



**University of Saskatchewan  
Graduate Students' Association  
Council Meeting  
Minutes from Tuesday April 17, 2018**

**Present:** Joshua Pickering, Chelsea Cunningham (College of Medicine), Douglas Fansher (Chemistry), Jose Alvin Berkenbrock (Electrical Engineering), Sudipto Mondal (Biomedical Engineering), Saman Naghieh (Biomedical Engineering), Luc Chabanole (Geological), Bethany Thiessen (Geography and Planning), John Bird, Olivia Bird (History), Amanda Galas-Wilson (Microbiology and Immunology), Natasha Boyes (Kinesiology), Mona Hamada (Pharmacy and Nutrition), Evan Poncelet (Psychology), Viktoria Hins, Palash Sanyal (School of Environment and Sustainability), Kirby Brigden (Sociology), Jennifer Bell (Soil Science), Katherine Raes (Toxicology), Breanne Murray, Caroline Malgrain (Western College of Veterinary Medicine)

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

**Organization of the Meeting:**

Dr. Scott Adams acted as the Chairperson. The Chair acknowledged Treaty 6 Territory and Homeland of the Métis people and indicated that the meeting was properly constituted. The VP External acted as the recording secretary for the duration of the meeting.

**OPEN SESSION**

**Call to Order / Opening Remarks (Item 1):**

Meeting called to order at 5:03 PM.

The Chair informed Council that the agenda was previously circulated one week in advance of the meeting. The Chair also drew Council's attention to item 3, presentation by the Vice-Provost Teaching Learning and Student Experience and the Director of Student Affairs and Services, who will be speaking about the mental health resources on campus.

The Chair shared some unfortunate news regarding the death of a graduate student at the University. Kehinde was a graduate student pursuing a Masters of Sustainable Environmental Management Program in the School of Environment and Sustainability. A moment of silence was convened to acknowledge her contributions to the University of Saskatchewan.

The Chair, also in his role as the Chief Electoral Officer, provided an update on the GSA Elections. Voting was held between Wednesday April 11 @ 9 AM to Friday April 13 @ 4 PM. The Elections Committee will meet sometime this week to ratify the results of the elections. The new Executives will be presented at the Annual General Meeting, which will be held on Tuesday April 24 @ 5 PM.

The Annual General Meeting will be held on Tuesday April 24 @ 5 PM in the GSA Commons. This meeting is open to all GSA members at the University. Quorum for the meeting is 50 members. We encourage additional members to attend, as we do not have 50 Councilors. Business at the meeting will include audited financial statements, appointment of auditors, and presentation of the new executive as well as any other business that is brought forward by any member of the GSA

### **Approval of the Agenda (Item 2)**

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

*Motion moved by David Bennett, Seconded by Iloradanon Efimoff.  
Motion carried.*

### **Presentation on Mental Health Resources on Campus (Item 3)**

The Chair welcomed the Vice-Provost Teaching Learning and Student Experience and the Director of Student Affairs and Services who will be discussing the mental health resources available on campus.

Director of Student Affairs and Services apologizes in advance for the barrage of information; information that is fairly sensitive that discusses diagnosis of students and the services and provisions used by graduate students. Today's discussion is about some of the landscape that has been seen particularly about mental health and resources and services and mental health crisis among graduate students. More information is indicating that there are challenges for graduate students, the experience faced by graduate students and the resources that are available. Further, the recent provincial budget speaks favorably for mental resources for the first time in a very long time.

How well do our students on campus think of our services (not disaggregated data)? The National College Health Assessment Data, a survey that is done across Canadian institutions, compares 2013 to 2016, the data shows that in general students are not as well as they were a few years ago. This is a general trend that we see in the wider society, although it is more exaggerated within the student population.

A snapshot of the student wellness center from last term indicates that there are five main reasons to visit a family doctor; anxiety (583 visits), depression, contraception, ADHD and counselling; four of the top five reasons were related to mental health. With our family doctors, we noticed that 60 % of their case load is mental health patients, which is probably 3 X as much as what they would see if they were working in the community. NCHA data shows reasons for challenges around areas of studies include; stress related, anxiety, sleep difficulties – issues of mental health and the challenges that students are facing.

Access and Equity Services Data from 2007 to 2017 indicates that the top reasons include anxiety, ADHD, major depressive disorder – there is a trajectory of increasing number of students registering with AES with those diagnoses. 75 % of students are registered with invisible disabilities with AES.

Number of individual visits / number of patients from 2011 / 2012 to present indicates that we are seeing more students every year. Between 2011 and 2018, student population increased by 10 % but the number of students visiting the wellness center increased by 30 %. The NCHA data indicates that between 2013 and 2016 we can expect to see that about 2200 more students are seeking access to services. What we actually see that 2013 to 2018, we see that 3300 more students accessing these services. This is fantastic but problematic and concerning about capacity of services and students wellbeing.

How have we responded? There has been a change in the model with significant work done around the wellness strategy with particular emphasis on promotion, prevention and intervention. Other universities rely on intervention in that if more students need mental health services, more counselors are hired. This is a reactive resource but does not change the downstream results. This thus needs a holistic approach that would allow for resources to be used more efficiently. Currently, we are at the intervention side but in 5 years from now, we will be approaching promotion and prevention activities and less of intervention.

AES now encompasses all groups under the human rights code. Student Health became the Student Wellness Centre. Student Affairs and Outreach was created and focuses on student outreach, crisis support and mental health intakes. Input for these changes has come from student leadership – especially towards the wellness strategy. Our focus was about access of service, timeliness of service and quality of experience. These are the things that students care about. There have been a number of different approaches to try and address these concerns.

Key changes this year include:

- Availability of mental health nurses
- Two mental health intake specialists
- Senior mental health clinician
- Crisis counselor in student affairs and outreach
- Mental health support groups, particularly around anxiety and depression
- New intake model
- Faith Leadership Council – a broader support for students
- Funding for Peer Health Groups – including Parents on Campus, Invisible Disabilities Group
- Mental health drop in support
- By-stander intervention program (sexual assault awareness prevention)
- Wellness website
- New model with the Health Region of Saskatoon -> Health Authority of Saskatoon -> for after-hours services

Has this worked?

- 3300 visits last term (about 15 % of students) – a significant increase – so it seems that students are accessing services on campus
- Wait time target was 2 week for any services – 76 % of all people who were seeking access to services in the Student Wellness Center were served within 3 weeks. This is quite a long wait time so if there's a high need; we try to accommodate on a needs basis.

Can we deal with some of the crisis that we are seeing?

- Student crisis group reduced the number of meetings from 10 to 4 in the fall term meaning there was a significant reduction in crisis cases.
- Number of cases handled by the management team has gone up by 300 % which means that we are reaching the individuals earlier and flagging things in a timely manner so that we are not reaching crisis cases. We are therefore doing a lot more prevention work.
- Preparation of students who came for service and got service increased by 90 %, which is 30 or 40 % higher than it was before and was a result of adjusting the model and spreading out the availabilities so that not just a single counselor was in charge of everything.

Graduate students roughly make up 15 % of the student population. 9 % of graduate students registered with AES, which is disproportionately low. About 15 % of students accessing the Wellness Centre were graduate students. Student Affairs and Outreach team also shows that the crisis response team gets involved with graduate students quite a lot. Why is registration with AES disproportionately a low number of graduate students registered? Perhaps cultural influences registration or the cost of diagnosis is too high.

15 % of students, being graduate students, are often seeing family doctors for mental health appointments. Just over 14 % of all students gaining access to mental health services are graduate students; most coming in in a preventative manner to access the services. The overall feedback indicates that students have a good experience with the practitioners. The Wellness website, launched in January, has had 1600 individual views – people have an appetite for the information and accessing the online content, creating the preventative space. For example, the use of the depression book on the website went up from 40 to 120; individuals have more of an understanding to what is happening.

What other things do we need to do?

- Extending the Student Affairs and Outreach Team
- Supports for indigenous students
- Supports for student residences
- Additional capacity for family doctors, counselors, advisors in AES
- Capacity for reception staff
- Funding mental health support groups, which requires increasing resources
- Distributed services across the campus
- Faith based supports
- Services in language other than English
- 24 / 7 support
- Finding possibilities for weekend support
- Wellness space: currently Marquis 104 for peer health mentors and faith leaders

The Vice-Provost Teaching Learning and Student Experience indicates that this is a valuable opportunity for us to continue collecting ideas so that we can articulate the needs of graduate student and to hear about whether there are things that have come to our attention that we should be thinking about.

***One of the problems as international students is isolation, so we are stressed and anxious about problems, and although we might use the center, perhaps there should be a support system for international students to talk with each other that is initiated by a counselor.***

Noted.

***Is there specific mental health supports that are targeted for graduate students as opposed to targeted just for diagnosis?***

It would certainly be acceptable to discuss whether there should be a difference between supports for graduate and undergraduate students, seeing as graduate students are often teaching / mentoring undergraduate students and it would be awkward to be in the same space.

***Services that might need to reflect graduate students. For example AES offers note-taking services which would probably not be needed by graduate students.***

The way it works at AES is that you would present with a disability of some sort, having the appropriate documents. AES use that information and the recommendations provided by the health care providers and create those accommodations. The combination of services offered is without limit. We are required by legislation to provide accommodation's to the point of undue hardship during an individual's education. Other common services are extended times on exams, provisions around extended deadlines, being out of the lab at different times. This will be matched to whatever you are presenting with. Things can be different depending on your program and may get complicated. One of the things that is currently being explored with CGPS is around policies and procedures around disabilities / AES. The University has a policy that everyone must follow, but Colleges often have additional guidelines / practices that are made available for students.

***AES – student reports that find it hard to work with their AES advisor because they are not aware of how things work with graduate students – so how many advisors are acquainted with graduate students?***

Some of the advisors have graduate degrees; however, there is still some support needed and expertise of training to showcase the understanding of graduate students. We will be working on the next few months on what is available in AES and to identify where the gaps are and is there anything that needs to be nailed down clearly to ensure that the team is not doing work that is not helpful for students.

***One case of confusion from a supervisor's side about what information they can ask about the health of their student and what rules the supervisor needs to follow? Are there any guidelines or rules for supervisors / faculty / TA's?***

Not everyone understands the boundaries / limits. There is ongoing work with faculty / supervisors / TA about understanding these kinds of boundaries. We will continue to address and educate broadly about the legislative requirements, which exists at the faculty level. AES facilities standardize and create structure to assist faculty to complete this. There is always opportunity to speak with AES so that they can have appropriate discussions with the supervisor, as you are not required to disclose anything.

***Mental Health First Aid Workshops that were occurring had a positive impact on the supervisor relationship and shifted the behavior of the supervisor to a positive manner when dealing with students. I wonder if there's anything that we can do about making a cultural of support and compassion when dealing with mental health.***

Mental Health First Aid will be scaled so that we can try to deliver it at least once a week. On May 9, there will be a staff forum by CGPS regarding mental health awareness and to see whether there are misconnects and how this can be approached. There is also a committee of University Council, TLARC, has created a working group on wellness and teaching that looks at some of the practices that we can influence for program delivery, which we know are inclined to make things worse instead of better. For example, scheduling midterms and assignments in a one week period – is that really wise? University can't compel faculty to certain practices but can encourage.

***USSU food centers – efforts to connect services of food center with health services – how is that connection happening?***

The goal is to create a network of people, staff and student leaders on an annual basis. The reason being is so that there is a level of comfort in knowing that if you have someone who might present at the USSU Food Centre a need that you know there is a far greater or more systemic issue, that you are able to refer this individual to other resources. Rely on the managers of these centres to know and understand the available resources that are on campus.

***The student-supervisor relationship – one of the biggest impacts on their mental health is the relationship – how does this relate to a potential ombudsperson?***

A good ombudsperson is a good mediator. We are still planning a fifth student forum. One of the modules is the supervisor module, which can be used as a way to address what is being referred to. This is especially important for new supervisors.

The SSA is a tremendously useful piece of preventative work that sets out the guidelines and sets some accountability on both sides and sets boundaries on both sides. The SSA was a huge accomplishment and next year's Executives should perhaps review the SSA and see what is working and what isn't as two years with the document, people can discuss what revisions need to be made.

***Requests the VPTLSE for help and support in promoting the SSA to faculty for mental health support, quality of education and wellness for students.***

VPTLSE encourages the new Executives to set a meeting with herself and the Dean, CGPS to ensure how this document can be pushed forward; perhaps it is ensuring all graduate chairs have read it or ensuring all new supervisors have access to it. This may also be possible of the graduate admin forum on May 9.

***How much do graduate students have to pay to access these services?***

The demand is on the rise and we see changes in wellness. Is it the case that there is more depression and anxiety or have people started to come more forward for services? We won't know which the case is but we do know people are accessing the services more and that we have grown as a population. One of the responsibilities is to sustain the model that we have, especially during peak demand and quality. Student mental health service funding comes from an envelope

that is provided to the VPTLSE office. There is limited flexibility to deeply these funds as about 80 % of this goes for salaried individuals. Over the past four years, we are prioritizing the resources that are available towards AES and Student Affairs and Outreach. Any kind of accumulated money has been spent.

There are a few options going forward:

- Pursue the Ministry of Health, which provides some of the funding that we use in the Student Wellness Center since we are considered a primary healthcare provider. Perhaps there is more opportunities there.
- Health insurance benefits recovery through the Health Plan, although we don't want to go this route as it creates a barrier to accessing these services if you are required to pay an upfront amount.
- Fee for Service – make additional funds from faculty / staff for using these services.
- Increase in the student service fee, which hasn't increased in the past 20 years.
- University donors.

### **Consent Agenda (Items 4 – 7)**

The Chair asked to amend the minutes of the Council meeting of March 20 to include Logan Pizzey in attendance. The Chair asked whether there were any other amendments to be made. Hearing none, the Chair asked for a motion to approve the consent agenda.

*Motion moved by Sudipta Mondal. Seconded by Amanda Galas-Wilson.*

*Motion carried.*

### **Ratification of Social Clubs (Item 8)**

The Chair notified Council that we received an application for a social club ratification from the “Emerging Leaders for Solar Energy USask”. The Chair asked Mr. Rick Pettipas to come forward and provide an introduction to the mandate of the club.

Mr. Pettipas indicates that this is an outreach group with the key goal to build a bridge between people and technology. Solar energy is becoming a bigger part of the energy industry but there is a big disconnect between what people know about this source and how it works. On campus, we hold monthly meetings where graduate students can come and learn about a specific type of source about solar cell technology. Sometimes, we hold bigger outreach events where we teach about solar cell technology. This helps the community learn about solar cell technology, especially elderly groups who attend and bring back information to their communities. As part of the ratification, it would be great to extend our membership and bring more members in and to allow people to understand more about this technology.

### ***Who are the people who will be teaching or providing the workshops about solar cells?***

It consists of students in engineering and chemistry and more or less people who have a PhD or training in solar cell technology. Students who are currently doing research that focuses on a specific type of solar cell technology are usually involved in teaching. Also our goal is to teach other students and members and encourage these individuals to be able to give a general talk so that they can build on leadership skills and presentation skills.

***How is essential is financial necessities to the group as I see there is no delegation for a treasurer?***

There isn't a whole lot of money flow at the moment. Our main costs have been paid from our own pockets. For example, these include solar cell meet and greet costs.

*Motion: To ratify "Emerging Leaders for Solar Energy USask" as a GSA social club.  
Moved by Sudipta Mondal. Seconded by Ali Kiani.*

***Motion carried.***

### **Report of the President (Item 9)**

President Ghaith indicates that this is his last report for Council and thanks Council for their engagement and involvement with the GSA. Ghaith encourages Council members to continue participating in the GSA business, and consider representing their academic units next year.

Ghaith indicates that the annual report has been prepared and will be circulated to members tonight. If there's anything that any Council member would like added to email Ghaith. There is also a potential MoU between the GSA and the UGPW PSAC Local 40004. The agreement has been attached to the agenda and Council will be asked for their feedback and approval. Ghaith informed the Council that he has recently opened discussion with the University about a potential business for the GSA. Ghaith concludes that the GSA should consider moving towards having a source of revenue other than Membership fees, so as to ensure that the Association is growing in the future. Hopes that the new Executives are able to continue working on this potential source of revenue.

***As Councilors, we are representing our departments and therefore our email information should be made available on the website, why is it not?***

All Council members' names are on the website. We avoid including emails on the website because of potential spamming and for privacy.

***Maybe the website should say that the contact information can be made available upon request?***

This has been noted and the VP Finance and Operations and VP External will ensure to add this onto the website.

***With the agreement between the GSA and Union, this is beneficial; however, is there a financial obligation?***

The short answer is no there is no financial commitment from either organizations. This will be discussed further in a later item.

### **Report of the Vice-President Finance and Operations (Item 10)**

Vice-President Bennett indicated that the first of April we hosted the Volunteer Canadian Income Tax Clinic, where we helped about 60 individuals and their spouses and families. This was made possible because we can access UFile for free, as per our membership with the Canadian Federation of Students. Bennet also indicated that the current process for the budget involves Board approval; however, I have indicated the budget in the agenda package for Council to seek feedback and input. The budget as it stands is a list of numbers and we value and

our need to support students as much as we can but also to ensure the sustainable operations of the GSA. The budget shows a reasonable balance; about 20 % of the budget goes to supporting students and groups, about 87 % of the budget revenue is from membership fees so as the President indicated, it might be reasonable to find another source of revenue to maintain the sustainable operations of the Association. Bennett emphasized again that the budget is available and if there is any input, to please email him. He further mentions that if anyone needs help with their income tax to email him before the end of this month.

### **Report of the Vice-President Student Affairs (Item 11)**

Vice-President Kiani wants to thank everyone for their support over the two years that he has been a part of the GSA. He had a great experience working with different people and different groups and has learned a lot. He hopes that the new Executives will also take advantage of the learning experiences. Kiani mentioned that he is currently working on the annual report and had a workshop about immigration, basic needs for international students. Believes that the future Vice-President Student Affairs should follow a similar process in terms of hosting these workshops.

### **Report from the Vice-President Student Affairs Regarding the 3MT Competition (Item 12)**

As included in the agenda package.

### **Report of the Vice-President External (Item 13)**

Sahtout wishes to thank everyone who attended the Gala and hopes that everyone enjoyed their time. It was an honor to host the Lieutenant Governor of Saskatchewan as well as two Members of the Legislative Assembly, senior administration, faculty, staff and students. Sahtout wishes that those awarded at the Gala will continue being role models and hopes that all graduate students continue their commitment towards research, leadership and community service.

### **Presentation-Co-Curricular Records (Item 14)**

Sahtout indicated that last Council meeting, a presentation on Co-Curricular records was made and it was mentioned that today a more-in-depth explanation to what would be adopted by the GSA for the CCR would be clarified. A CCR is an official record from the University for Non-academic Related Things that are done at the University. There are 4 criteria's that the University has indicated that something needs to have to be part of a CCR: has a connection to the University, has validation requirements, follow the learning guides that are part of the learning charter and be able to provide students an opportunity to engage. The CCR needs to be approved by the College / Unit / Student Association and should have no relationship to something that will be appearing on the academic transcript. Things are not considered CCR when they are outside the University's scope, is field work that is part of a course and is part of a social event. Paid positions that are consistent with a salary cannot be considered part of CCR; however, when someone receives an honorarium that is not representative of the time spent, this can be considered CCR. The Executives has discussed what will be considered part of the GSA approved CCR at lengths and the following fits within the guidelines of a CCR;

- Executives that fulfilled the duties of their term
- Council members who also engaged in a GSA Standing Committee
- Participants of the 3MT
- Participants of the Graduate Student Research Conference

***When will this be in effect?***

This will be retroactive to May 2017.

***Are there other universities that have used this?***

It is a common practice across most North American universities. It is a way of ensuring students become more engaged in the university as well as to allow students to have an official record that can be taken to prospective employers to substantiate engagement claims (more substantial than a CV).

***Will scholarship funding be considered on the CCR?***

This is still in discussions with the advisory committee and the recurring issue is that there are many scholarships at the graduate and undergraduate level and to be able to specify which can and cannot be on the CCR will require further discussions.

***How do we get it?***

Executives have been keeping track of those who will receive a CCR. It is not something that you have to request and we will automatically do this for you. Moving forward, the Office Manager will be trained to complete the CCR.

***If we are engaged in other committees in our College, how do we get these?***

The GSA can only do things affiliated with the GSA. If you are involved with other initiatives in your College, recommend to approach the department / administrative staff to understand who is in charge of approving CCR. Some Colleges are further ahead than others with regards to approving CCR material.

**Report of the Indigenous Liaison (Item 15)**

Efimoff indicates that this is her last GSA Council Meeting and wishes to thank everyone that she has had an opportunity to work with in her role as Indigenous Liaison. In the last month or so, the GSA survey is up and running and is available and encourages graduate students to fill it up. A broader representation of graduate students is required. In the last few months, has been working extensively on the governance committee for recommendations to the governing documents that will come up at the AGM.

**Memorandum of Agreement between the GSA and UGPW (Item 16)**

A MoU has been created between the GSA and the Union of Graduate and Postdoctoral Workers (PSAC Local 40004). The copy of the potential MoU was circulated with the agenda. We are bringing this forth for approval tonight. This has been a compilation of about 8 months of work and has gone through extensive consultations. Ghaith believes this is a step in the right direction to ensure a sustainable relationship between the GSA and the Union.

*Motion: To approve the Memorandum of Agreement between the GSA and the Union for Graduate and Postdoctoral Workers – Public Service Alliance of Canada – Local 40004*  
*Moved by Iloradanon Efimoff. Seconded by Sudipto Mondal.*

***Motion Carried.***

**Other Business / Announcements (Item 17)**

Ghaith encourages everyone to attend and to invite their colleagues to the AGM next Tuesday.

**Adjournment**

*Motion to adjourn at 6:45 PM. Moved by Sudipto Mondal. Seconded by Douglas Fanscher.*

*Motion Carried.*