



**University of Saskatchewan
Graduate Students' Association
Annual General Meeting
Minutes from Tuesday April 24, 2018**

Present: Scott Adams (Chair), Jesus Corona Gomez (Incoming VP Finance and Operations), Edgar Martinez-Soberanes (Incoming VP Student Affairs), Somtochukwu Ufondu (Incoming VP External), Zahra Ghoreshi, Karolina Pusz-Bochenski, Dana Ramsay, Naomi Maina, Viktoria Hinz, Manye Mtata, Masoud Mohammadtahen, Saman Naghieh, Breanne Murray, Evan Poncolt, Stephanie Graves, Md Shahrion Islam, Nazmul Hossain, CM Khaled Saifallah, Sakib Mobtada, Banjo Olaliye, Alex Tu, Jocelyn Bboin, Peter Friedrichsen, Isaac Pratt, Tyler Morhart, Douglas Fansher, Osai Clarke, Joshua Zimmerman, Kaiyang Tu, Amanda Galas-Wilson, Josh Alk, Mona Hamada, Palash Sanyal, Milratha Clay, Aimee Schnyer, Jennifer Bell, Mamata Paniorani, Federica Giannelli, Courtney Carlberg, Marissa Evans, Jose Alvin Berkenbrock, Sander Sule, Mays Al-Dulaymi, Asmita Poudel, Fatma Elzahraa, Anand Nambisan, Moralba Dominguez, Kushagra Parolia, Sudipta Mondal, Natalia C. Cardoso

Executives and Board: Ziad Ghaith (President), David Bennett (VP Finance and Operations), Naheda Sahtout (VP External), Ali Kiani (VP Student Affairs) and Logan Pizzey (Board Member)

Invited Guests

The Chair welcomed Saman Naghieh and Isaac Armstrong from the Union for Graduate and Postdoctoral Workers at the University of Saskatchewan, PSAC Local 40004, to give a few words. Mr. Naghieh thanked us for the opportunity to speak at our Annual General Meeting. He informed us that last year he had the opportunity to serve as one of the executive members of this Union and this year he is currently serving as the VP Graduate Students. The Union represents teaching assistants, research assistants, student assistants and postdoctoral fellows. As per the collective bargaining agreement for graduate students, the rate of pay has been increased. Mr. Naghieh informed us to pay attention to our pay cheques and that if there is any problem to email the PSAC local office. Another resource this year is Isaac Armstrong, the regional representative of PSAC, who comes with a plethora of bargaining experience.

Mr. Armstrong reinforced that the Union represents those graduate students working as teaching assistants and research assistants. The first collective bargaining agreement was signed last fall which included an increase in the rate of pay over the next four years. This is what the Union does, negotiate for better pay; however, the Union also works to help in the interpretation of the collective agreement and collective bargaining. If the employer wants to go against these terms, it is important to approach the Union. Mr. Armstrong mentioned that he works for the members and is 100 % accountable to the members. Mr. Armstrong indicated that he has been a member of PSAC for 13 years, served in different roles on the executive team, and was a graduate student at one point completing a Masters of Labor Studies from the University of Massachusetts. He

encourages anyone who has a problem to approach the Union so that it can be rectified. Mr. Armstrong is located at 131 McLean Hall, Monday to Friday, 8:30 AM to 4:30 PM.

Organization of the Meeting:

The Chair acknowledged that we are on Treaty 6 Territory and the Homeland of the Métis people. Notice of the meeting was given 30 days in advance and the agenda material was circulated via email to all Council members and was available to all the GSA members on the GSA website. Notification of the meeting, along with links to the agenda items, was also circulated to all graduate students by email. The Chair recognized that quorum was reached. The VP External (Naheda Sahtout) acted as recording secretary for the remainder of the meeting.

Item 1: Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 5:35 PM.

The Chair introduced all of the current Executives and thanked them for joining us today and for their service over the past year.

Item 2: Approval of the Agenda

The Chair asked whether there were any amendments to the agenda. Seeing none, the Chair called for a motion to approve the agenda as circulated.

Motion moved by Tyler Morhart. Seconded by Amanda Galas-Wilson.

Motion carried.

Item 3: Remarks from the Chair and Elections Report

The Chair, also in his capacity as the Chief Electoral Officer, offered a brief summary of the elections that was recently held. Voting took place from April 11 to 13. 395 students cast their ballots, which was equivalent to 12.6% of eligible students, quite similar to previous years. The Chair introduced the new incoming Executives and congratulated them on their election. The Chair thanked them for their leadership in running and looks forward to an excellent 2018 / 2019 year ahead. He further thanked the Elections Committee for their time and consideration in overseeing the elections.

Item 4: Approval of the Minutes from the 2017 AGM.

The Chair asked if there were any amendments to the minutes. Hearing none, the Chair asked for a motion to approve the minutes

Motion moved by Ziad Ghaith. Seconded by Jocelyn Bbain.

Motion carried.

Item 5: Report of the Vice-President Finance and Operations

Vice-President Bennett thanked everyone for being here and thanked the Elections Committee for their commitment towards the elections this year. Mr. Bennett thanked the staff members, all the volunteers and all of the members for participating and engaging in the GSA. He specifically thanked those who sat on the Bursary Selection Committee, the Budget and Finance Committee and the volunteers who helped at the Income Tax Clinic. Through the Income Tax Clinic, we

were able to help about 67 graduate students, spouses and dependents, with their Canadian income tax filing. Through his tenure as the VP Finance and Operations, Mr. Bennett spent quite a bit of time catching up on the budget, making sure the system was strong and working on the budget for the upcoming year. The budget, included in the agenda, was approved by the Board last week with one minor amendment. This is a budget that focuses on supporting our students. We have done this by increasing the amount that we contribute to the crisis aid program and the travel award program. Both of these programs we benefit exponentially. For example, last year the GSA contributed CAD 5000 to the crisis aid program and saw almost 5 X that amount given to graduate students. An even higher outcome was observed with the travel award program. Through these programs, we contribute the funding and they provide the administrative tasks, as the GSA doesn't have the capacity to fulfill the administrative tasks. We have ensured that our budget is sustainable and will generate a small surplus.

Item 6: Approval of the GSA Financial Statements for the Year-Ended April 30, 2013

Pursuant to the Non-profit Corporations Act, 1995 and the GSA Constitution, we do have to approve our consolidated financial statements. While these were done at a time prior to Vice-President Bennett's time in the GSA, he has reviewed them and the auditor has reviewed them and they are acceptable with all the trial balances matching. We also received the 2014 financial statements; however, we weren't in a position to distribute them because they needed to be signed. These will be approved at a future SGM or AGM. Our financial process is finally getting caught up after being non-existent for multiple years.

WHEREAS Section 9.1.2.i of the GSA Constitution govern the presentation of Financial Statements to the Membership.

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the reviewed financial statements of the University of Saskatchewan Graduate Students' Association Inc. be accepted for the year ended April 30, 2013, as presented.

*Motion moved by David Bennett. Seconded by Ziad Ghaith.
Motion carried.*

Item 7: Approval of the GSA Auditor for the 2018-2019 Financial Year

Vice-President Bennett indicated that pursuant to the Non-profit Corporations Act, 1995 and proper procedures in corporate governance, membership is required to approve and appoint an auditor going forward for the next financial year. Mr. Bennett recommends that we continue with our relationship with Kathryn Bankowski from Buckberger Baerg and Partners LLP, who are our current auditors. They are very proficient in their auditing. Recommends this for at least one more year until things is caught up, then to consider a competitive request for auditors for the following year.

WHEREAS Section 9.1.2.iii of the GSA Constitution and Section 149(1) of the Saskatchewan Non-Profit Corporations Act govern the appointment of an auditor.

BE IT RESOLVED THAT Buckberger Baerg and Partners LLP be appointed as auditors for 2018-2019 Financial Year.

*Motion moved by David Bennett. Seconded by Ziad Ghaith.
Motion carried.*

Item 8: Report of the Vice-President Student Affairs

Vice-President Kiani noted that it was a great pleasure for him to work for the GSA for two years and serve graduate students as the VP Academic last year and the VP Student Affairs this year. This year, along with the GSA Coordinator Edgar Martinez-Soberanes, he was responsible for fall orientation / winter orientation, social events and the Three Minute Thesis Competition. Kiani thanks the volunteers and the previous office manager for their help at the fall orientation event. Kiani noted that the other part of his duties was advocacy for graduate students and to sit on hearing boards to resolve graduate student issues at the academic and non-academic level. Kiani wishes to thank his team for their assistance and all the GSA members for their support.

Item 9: Report of the Vice-President External

Vice-President Sahtout indicated that it was a pleasure to have served as the Vice-President External for the 2017 / 2018 academic year and looks forward to being the President for the 2018 / 2019 academic year. Sahtout noted that she has learned a lot from the team this year and hopes to use what she has learned to further progress the advocacy and issues of importance for graduate students. In her role as VP External, she was responsible for maintaining the relationship with CFS and ThinkGrad, as well as discussing items of importance with other associations, especially those items that the GSA currently seeks advocacy and best-practice solutions to. She travelled to three conferences and is currently attending another virtually. Several of these conferences were especially helpful because they focused on graduate student needs and best-practices and provided space for discussions between associations.

Another part of her portfolio was health and wellness, in which along with four students from the Masters of Public Health program, seven sessions were held ranging from self-defence to laughter therapy. These sessions were attended by graduate students who would not normally participate in activities. Sahtout also helped the Indigenous Liaison with maintaining the Guppies recreational team for the winter futsal team. Her main event was the organisation of the awards gala, which was held on April 7, 2018, and which saw six graduate students and one faculty member win awards. This gala is a symbol from the GSA to showcase how much we appreciate our graduate students, their dedication to research, commitment to leadership and their philanthropy towards the community. Sahtout notes that the GSA is quite proud of the graduate students and their representation and leadership on campus has captured the eyes of all those who were present at the Gala. Sahtout wishes to thank the Executive team for the remarkable learning experience.

Item 10: Report of the Indigenous Liaison

Iloradanon Efimoff had sent in her regrets; however, President Ghaith indicated that she wanted to extend her greetings to all of the members of the GSA and thanking them for supporting Indigenous students on campus. She also wishes to inform those present that if there were any specific questions to direct them to her by email gsa.aboriginal@usask.ca

Item 11-12: Amendments of the GSA Constitution and ByLaws and Policy Manual

Vice-President Sahtout, in her capacity as the Chair of the GSA Governance Committee, indicated that the Committee was faced with a difficult task this year to discuss the change in governance structure that was approved at the 2017 AGM and to follow through with recommendations that were provided for by Executives, Councillors and Members. The recommended changes that were put forth in the governing documents, as attached to the agenda, suggest a change in the Board composition so that the President and Vice-Presidents constitute the Board, to maintain compliance with the Saskatchewan Non-profit Corporations Act, 1995. The changes also made clearer the duties and responsibilities of each Executive. The Committee had an extensive look through the documents to ensure that the language was appropriate to the membership. Sahtout noted that in the 2017 SGM, the change in governance structure was contingent on revising this structure in a year to identify whether this structure was in fact beneficial for the Association. The motions put forth read as follows:

Whereas section 9.6 of the Constitution of the University of Saskatchewan Graduate Student Association Inc. (GSA) Allows a General Meeting of the membership to amend the GSA Constitution, By-laws, and polices.

Whereas the last amendment approved by Special General Meeting on March 13, 2017 was approved on general understanding that the GSA will be continuing to review its governance, operations and procedures, and will measure and report back to the membership

BE IT RESOLVED that the Constitution, By-laws and Policies be so amended as recommended by the GSA Governance Review Committee, as set forth in the following pages, and take force May 1, 2018.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED and that the membership consent to the correction of non-substantive numbering and typographical errors that may arise following these amendments

Motion was moved by Naheda Sahtout. Seconded by Tyler Morhart.

The Council Chair asked whether there was any discussion or debate with regards to this motion.

You propose a new kind of membership, the Associate Members for Postdoctoral Fellows. Will this change the privileges that they currently have to access the Health and Dental Plan and UPASS?

President Ghaith indicated that the change in the name / title will not change their ability to access any of the services they currently access. Postdoctoral fellows will still be eligible to purchase the UPASS and the Health and Dental Plan. The change ensures that the GSA entity is for graduate students, but that postdoctoral fellows are still able to access services. Ghaith noted that there is currently a movement for the separation of postdoctoral fellows within the University that will potentially allow them to enroll in their own Health and Dental Plan in the future.

There is a change in the layout of the Committees – why is the membership removed from the document?

Vice-President Sahtout noted that this membership will be included back into the documents. It was further noted that the terms of reference for each GSA Committee has now been included in detail within the Policy Manual. President Ghaith noted that Policy changes can be made through Council should the need arise anytime throughout the year.

Why was the sentence that indicated ‘the Executive Committee overlooks the day to day activities of Council’ deleted?

Vice-President Sahtout indicated that this sentence was not meant to be deleted. President Ghaith noted that there are no basic changes to the responsibilities of any of the Executive committee. There are some changes to the duties of each Executive to ensure that they align better with how the Association is running.

How would you define substantive vs. non-substantive changes?

Non-substantive change would include formatting / grammar / spelling mistakes / numbering / consistency in word choices and typological changes. Substantive would involve changing the meaning of sentences or clauses that would require the approval of the Membership.

In clause 5.3, why is the associate members not included in this statement?

Vice-President Sahtout noted that Regular Members fund the Association; however, Associate Members pay membership fees to access the services and not to fund the Association.

In the definition of the academic unit, what change has occurred?

President Ghaith noted that the GSA doesn't have a strict definition to Academic Unit and that this is left to the students in each department or college. Sahtout noted that the purpose of the addition was to ensure that no Academic Unit was composed simply of postdoctoral fellows. The addition of the phrase encompassing postdoctoral fellows shall be removed from the definition of academic unit.

Clarification on the Board of Directors?

President Ghaith indicated that we suggest a change in the Board composition, where the Board will be the President and Vice-Presidents, as opposed to the current structure. This is similar to many student associations, including the USSU, which define their Board as Executives. When we decided to change the governance structure last year, we included alumni / Council appointee and we have reviewed this structure and are recommending today a change in the composition of the structure to ensure that the GSA is running in the right way. With the new structure of the GSA, we are ensuring that we align with the Saskatchewan Non-profit Corporations Act, 1995. We are recommending this change; we maintain our not-for-profit status with liability insurance.

The Chair, hearing no further discussion, called the question.

Motion carried.

Item 13: Report of the President

President Ghaith wished to inform Members that there was a lot of work this year that was recognized in the University and externally as well. Ghaith thanked the Executive team, the Chair, the Members and the Staff.

This year we had about 4000 graduate students, a record in the University, with about 1000 PhD students among them. This is a huge change in the number of graduate students on campus. Membership fees gave an operating budget of about CAD 200,000 and there was about CAD 80,000 fundraising efforts (about 1/3 of the whole operating budget). The Health and Dental and UPASS came to about CAD 1.5 million. Next year, the GSA fees will not change, the Health and Dental fees will not change, UPASS will increase to CAD 111.01 and the CFS fee will increase to CAD 6.15.

There were several main achievements.

- The Student Supervisor agreement was approved by the CGPS Council in May 2017 and is currently on the CGPS website. The ultimate goal of this is to have it mandatory; however, this will take a lot of work. There is currently a lot of support from students, faculty and many are aware of this agreement, and he hopes the new Executives will continue to push this initiative forward.
- We also signed an agreement with the University which allows for a graduate student to sit on the Athletic and Recreation Advisory Council. This allows for graduate students to participate in the discussions and vote on any changes pertaining to these fees.
- We drafted an agreement with the Union for Graduate and Postdoctoral Workers, which was approved by GSA Council, in which the roles and responsibilities of the GSA and the Union are clearly defined. We are currently waiting to sign this.
- The GSA survey was sent out to graduate students. The goal is to understand our members more and to advocate for what is important for graduate students. The efforts of many Executives and graduate students need to be acknowledged. Encourages everyone to fill this survey so that we can share the results with the University for advocacy.
- Representation on the University Board of Governors, which requires change in the University Act and thus is a difficult change. We have achieved a lot and have been recognized everywhere on campus and we are hopefully close to having a non-voting member on the Board so that graduate students can share their perspectives. University Council, which represents the whole University committee, moved and supported a motion to support in principle having a graduate student on the Board. There is a lot of information in the report but should you have any questions to contact the GSA President.
- Graduate students were very involved within the GSA this year, with 65 Councillors. Participation at meetings was phenomenal.
- Communication: we depend a lot on social media as we currently do not have access to our member list-serve so that we can communicate with our members directly. Currently CGPS sends our communication and therefore we are limited in the capacity and the types of emails that we can get. We are hoping that we would be able to have access to this email list soon.

Item 14: Honorary Lifetime Membership

Vice-President Bennett indicated that Honorary Lifetime Membership is the highest honour that the GSA can offer. Ziad has put in countless hours and has been the heart and soul of the GSA for the past several years. A lot of ideas have stemmed from his progress and commitment to the GSA. He has shown work ethic, enthusiasm and dedication to putting the needs of graduate students first.

WHEREAS Section 5, Subsection 5.3.3 of the GSA Constitution permits the naming of an Honorary Lifetime Member which is purely symbolic. Such a position shall be awarded by a majority vote at a General Meeting.

BE IT RESOLVED THAT Ziad Ghaith be made an honorary lifetime member in recognition of his diligence, dedication, and years of service to the GSA that served to enhance the image, reputation, and standing of the Association.

Motion moved by David Bennett. Seconded by Isaac Pratt.

Motion carried.

Ziad Ghaith thanked David and Isaac for this appreciation. Ghaith indicates that we are almost at every table in the University and that we should be able to use this to the advantage of the graduate students if we do it in the right way.

Item 15: Other Business / Announcements

The Chair asked if there was anything else that anyone wanted to bring forward.

Tuition fees keep increasing in our University, what can we do as the GSA to support and advocate for this tuition fees?

Bennet indicated that rising tuition affects us all and has a particular impact with the differential fee for international students. This year, we invited the Dean of CGPS to the GSA and our members attended tuition consultation and we provided a lot of feedback from our members. We passed along a tuition petition with 800 signatures that was submitted to the Board of Governors. Going forward, our voice on the Board will help. Ghaith added that the tuition differential was going to increase to a higher level than what was approved.

Item 16: Adjournment

The Chair called for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Motion moved by David Bennett. Seconded by Douglas Fansher.

Motion carried.

Meeting adjourned at 6:20 PM



2018 GSA EXECUTIVE ELECTION RESULTS

Total number of voters: 395

President - Do you have confidence in Naheda Sahtout fulfilling the roles and responsibilities of President

Yes – 230

Abstain – 105

No – 60

Vice-President Operations and Finance - Do you have confidence in Jesus Corona Gomez fulfilling the roles and responsibilities of Vice-President Operations and Finance

Yes – 224

Abstain – 126

No – 45

Vice-President Student Affairs

Sudipto Shekhor Mondol – 229*

Edgar Martínez-Soberanes – 122

Abstain – 44

*The Elections Committee determined the candidate to have violated the “Elections 2018 – Rules and Regulations,” and a motion was passed by the committee to disqualify the candidate from the election. Edgar Martínez-Soberanes was determined to be the successful candidate for this position.

Vice-President External - Do you have confidence in Somtochukwu Ufondu fulfilling the roles and responsibilities of Vice-President External

Yes – 231

Abstain – 123

No – 41