University of Saskatchewan
Graduate Students' Association
GSA Council Meeting Minutes
Tuesday December 3 2019. GSA Commons

As Council gathers, we acknowledge that we are on Treaty 6 Territory and the Homeland of the Métis. We pay our respect to the First Nations and Métis ancestors of our gathering place and reaffirm our relationship with one another.

Attendance: *See appendix A*

1. Call to Order

The Chair of Council officially called the council meeting to order at 5:07 pm after quorum had been met.

Mr. Osai Clarke acted as the recording secretary for the meeting.

2. Guest from the University's ICT Resources

The Chief Information Officer (CIO) of the university's information and communications technology (ICT) Shari Baraniuk briefed the councillors on a few new developments. Shari started by drawing the councillors' attention to the USASK website. In the main search window, she typed CIO and selected the first link, where all the new initiatives, infrastructure, and other 2025 technology goals can be found.

The aspirations for ICT are geared towards improving student success rates during their tenure as students at USASK. Another goal is to embrace and empower creative learning, which all boils down to a simple question: how we leverage the technology of the future for a student's journey beyond their university life. (Artificial Intelligence (AI), virtual reality tech, etc.)

The University's Technology Plan 2025 was launched at the beginning of November 2019, a big part of that plan is supporting institutional excellence which is why we will be reaching out next year and throughout the 5-year journey for feedback to see how some of those commitments could be

modified to better suit the university community.

Office of the ICO also provides ongoing support to our students, for example, we have updated cybersecurity information for the holiday season. There were incidents of people spoofing some of the deans and compromising some of our university colleagues' accounts so pay attention to the several tips and warnings coming from our office.

Canvas and D2L are two vendors tendering to replace blackboard. We will be reaching out to get as many people as possible for feedback as we look to finalize an appropriate replacement.

The information technology catalog is quite complete, so Shari asked councillors to take a look to make sure that the services are clear. She also wanted to know if any of the above information was a surprise to the councillors and if so asked them what a better mechanism would be to build awareness of the above updates.

Q&A:

Comment:

President Rengifo suggested that we can engage some of the students on the GSA's social media platforms, especially given that the council meeting is only a few representatives from the different academic councils and some of the student body is just more prone to social media engagement.

Question from Councillor:

In my research, I need to use high-performance computing so I tried to get help via the way of a ticket and never got a response so I followed up by going to the ICT desk at the Library and they told me the school is limited to Microsoft, so they don't have access to the type of software I was enquiring about. That being said, my question now is where can we get this kind of software?

A: I will fix the communication channel amongst my different groups. Secondly, our research computing area is targeted more to research problems like what you've articulated whereas our IT support folks are typically more for the masses and general IT support. They are supposed to triage those concerns to our research computing group, they support the research across the institution, so they have experience with all levels of software. It's unfortunate that you had that experience but will make sure this triage is better going forward.

Question from Councillor:

Is there a way that ICT services can facilitate quicker access to different software and provide some of the research support over the weekend?

A: When you go through the services catalog, you'll see our research computing support only operates Monday to Friday. We are trying to get our IT support which operates through the weekend up to a level that they can render some research support. We are always trying to strike that balance between IT and security and what we can allow on campus, this is a work in progress so trust me when I say some of those limitations are actively being worked on.

Comment from Councillor:

 As students, we all go through the software center to download the appropriate software. If the software product we're looking for is not available, I'd like to suggest that one could make a request through the software center in addition to the current protocols.

The Chair thanked Shari for her presentation and engaging councillors.

3. Approval of the Agenda

The Chair asked if there were any amendments to be made to the agenda as circulated.

VP Ezekwesili asked that item **7** be moved to item **4.**
Motion to amend the agenda (Ezekwesili/Fonseca)

Carried

VP Fonseca requested that the "ratification of the Iranian Student council" be added to the agenda as item **8**.

Motion to amend the agenda (Fonseca/Ezekwesili)

Carried

President Rengifo requested that a discussion on Tuition be added as item **9**.

Motion to amend the agenda (Rengifo/Alam)

Carried

Motion to approve the agenda as amended (Zahan/Kamal)

Carried

4. Canadian Blood Services

Brady Figley addressed the councillors, breaking down the nature of their partnership with the school and a few things about blood donations. He started by letting them know that the organization has made it their duty to reach out to all of the colleges, trying to organize a life-bus to pick up students to drop off at their center, and an hour later those students will be dropped back to school. The Canadian blood services are toying with the following dates in 2020 for a life-bus pick at the GSA: Jan 29th, Feb 19th, and March 26th.

Brady shared that 500ml of blood is taken in a session. There will be a sign-up sheet for the above dates. Brady also informed the councillors that they host blood typing events. However, the more accurate blood typing is offered on one's donor cards as donations are more thoroughly screened.

Blood donation deferrals are as follows:

- After a tattoo, there is a 3-month period before one can donate blood;
- Cannabis, while there is no deferral one has to be able to consent to the donation;
- Travel to certain regions affected by malaria will have a full year wait before they are able to donate;
- After a donation, a man has to wait for 56 days before he is able to make the next donation while a woman has an 84 day wait.

Birth control doesn't affect a woman's ability to donate.

Q & A:

Q: Have you considered collecting donations on campus instead of organizing a life-bus?

A: It's much easier at the moment to collect blood donations in our clinic. We no longer do mobile clinics. Manitoba and Saskatchewan seem to have the best strategy to date with a centralized location.

The Chair thanked Brady for addressing the councillors.

5. Approval of the minutes from November 5, 2019
Motion to approve November 5th minutes. (Badr/Fonseca)

<u>**Carried**</u>

6. Information to be received
   A) October 21, 2019, Executive meeting minutes
   B) November 4, 2019, Executive meeting minutes
   C) Governance Committee minutes from November 1, 2019

D) Bursary Selection Committee minutes from November 6, 2019

Motion to receive agenda item 5A-D. (Murray/Katz)

<u>Carried</u>

7. Executive reports

A. Report of the President

President Rengifo addressed the gathering focusing on the following 2 areas:

1)The GSA commons will be open on the 25th, 27th, 30th and 31st of December 2019 to give students (both graduate and undergraduate) left in saskatoon without the company of their loved ones a place to hang out on the holiday dates mentioned. Food and activities will also be open to the students who stop by the GSA Commons.

2)The president spoke briefly about learning sessions held in collaboration with the library on the topic of intellectual property more specifically copyright legislation. There will be more similar sessions to bolster the support of our students over the course of the winter semester as it also assists in their professional development.

There were no questions for the President.

B. Report of the VP External

VP Ezekwesili asked that councillors to check the sports schedule and cheer the GSA Guppies Volleyball and Basketball teams that are currently playing. Health chats for the month of December are as follows: "Bringing in the Bystander" 17th December from 3-4:30 pm and Zumba on the 1st and 3rd Friday from 6-7 pm. The Annual Gala will be held on the 4th of April 2020 at the Remai Modern and tickets will become available from January 2020. VP Ezekwesili also informed the councillors of the cancelation of the student choice initiative shortly after the Ontario CFS took the Ontario government to court and won.

There were no questions for VP Ezekwesili.

C. Report of the VP Finance and Operations

VP Alam shared that more than 130 bursary applications were reviewed by the Bursary Selection Committee to which 23 bursaries were awarded. Unsuccessful applicants were encouraged to

reapply in future Bursary offerings as the GSA Executive continues to lobby the administration for more funding. Think grad conference will be hosted at USASK this year from Jan 23rd to 26th 2020 to discuss but not limited to issues like that of rising tuition cost.

VP Alam closed by thanking all the members who served on the Selection Committee and his fellow Executive members.

There were no questions for VP Alam.

D. Report of the VP Student Affairs

VP Fonseca informed the councillors that the Holiday social was a success and thanked all who came out to the event. Currently, VP Fonseca is working on the Winter Orientation to be held on January 16th, 20220. The goal of which is to introduce newcomers to the different services and faculty members that may be instrumental as they pursue their graduate studies.

There were no questions for VP Fonseca.

8. Ratification of The Iranian student council (ISC) as a GSA Social Club

The representative Arash Mollahosseini informed the council that the past few years the social club wasn't running but they're planning to have their first event on the 27th of December (the longest night of the year). They look forward to sharing their culture with all on campus.

Motion to ratify ISC as a GSA social club. (Fonseca/Badr)

Carried

9. Tuition Discussion

President Rengifo opened the discussion with the following:

Three (3) different bodies are responsible for most of the institution's decisions namely: University council (where a GSA Executive represents all of the graduate students), Senate (where the GSA President is the representative) and lastly, the Board of Governors. We don't have any representation on the Board of Governors, which is the group responsible for deciding tuition increase. Before a decision is made there are consultations with the deans of different colleges. The deans hold forums to engage their students and ascertain their thoughts on increasing tuition. This is then communicated to the Board of Governors so they can decide if there is a tuition increase and by how

much that increase will be and what services the added funds will cover to benefit the students.

Basic consultation has just begun, and so far, they've met with the Provost and the Interim Dean of CGPS. The Provost is one of the advocates for graduate students so we can raise our concerns to them. Next year President Rengifo will present on behalf of the GSA Executives as to why tuition cost should be frozen. Every year we have seen a 3% increase, they haven't decided on the increase yet, but we want to ensure that they don't increase it too much and that those added funds actually go towards more scholarships, more funding or the other services that we need.

I may not be able to answer questions you may have but I will be able to bring your concerns up to all the deans.

President Rengifo's main concern is how this increase is going to affect the most vulnerable of our colleagues and those are the graduate students without funding. Most of those students have part-time jobs, how are they supposed to cope with the hike in cost?

Contributions from academic councillors:

Councillor - I came from the University of Toronto and expected to get a job shortly after getting to Saskatchewan to help me service the loan that I have to pay back on my undergraduate degree. I still, haven't been able to find a job. How are we supposed to bridge the gap on the already high tuition cost and the limited amount of scholarships available to me and other students in the school of public health?

President Rengifo - Thank you for your contribution I will be sure to bring up your concerns.

Councillor- Most funding we get is guaranteed for 3 years but the Ph.D. programs are usually 4 to 5 years long, before they consider such an increase, they should look into fixing current funding shortcomings.

Councillor - CGPS doesn't really listen unless you have the statistics. How much is living cost, how much do you have in funding, is the current tuition amount affordable for the average graduate student?

President Rengifo - The university has been compiling its own statistics as to the number of students who don't have funding and the number who apply for the need-based bursaries. We do have a survey that we ran to ascertain some information on the level of financial need from the graduate student community so that will also present to all the deans together with what they've been given.

Councillor- I have been on campus for the past 6 years, we can't directly compare our tuition amounts to the other U15 universities since they give more financial support to their graduate students, and not to mention some of those institutions have abolished the differential fee. Simply put, are we getting the same quality of life as the students from the other U15 universities. You are more unlikely to be able to start a family at USASK than the other Universities.

President Rengifo - I've made a note of all the points you've mentioned and just wanted to add that the University is planning on only accepting students with funding in the future to ease some of the financial instability we currently have on campus.

Councillor- The associate dean discussed two models for increasing tuition. There is the fixed increased and the variable increase. The international ranking of USASK is not comparable to the other U15 universities so why should a student here pay the median tuition cost of the U15 institutions. There is a lot more writing support for students at U-Waterloo than what is currently offered to our students as a former student there. While anecdotal it speaks to the little things that USASK can implement so that our program is on par with the other U15 institutions to legitimately consider the proposed tuition hike.

Councillor- I think the government withheld some of their funds in the last few years but now they are going to start those funds again. My question is how those funds are going to be used, will the university offer more scholarships, or will they offer larger scholarships to better help the graduate student population?

President Rengifo ended the discussions by letting the councillors know that on January 28th the President of the University will be at the GSA commons so please come out and participate in those discussions.

10. Other Business/Announcements

VP Fonseca invited councillors to be a part of the University's wellness project which was seeking graduate student to be a part of a 90-minute informal discussion focussed on teaching and learning practices when it comes to mental health and student well being. Food will be provided.

6 or 7 graduate students on 16th Dec (9:00-11:00 am), Tuesday 17th (9:00-12:00 pm), and on Thursday 19th (1:00-4:00 pm).

The Chair thanked all councillors for their participation this term, the Council Secretary for his assistance and the Executives for their leadership. The Chair asked new councillors who had questions to come see her after the meeting.

11. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn (Rengifo/Alam) at 6:33 pm.

<u>Carried</u>

Academic Council	Name of Councillors and (alternates)	Sep.24 2019	Oct.15 2019	Nov.5 2019	Dec.3 2019	Jan.28 2020	Feb.25 2020	Mar.17 2020	Apr.7 2020	Jun. 2020	Aug. 2020
Agricultural and Resources Economics (ARE) Graduate Student Association	Ran San (Valentina Ofori)	*N/A*	P	P	P						
Animal & Poultry Science Grad Students' Assoc.	Muhammad Imran (Kiana Rieger)	P	A	P	A						
ARCHAIA	Adrienne Ratushniak (Michelle Gowan)	P	P	A	A						
Biology Graduate Student Association	Rebecca Smith (Ruth Greuel) (Carmen Marquez) (Andrea Wishart)	N/A	P	P	P						
Chemistry Course Council	Naheda Sahtout (Doug Fansher)	P	P	P	P						
College of Medicine Graduate Students Society – Anatomy, Physiology & Pharmacology	Kushagra Parolia (Andrew Roebuc)	N/A	N/A	N/A	A						
College of Medicine Graduate Students Society – Biochemistry, Microbiology & Immunology	Sampurna Ghosh (Megha Rohamar)	N/A	N/A	N/A	A						
College of Medicine Graduate Students Society – Community Health & Epidemiology	Harini Aiyer (N/A)	N/A	N/A	N/A	A						
College of Medicine Graduate Students Society – Health Sciences	Michael Zaki (N/A)	N/A	N/A	N/A	A						
Computer Science Graduate Council (CSGC)	Rifat Zahan Muhammad Aminul Islam (Md. Nadim)	N/A	p	p	P						

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Engineering Graduate Community Council (EGCC) – Biological	Tumpa Sarker (Peyman Alizadeh)	N/A	N/A	N/A	A						
Engineering Graduate Community Council (EGCC) – Biomedical	Subashree Srinivasan (N/A)	N/A	N/A	N/A	A						
Engineering Graduate Community Council (EGCC) – Chemical	Shahab Minaei (Khaled, Zoroufchi Benis)	N/A	N/A	N/A	P						
Engineering Graduate Community Council (EGCC) – Civil, Geological & Environmental	Ajay Shrinivas Muthukumar (Mohanad Zaghloul)	N/A	N/A	N/A	P						
Engineering Graduate Community Council (EGCC) – Electrical & Computer	Karim Shahbazi (Jose Alvim Berkenbrock)	N/A	N/A	N/A	P						
Engineering Graduate Community Council (EGCC) – Mechanical	Alireza Razmavar (Hadi Ramin)	N/A	N/A	N/A	P						
English Course Council	Lindsay Church (Michelle Kent)	P	P	P	R						
Geography & Planning Grad Council	Selena Schut (Renata Leonhardt)	P	A	P	P						
Graduate Geological Society (GGS)	James Schulte (Brayden McDonald)	P	P	P	R						
Johnson-Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy Students' Association	Manreet Kaur Nehal (Syed Adnand Khalid)	N/A	N/A	P	R						
Kinesiology Graduate Student Council	Natasha Boyes (Natalie Houser)	P	P	P	P						

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MBARC	Alexander Mueller (Megan MacDonald)	N/A	N/A	P	P						
PEGASUS	Kimberlee Dube (Ethan Runge)	P	P	P	P						
Pharmacy & Nutrition Graduate Students' Council	Janine Rover (Mujtaba Badr)	P	P	P	P						
Physical Therapy Student Society (PTSS)	Julia Koop (Brandey Blahut)	P	P	P	P						
Plant Sciences GSA	Asanka Godakanda (Berenice Romero)	P	P	P	P						
Psychology Graduate Students' Association	Farron Wielinga (Josh Katz) (Brandon Sparks)	P	P	R	P						
SENSA	Mostofa Kamal Purbasha Mistry (Layane Moura) (Anita Bhatt)	P	P	P	P						
SPHSA	Aisha Sajid Humaira Inam (Janessa Tom) (Chunbei Liu)	N/A	N/A	P	P						
Sociology GSA	Connor Morrison (Cerah Dube) (Alana Demkiw)	N/A	P	P	A						
Soil Science Graduate Student Association	Rachel Brockamp (Aimee Schryer)	P	P	P	P						

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Toxicology Graduate Students' Association	Mikayla Oldach (Alana Weber)	P	P	R	P						
Western College of Veterinary Medicine (WCVM) GSA	Breanne Murray (Zeyad El Karsh)	P	P	P	P						
Exec. President	Mery Mendoza Rengifo	P	P	P	P						
Exec. VP Finance and Operations	Mohammad Wajih Alam	P	P	P	P						
Exec. VP Student Affairs	Alejandra Fonseca	P	P	P	P						
Exec. VP External	Chiamaka Ezekwesili	P	P	P	P						