council
12. Report of the Vice President External: ThinkGRAD membership
- a. A collaborative project between several GSA across Canada to have a support system to identify areas of weakness and see what support systems other universities have and how to incorporate them into our own
 - b. Does this council agree this is a good initiative to be part of? The board will make the final decision as it has an \$800 membership cost
 - I. Motion: *Whereby Council endorses membership to the University of Saskatchewan Graduate Students' Association on ThinkGrad, with an annual membership fee of CAD 800.*

2. *Whereby membership on ThinkGrad will be evaluated every year by the GSA executives so as to ensure membership fees are being used to the benefit of our GSA members.*
3. *Whereby Council recommends that the board approves this membership and membership fees in the November meeting.*
 - i. Mover – Naheda Sahtout
 - ii. Second – Iloradanon Efimoff
 - iii. Carried, one opposed, three abstained
 1. Member - Do the students have to pay for it? Will it be beneficial to the students?
 2. Naheda - You will not have to pay for this – the funds come from the grad students fees, no additional fees would be allocated. Usask hosted the first meeting, they are trying to put together a system to access all policies and mandates – a database of them all, as of now GSA must connect personally with each university – with the database/website the GSA can access these documents to streamline effectiveness
 3. Robert, a small amount of money for the GSA in perspective and the effectiveness of the system
 4. Member - Who will be managing the funds? Who these people are?
 5. Takes time to set up the structure – they are in the current process of that, we are not required to continue this throughout the years, the council can withdrawal at any time
 6. Member – a separate entity, not attached to a certain university, current participants
 7. A group of orgs will be in charge of it, still in the process of development, cannot comment upon the governance structure, UBC, McGill, UofS, Montreal University, McMaster, Manitoba, interest from Alberta
 8. Member – maximize information, grad student opportunities – for doctorates, post docs
 9. Not the exact reason its there, more so for policy – but will bring the policy forward
 10. Ziad – the student supervisor agreement will have future benefit of this document, council composition of other universities, a useful tool to benefit the GSA
 11. Member – (Jim) an incredible tool to advocate for GSA
 - iv. Motion – the council determines the continued membership, not just the executive and recommend to the board to approve the fees, the final decision is with the board
 - v. Seconder – Jocelyn
 - vi. Carried, one opposed, three abstentions

13. Discussion Sessions

- a. GSA Bus Pass Review
 - i. Questions about the bus pass review
 - ii. Member - opt out request
 - iii. Ziad - Issue is complicated, a signed contract with Saskatoon Transit, signed 5 years ago and agreed upon, asking for feedback if the grad students want the pass when the survey to goes out
- b. Student Parking Passes

- i. Airnjay - Received grievances from students in the last month, where they pay for transit, a parking pass, and have to find parking
 - ii. Students on campus can opt out of the bus pass, students across the street cannot opt out of the bus pass
 - iii. Proposal to find a number of students opposed to this
 - iv. Comments be added to the bus pass survey, encourage all councilors to gain feedback from their student body to be added to the review process
 - v. Why can't students with parking passes opt out, new rink across the street, parking was taken away from students who live on campus
 - vi. This will be taken to the VP of student affairs, as he sits on the parking committee
 - vii. Students have to pay for parking when living on campus on the far end, near innovation place
 - viii. The university parking services owns the parking
 - c. GSA Health & Dental Plan
 - i. Committee that reviews these plans annually, with input from council
 - ii. Member – very frustrated with the plan offered by the university, not an effective model, an unethical plan (illegal to offer discounts to students), college of pharmacists is reviewing this – choose a provider based on their skill, not their discount – Saskatoon Chamber of Commerce has a great plan
 - iii. Member – lapses in the plan once you have any major medical concerns, covers the simple things, but should be looked at to find a different provider with a better cost-benefit analysis
 - iv. Suggested to bring in our Student Care Rep (plan broker) to come to council for a discussion session
 - v. No objections to change from the council, but are open to hear frustrations and take that to negotiations
 - vi. Member – international students' perspective, students are advised to get insurance and the current insurance plan does not cover services provided on campus
 - vii. Member – Calgary has an on-campus support staff for claims
- 14. Other Business / Announcements
 - a. Member – Bangladesh Ratification, event next Saturday looking for funds from the GSA for their dinner
 - b. Chair did not receive the documentation in time to meet the agenda deadline
 - c. Motion: Motion for council to re-ratify the Bangladesh Students Associations and Indian Students Association
 - d. Mover – Naheda
 - e. Second – Arinjay
 - f. Carried, one abstention

CONFIDENTIAL SESSION 19:19

IN CAMERA SESSION 19:37