

**University of Saskatchewan  
Graduate Students' Association  
Council Meeting**

Minutes from Tuesday January 30, 2018

**Present:** Archaeology and Anthropology, Biology Graduate Students' Association, College of Medicine Graduate Student Society, Chemistry Course Council, Computer Science Graduate Student Council, Electrical Engineering, Biomedical Engineering, Graduate Geological Society, Geography and Planning Graduate Council, History Graduate Student Committee, Indigenous Graduate Students' Council, Microbiology and Immunology Graduate Students' Council, Johnson Shoyama Graduate Students' Association, College of Kinesiology Graduate Student Executive, Pharmacy and Nutrition Graduate Students' Council, Psychology Graduate Students' Association, Physics and Engineering Physics, Plant Science Graduate Students' Association, School of Environment and Sustainability Graduate Students' Association, School of Public Health Student Association, Sociology Graduate Students' Association Soil Science Graduate Students' Association, Toxicology Graduate Students' Association, Western College of Veterinary Medicine Graduate Students' Association

**Executives:** Ziad Ghaith (President), Ali Kiani (VP Student Affairs), Naheda Sahtout (VP Student Affairs), Iloradanon Efimoff (Indigenous Liaison)

**Organization of Meeting:**

Due to the Chair being away on a family emergency, the President acted as the Chairperson until Council nominated a Chairperson. The VP External acted as recording secretary for the duration of the meeting.

**INVITED SPEAKER**

The President welcomed everyone to the first Council meeting of 2018. He informed the Councillors that the Provost, Vice-Provost Teaching, Learning and Student Experience, Associate Provost, Institutional Planning and Assessment and Strategic Planning Advisor, Institutional Planning and Assessment were here today to speak about the University Plan. The President thanked the guests for joining the GSA Council tonight and proceeded to invite the Provost to discuss the University Plan with the Council.

The Provost hopes that this University Plan can play an important role as a tool to understand the continuity of our programs. The Plan is a guide to our future and provides directions that can be used for the future of the University. The Plan focuses on stakeholders; faculty, staff, alumni, student groups, students. The Plan talks about where we have been and where we are going. We can come into a position of strength by understanding what sort of risks we can take to move forward and the Plan will dictate the clear path that will allow us to move ourselves to areas of excitement.

The U of S has many milestones that they have looked at over the years. We have looked at four in particular, which are captured as the horizontal bars in the weave.

- Indigenization

- Discovery
- Teaching and Learning
- Engagement

There are basic principles that the University is based on. These have been described and shaped by many decades of history and what we continue to go forward, captured in the vertical bars.

- Sustainability
- Diversity
- Connectivity
- Creativity

The Plan shows three commitments with regards to how we would like the University to move forward. These have been in discussions since late 2016. Several of the areas that have led to these commitments shape the future; Commitments are different than pillars – they say this is what we want to do and will provide resources to help guide us there.

- 1) Courageous curiosity: empower a culture of innovation with the courage to confront humanity's greatest challenges and opportunities.
  - a. Be Curious - areas where we want to push the boundaries in scholarship in teaching and learning within Canada and in the World.
  - b. Uplift indigenization – important to what we want to do in this province and country to embrace the key element which is us, indigenous partners, community and students.
  - c. Embrace disciplinarily – disciplinary strength to do interesting and challenging work to challenge the boundaries.
  - d. Seek solutions – to solve major problems in key ways.
- 2) Boundless Collaboration – invigorate the impact of collaboration and partnerships
  - a. Enrich disciplines – allow supervisors and departments to engage more within their college, other colleges, other universities – thereby allowing problem solving and making us evolve.
  - b. Align structure – we want to make it easier for cross-over and collaboration
  - c. Embolden partnerships - want to be involved in partnerships, which are beyond what happens in the University; includes government, private and public sector. Maintaining collaboration at the international level is key.
  - d. Experience reconciliation – the biggest problem with what we have in the country is dealing with reconciliation – accepting what we have gotten to and how to approach reconciliation properly so that we aren't 'close enough'.
- 3) Inspired communities – those involved in community related research will be involved in this. Inspire the world by achieving meaningful change within our community.
  - a. Respect each other therefore respecting oneself
  - b. Amplify value – achieve what we can do together
  - c. Celebrate the stories of what matters to these communities
  - d. Energize to show that what the communities are doing really matters.

This Plan is a journey of the next seven years to 2025. The Plan leads to a University that the world needs. At the end, we would like to look at five aspirations that we would hope to have accomplished;

- 1) Authentic indigenization – enrich spirits and partnerships with indigenous community, staff and faculty.
- 2) Productive collaborations – community, for scholarship and teaching, private sector and international partnerships.
- 3) Meaningful impact – translate knowledge that we have generated, innovation that we have allowed our community to achieve societal goals.
- 4) Distinguished learners – our graduates are the most sought-after
- 5) Global recognition – our research and students are recognized as world class

Deans of colleges / directors of schools are engaged in a parallel exercise so that there is alignment as to how they want to achieve the parts of the University Plan. Provost explained that the Vice Provost, Teaching and Learning and Student Experience is developing a plan by listening to how all the Colleges. Vice Provost Indigenous Engagement is also looking at what we can do. Research plan is also being developed. There will be a lot of richness that will be added to this one page weave / tapestry that will make this stronger for the next generation of planning. It is always a commitment that what we do is for the next generation, taking respect of what people have done before us.

The Provost asked how we see ourselves in this and requested any questions / concerns / comments from the graduate students in attendance.

***A council member discussed about ‘Spark Night’ – an innovation opportunity in Saskatchewan, where several different disciplines put up a project that gets funded at the end of the year. Is that something you would want to implement?***

What we want is to encourage students / staff and faculty to engage in ideas that they can bring to life. The most important part is to get the engagement between the different groups. Innovation is a much broader word than someone who starts a business – it means pushing boundaries to engage the community.

***One thing at the U of S that doesn’t seem to be present is us hosting International Conferences. How could you attract International Conferences to be hosted at the U of S?***

The Vice-Provost mentioned that the hosting of conference is done by departments / faculty. It is important to have conversations with them. Conferences have happened here, and include those at the International and National level. It takes years and lots of funding to get an International Conference set up.

***Can you talk a little more about the process of getting the Plan approved – this has been in University Council as information – when will we see a revised draft?***

The current revised draft will go to PPC tomorrow (Wednesday) and that will go up for discussion, with regards to language and the required narrative. The third component will include the milestones. The process does include more consultations through Council and it will be presented again in February. The language will be adjusted and there will be more attention to detail. Consultations will continue to March. Council, Senate and Board

of Governors will all be informed. In parallel, we are required to move this over the next year and will look into aligning the Colleges plans and will allow a lot of time for discussions. In the seven years, this will be evaluated annually and at the half way mark we will pause and see whether we are headed in the correct direction. Colleges are doing parallel strategic plans and they are working in tandem with the Plan. There are three specific areas that we are looking at and ultimately we want colleges / schools to be able to map their plans so that over the next few years each college / school is able to align to the Plan. The Vice-Provost added that the Plan is a framework so that colleges / schools can take this to build their plan.

***Applicability of initiative of U of T to decrease tuition fees for international students – is this something that will be considered in the near future?***

U of S wants to look at this to see that we are competitive. Our tuition fees are lower and below the median of all U15 schools. The fact is there are differential fees between domestic and international among all other Universities in the country – it is important that we align to be competitive so that we can get the best of international and domestic. It's not as simple as waiving the differential fees and look at other funding to make sure it is done properly. Toronto has the capability of doing that as they have a different system and funding mechanism than us. U of S is quite different but this will be looked at so that we can provide the best tuition and academic experience for our students.

***Pillar of sustainability is not accounted for in the Plan, especially when diversity, creativity and accountability are well accounted for. This is absolutely crucial and more effort should be put into this;***

The rest of the document includes sustainability and the sign post has it highlighted and captured. Sustainability is certainly something that will be the future in this planet and is the strong strength for this: University – Planetary health, water security, food security – these will be ideas for the future that will come out of this.

***The GSA President has seen this plan multiple times and has seen marked improvements – CGPS is currently working on their own plan and there is parallel plans in each college / school. As most colleges would develop something in isolation of CGPS – how will we deal with potential problems and conflicts?***

You raise an interesting question and the concern of negativity that it could become when aligned. Technically students should be members of their own college and then members of CGPS. We want to encourage the right focus of graduate studies / certificate programs so that there is support. If colleges are looking at a different funding model and another one is not, then CGPS needs to ensure that they play a role in aligning that. Critical areas of financing, resources and ensuring that we get the best students. This will be aligned with colleges and the University. The Vice-Provost indicated that the Provost has organized it in such a way that last week, all colleges were invited to provide feedback to the Plan. This allows VPTL to do the planning once they hear from other colleges. We are there to support, lead and influence and therefore these opportunities are allowing us to go back and forth to make sure there is alignment. We at the U of S have the advantage of doing interdisciplinary activities as each of the schools are on campus and we should take advantage of that.

The GSA President stressed that this is an important opportunity for us students to be engaged in these discussions with our colleges / schools.

## **OPEN SESSION**

### **Call to Order / Opening Remarks**

The meeting was called to order at 5:46 pm.

The President reminded everyone that the Chair was away due to an emergency. As per our by-laws, a temporary Council Chair shall be nominated for the duration of the meeting. The President called for nominations from the floor.

*Iloradanon Efimoff nominated David Bennett for Chair. Seconded by Arinjay Banarjee.*

The President invited David Bennett to the stage to introduce himself prior to Council voting to appoint him as Chair for the remainder of the meeting.

David Bennett indicated that he has played an active role in the GSA as Councillor and Vice-President Finance and is therefore quite familiar with the constitution, by-laws and policies and Roberts Rules of Order. He reiterated that the Chair's role is to facilitate the democratic process and not play an active part in it. The President further added that Mr. Bennett has also been appointed as an honorary lifetime member of the GSA due to his work and efforts with the GSA. The President proceeded to ask Mr. Bennett to leave the room so that Council could vote.

*Whereby Council appoints David Bennett to act as Chair for the January 30, 2018 Council Meeting. All in favour. No abstentions.*

The President asked Mr. Bennet to take the floor as Chair of Council for the remainder of the meeting.

Arinjay Banerjee asked to make a general announcement to Council prior to the commencement of the meeting. Mr. Banerjee encouraged and stressed that it is important for Council members to read the agenda items carefully so that they are not voting for things that shouldn't be voted on.

### **Approval of the Agenda**

The Chair advised that the meeting is in order and quorum was present. The Chair asked Council if there were any additions / amendments to be made to the agenda prior to approval.

The VP External indicated that she had sent in her regrets to the November 21 meeting, although these were not included in the minutes.

The VP External also indicated that herself and the Indigenous Liaison had requested 3 motions to be included in the agenda as items for discussion and decision.

*Motion: The VP External motioned to approve addition of the 3 motions, which were included in the supplementary information, in the agenda as items 13.b.1, 13.b.2 and 13.b.3. Seconded by Ilradanon Efimoff. All in favour. Motion carried.*

The VP Student Affairs would like to strike item 7 from the agenda. This is because the group wanted to be registered as an academic council, although used the wrong form. This has since then been cleared up and they are now registered as an academic council.

*Motion: The VP Student Affairs motioned to strike item 7 from the agenda.*

*Seconded by Naheda Sahtout. All in favour. Motion carried.*

*Motion: Approval of the agenda as amended. All in favour. Motion carried.*

### **Consent Agenda**

The Chair proceeded to ask whether any Council member would like to remove any of the items from the consent agenda, items 4, 5, 6, 8 and 9. Without objection, items 4, 5, 6, 8 and 9 are adopted.

### **Report of the President**

The Chair proceeded with the regular agenda and invited the honorable GSA President to give a report. The President thanked the Chair and Council and indicated that the President's reports as well as the Executive reports are in the agenda. To be brief, the most important update is regarding the proposal to have representation at the University Board. It was adapted by GSA Council on November 21 and was presented to senior administration and University Council as information in December. The GSA has received very positive remarks from the University community about the statement. The original plan was to ask University Council to endorse the statement in January but the President has since then received advice from the University Secretary's Office to meet with the Chair of the Board of Governors before putting this to University Council. The President hopes to meet with the Chair as soon as possible for consultation. In the meantime, we have prepared a full proposal to put forth in University Council, and at the February 15 Council meeting, we will officially ask University Council to endorse the proposal. In the agenda item, the proposed motion has been included in the report provided and has been discussed with the University Secretary Office to make sure that it is aligned with University policy. The Executives and the working group support this motion and hope that the University Council will endorse this in February. We encourage Council members to write questions or comments should they have any. We also encourage GSA Council members to attend the meeting in February (February 15). It is important and further supports the importance and the future of graduate studies at the University of Saskatchewan.

In October, the GSA posed a survey about the UPASS to its members. The results of the survey indicated that many wanted a summer UPASS. Several of the Executives met with Transit Saskatoon and provided multiple ideas about having a summer UPASS. (A) sign a new agreement, which would be brought forth to Council for approval, (B) allowing the GSA to sell passes over the summer, although Saskatoon Transit indicated that the discount would likely not be as much as that of the Fall and Winter. We are awaiting a decision by Saskatoon Transit so that we can bring forth to Council what options are available for us to move forth with.

We are continuing our efforts with the Student-Supervisor Agreement - many departments have started to ask faculty to sign agreements, even though it is not specifically the one we have.

Emails have been sent out in early January to indicate the availability of this agreement and this will be sent by CGPS again as a continual point of information so that faculty are aware of it.

***The motion that has been written for the Board of Governors – since there is no time frame, based on your experience when was the last amendment to the Act?***

1995 was the most major change, 2004 included a minor change – opening the Act is a political issue and is dependent on the political atmosphere of the province. We cannot push the University to open the Act as the University has strategic priorities. Therefore, although the motion doesn't have imposing language, we are ensuring that we can encourage University Council to accept it which will then be taken to Senate in April. This means that any amendment in the future Act will hopefully include this motion

***Friendly amendment to change 'for the Board of Governors' to 'to the Board of Governors'.***

**Report of the Vice-President External: Health and Dental Fee Increase**

Every year we have to discuss the Health and Dental fee increase or decrease because we have to pass Council's recommendation through the University Fee Committee for implementation of our tuition fees for the following year. The following is a brief description of how the Plan fees are determined, based on Fall 2017 data, and what options we have.

- StudentCare's formula to calculate the Plan costs includes; amount of claims students make, inflation trend and administration costs from the insurer, the administrator and the University.
- From September to December, 91 % of the Health Plan claims were made and 101 % of the Dental Plan claims were made. On average, 96 % of the claims were made by students, which is on the high side. Generally, 88 – 92 % is the perfect region for claims. If the percentage claimed is less, then we are overpaying the insurer. If it is more, then the insurer is generally at a loss.
- Briefly, there is generally an increase in individual claims every year; approximately 6% this year for Health and a 5 % increase in the Dental.
- The inflation trend explains the idea that every year there are increases in claims because health services are getting more expensive, there are changes to patterns of use and there are new services being introduced. On a plan like ours, which doesn't inflate much, the inflation trend has generally been between 5 % - 8 %.
- Using all this data, and also knowing that the Fall term has generally contributed 1/3 of the claims for the year, StudentCare can project what the 2017 / 2018 claims would be.
- Using these projected claims; StudentCare can calculate the projected cost of the Plan for the 2018 / 2019, using the formula mentioned above. Their projected cost indicates that the plan would have to increase by about 5 % (\$22.95) in order to meet the expected cost.
- There are 3 options;
  - o Keep the Benefits the same and increase the cost of the Plan by 5 % (\$22.95) to ensure that the Benefits are in fact maintained.
  - o Reduce the coverage of the plan, ie. Reduce prescription drugs from 80 % to 70 % which means that the Plan cost would increase by 0.5 % (\$1.12).
  - o Use the Health and Dental Reserve fund to subsidize the cost increase, which is not ideal as future years students will have to pay a much higher difference.

Furthermore, the reserve fund is essential for emergency situations that sometimes arise, when the insurer decides to change Premiums. Unexpectedly.

The VP External opened the floor to any questions from Council members.

***Is this anticipating that the PST is going to stay on insurance?***

Yes, we are assuming that the government is not going to take off the PST on premiums anytime soon.

***A couple of months ago, there was a discussion about people being unsatisfied with the Plan, and yet this has not been reflected in any of the changes?***

I've given ample of opportunities and have let those individuals that were unsatisfied of meeting times but have not received any feedback.

***Is there a deadline so that we can put out a survey to consider the entire graduate student body not just GSA Council members?***

The deadline for fee changes is 3 weeks. If Council chooses option 2, we need to take into consideration that there are some students that don't have to pay for subscriptions that are paying to subsidize others, whereas other students would like more coverage, so it depends what the students want: but there is a deadline we need me to meet.

***Could you talk about the StudentCare survey?***

Student Care has prepared a survey. We don't have access to the data yet, but we should soon and that might influence our decision. I will make this data available for the next Council meeting. They have assured me that option 2 would negatively influence students, as this has been observed in other Universities.

***Are all the claims mostly prescription drugs or is it only a small percentage?***

I don't have the data on hand so can't really answer. There are students that use it more than others. I will have the data available for the next Council meeting.

***Seems kind of strange that they would offer to lower prescriptions?***

They didn't offer that, we did. This was an option we gave them to see what the price would be.

***Comment: For people that do need prescriptions, a lot of medications, this plan really doesn't help at all.***

Ideally we would like a suggestion from Council today. The GSA President also mentioned that the Health and Dental Committee met last week and discussed these options. The VP External indicated that this was in fact the case and the recommendation from the Committee was to proceed with option 1 as the members didn't want to put students at risk by lowering the benefits or to put the GSA at risk by lowering the reserve fund.

*The Chair informed the Council that the VP External wants to amend the agenda to add a motion to approve option 1, which requires a 2/3 majority. Seconded by Indiana Best. All in favour. Motion carried for Council to vote on Option 1.*

*Motion to approve an overall increase in 5 % to the current Health and Dental Plan cost. Motion carried with 2 abstentions.*

The President encourages everyone to share this with this increase in fees with students in their department. The President also requests that in future years, the GSA should think of assessing Post-docs as mandatory. Currently, Post-docs opt-in whenever they want and this potentially increases the claims of the year; therefore we need to reexamine the current opt-in option for post-doctoral students, for the interest of everyone, especially because for the past three years, there has constantly been an increase.

## **Motions**

### **13.b.1:**

Removal of Jania Chilima and Indiana Best from the Sustainability Committee and addition of Palash Sahyal and Michelle Wauchope-Thompson.

*Moved by Iloradanon Efimoff. Seconded by Indiana Best. Motion carried unanimously*

### **13.b.2:**

Motion to populate the governance committee as outlined in the GSA governing documents

*Moved by Iloradanon Efimoff. Seconded by Ziad Ghaith.*

*A member of Council asked what the time commitment is like?*

The President indicated that we really need to discuss the governance structure this year as there needs to be a reexamination of the new governance structure and how well it has worked to the benefit of the GSA. On average, it could be 2-3 hours every 2 weeks and includes document coverage and modifications. It is a good experience.

The Chair asked Council to vote on populating the Governance Committee, which will include the following;

- The VP External
- The VP Finance and Operations (the newly appointed after the by-elections)
- The Chair as *ex-officio*
- Members of Council: Indiana Best, Iloradanon Efimoff, Jovey Sharma, Ziad Ghaith, Sudipto Mondol.

*Motion carried.*

### **13.b.3**

Motion to populate the Ethics and Discipline Committee as outlined in the GSA Governing documents.

*Can the President provide time commitments?*

This Committee will meet only if needed. In his time serving as an Executive, the President doesn't recall ever this Committee having a meeting. Should there be a need, the time commitments will not be exhaustive.

The Chair asked Council to vote on populating the Ethics and Discipline Committee, which will include;

- The Chair
- Members of Council: Logan Pizzey and Marie-Eve Presber
- 2 members that are not Executives or Councillors, which will be approved at the next Council meeting.

***Motion carried.***

Members at large will be ratified at the next Council meeting.

### **Other Business**

VP External asks Council for approval of revising titles of senior administration in previous Council meetings. The President stressed that it is best practice to ensure that only titles are placed in the minutes. Seeing no objections, this has been adopted.

***Motion to move Council to in-camera session. Moved by Ziad Ghaith. Seconded by Iloradanon Efimoff.***

***Motion to move out of in-camera. Moved by Marie-Eve Presber. Seconded by John Bird. Motion carried.***

***Motion to allow Council to amend the agenda to approve a motion that allows the Executives to sign the UPASS agreement with USSU. Moved by Ziad Ghaith. Seconded by Katherine Raes. Motion was carried with required 2/3rds to amend the agenda to add this motion.***

***Motion to allow the Executives to sign the UPASS agreement with the USSU. Motion carried.***

The By-election for the VP Finance and Operations has been called and the information session took place today. As the Chair has resigned, we don't currently have a Chief Elections Office. Council needs to appoint a CEO. The Chair opens the floor to nominations.

***Arinjay Banarjee nominates Katherine Raes. Seconded by Iloradanon Efimoff.***

Katherine Raes has some knowledge of elections and the procedures in the GSA. She has been active in the GSA for a while and has knowledge of how it runs. The President stressed that the CEO should be knowledgeable about the GSA to run this by-election and thanked Katherine for accepting the nomination. The President noted there is nothing to contradict the by-laws of the GSA to appoint Katherine as the CEO for this by-election.

***Motion to amend the agenda to add a motion to nominate Katherine Raes as Chief Electoral Office. Motion carried.***

***Motion to approve Katherine Raes as temporary CEO. Motion carried with 1 abstention.***

As the Chair position is currently vacant, a call for Chair will be made and the individual will be nominated at the next Council meeting. This individual will then play the role of Chief Electoral Officer for the general elections.

***Motion to adjourn meeting at 6:54 pm. Moved by Katherine Raes. Seconded by Arinjay Banarjee. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned.***