

Graduate Students Association of McMaster University
Council Meeting

April 24th 2017
GSA Office, East Tower Refectory
6:00 p.m.

Minutes

Attendees: Lucia Lee (VP External), Ashley Ravenscroft (DoO), Sara King Dowling (FRC Science), Rodrigo Narro (BoG), Colette Nyirakamana (VP Services), Firat Sayin (FRC Business), Curran Egan (FRC Humanities), Kara Tsang (GSA CRO), Mohamed Zaher (FRC Engineering), Vi Dang (International Representative), Angela Orasch (VP Internal), Maleeha Qazi (FRC Health Science)

Observers: Tim Van Boxtel (Incoming GSA President), Robert Alex Ballagh (Incoming VP Services), Avijit Mallick (Incoming VP Internal), Shawn Hercules (Incoming VP External), Sara Oikawa (Incoming FRC Science)

Call in: Megan Murphy (VP Administration)

Regrets: Natalie D'Silva (President), Hanie Yousefi (FRC Engineering), Johnathan Tran (FRC Science), Arun Jacob (FRC Social Science), Marguerite Marlin (FRC Social Science)

Absent: Mariam Munawar (Senator Business), Sid Nath (Senator Health Science), David Bakhshinyan (FRC Health Science), Philip Tominac (Senator Engineering), Alexander Nielsen (Senator Science), Samira Farivar (FRC Business), Lyia Niu (FRC International)

1.0 **Call to Order** at 6:08 p.m.

2.0 **Approval of the agenda**

Motion to accept the Agenda for April 24th 2017 including ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING BUSINESS; first by Curran, seconded by Firat, all in favour, motion carried.

3.0 **Approval of the Minutes from previous Council meeting**

Motion to approve Minutes from the Council meeting of March 27th 2017; first by Firat seconded by Maleeha, all in favour, motion carried

4.0 **Reports (Consent agenda)**

Motion to accept the reports submitted in advance by councillors; first by Sara, seconded by Curran, all in favour, motion carried

- **Reports from the Board**

- **President's Report**

- 4...1 **Board of Directors**

Natalie submitted the following report:

- The Board agreed to pay an increased insurance premium as they were mandated by the University to increase our policies to 10 million. The Board also discussed Phoenix employee issues and Phoenix lease agreement.
- The GSA and MSU met with the New Budget Model Review Committee and discussed the pros and cons of the model.
- She has given the VPs and the CRO honorarium bonuses for the hard work they have all put in throughout the year.

- 4...2 **Bylaws Committee**

- No new business.

- 4...3 **Senate Report**

- No report submitted

- 4...4 **Board of Governor's Report**

- Rodrigo mentioned that the last Board of Governors meeting took place on April 20th. There were no major updates from the meeting.
- One of the recurring themes and issues that was discussed at length was how does McMaster, as a post-secondary education institution, become a place to have difficult and complex discussions surrounding a myriad of topics; yet also protect communities that feel persecuted, oppressed or discriminated against?
- He will be sending a survey by the end of the week to the incoming and outgoing councilors regarding feedback on a variety of issues that he must report to the Human Resources Advisory Panel.

- **Vice President (VP) and Faculty Representatives to Council (FRC) Reports**

- **VP Administration Reports**

- 4...1 **Finance Committee**

Megan Submitted the following report:

- They reviewed the February and March (preliminary) financials. There were a few major items that have changed since last year. For instance, some capital assets have moved to the GSA books. Moreover, when considering the finances other considerations had to be made, such as, but not limited to, an outstanding insurance payment, H&D premium payments, and a small refund from CIBC, when comparing year over year values. The GSA budget for next year was approved at the AGM based on the 4% fee increase, with a reduced social activities section. This should help alleviate some financial burdens the GSA is facing.

- 4...2 **Phoenix Executive Committee**

Megan Submitted the following report:

- They held a PEC meeting on April 11th. They discussed some service concerns, but noted that there have been improvements to service times. The Phoenix is also in the process of trying a new app

for customers based on a stamp card system. Moreover, they hope to have minor menu revisions out for May. Finally, she noted that the next meeting will be scheduled for May.

- **VP External Reports**

- 4...1 **Events and Trips Planning Committee**

Lucia sent the following report:

- The VP External would like to ask for council members' comments and suggestions regarding the GSA website. Specifically, any functionality problems?
- They are planning to have a planetarium night for 5:30 pm, Thursday, April 26.

- 4...2 **Students Issues Action Committee**

- No new business

- **VP Internal Reports**

- 4...1 **Academic Affairs Committee**

Angela sent the following report:

- The AAC discussed the ombuds issue and decided on two action plans:
 - 1) They are looking to contact the ombuds office and get data on uptake.
 - 2) The VP Internal will meet with Blake from the MSU to talk about the OMBUDS office and the management of it currently Met with SGS to discuss Awards:
- Awards nomination deadline will be the 15th of August
- The Awards ceremony will be on the 18th or 19th of October – waiting on SGS to confirm the date
- She also updated forms for awards and contacted appropriate bodies for increased 'advertising' for awards.
- Awards ceremony will be amended to include a more personalized account of the winners.

Met with MSU executive and Sean Van Koughnett about ombudsman issue

- Sean outlined that there is apparent discrepancy in our funding of ombuds, claiming that we use 16% of the service, but don't pay anything. However, he did say that this wasn't an issue (as far as the university is concerned) as of now.
- Currently looking at the role of ombudsman and compiling research on the uptake.

- **VP Services Reports**

- 4...1 **Graduate Student Services Review Committee**

Colette sent the following report:

- Council approved the referendum question regarding the HSR bus fee and agreement for the next 3 years (2017-2020). The referendum will be held on May 8th and will determine if students agree to pay the proposed fees or not.
- The 2 referendum questions on mental health services for students passed. Now graduate students will have access to mental health services at the Student Wellness Centre starting on May 1st, 2017. In addition, the GSA will work with Student Care regarding the access to remote mental health services and the fee associated to these services.

4...1 GSA Summer Leagues Committee

- No new business

4...2 Health & Dental Committee

- No new business
- **FRC reports**

4...1 International

Vi sent the following report:

- She will be participating the following events:
 - International Craft Night in May.
 - Welcoming Event for new grad students in May.
 - International Panel Discussion in September.

4...2 Business

- No report submitted

4...3 Engineering

Zaher sent the following report:

- The number of representatives from each department has increased from 2 to 3 for EGS.
- An internal committee will be formed to manage the upcoming METRIC conference.
- EGS is will be forming an internal committee to manage travel awards, Dr. Puri increased the award funds from \$10 K to \$20 K.

4...4 Health Sciences

- No report submitted

4...5 Science

Sara sent the following report:

- SAM AGM was held April 18, 2017
- Update on election results, Sarah noted that two new representatives were elected.
- She is currently working on the MOLE final report for SPICES (as it was a grant project).

4...6 Humanities

Curran sent the following report:

- Since the last meeting of Council, he has served on the referenda review committee. He provided comments by e-mail, and attended a meeting of the review committee, at which complaints pertaining to the Mental Health referendum were discussed, and appeals from the 'No' campaign were addressed.
- He also attended the AGM, where he brought a motion to amend the budget for the 2017-2018 fiscal year which received the support of the AGM. It had been my intent to seek membership on several GSA committees, but loss of quorum prevented this item from being addressed at the AGM.
- In his capacity as President of the History Graduate Student Society, he has been active over the course of the past month organizing the Graduate History Student Conference, and accompanying Archival Skills Workshop, to be held on the first weekend of May.

4...7 Social Sciences

Marguerite sent the following report:

- As the end of her term as a FRC of Social Sciences approaches, she has been asking people in her faculty to give feedback on what they liked and what they would like to see in the future in terms of representation of the faculty at Council. As noted before, the availability of travel grants remains a very large priority. There are also concerns about coverage of prescriptions in the health plan – with some reporting that they have had multiple routine prescriptions not covered by insurance simply because there are only selected types of antibiotics that are covered under our plan.
- It has not escaped her attention that there is a lack of uptake in terms of replacements for Arun and herself as Social Science FRCs. She has been attempting to address this by encouraging social science graduate students to come forward and represent the faculty on Council. Certainly, those in the faculty often appear to be very well-informed about the dynamics and issues of interest to students at the graduate level. However, there are problems with cynicism, as well as the usual constraints of time that grad students have in our faculty. They have in general been pleased by the bylaws changes to allow for more direct representation across all faculties, and she would encourage the Council to further pursue avenues that would encourage them to feel that they can make substantive changes to graduate student policy at McMaster.

5.0 Update from AGM (5 minutes)

- Colette mentioned that the AGM approved the GSA budget 2017/2018 with a 4% GSA fee increase except for the line of social activities. She added that the results of the executives' election were ratified.
- Sara asked specifically what the social line covers? Ashley explained that it covers sponsored activity, social event, welcome week, club finding recognition, and McMaster Community Initiative.

6.0 GSA Year in Review – Report from the Executive and Committees of Council (Consent)

Motion to accept the reports review from the Executives for the year of 2016-2017; first by Firat, seconded by Lucia, 9 in favour, 2 abstain, motion carried.

7.0 Ratification – Directors of the Association (10 minutes)

- Statement of interest were circulated last week, votes for the Board of Director nominees are;
 - Maleeha Qazi (Internal Director) 8 votes, 0 against, 1 abstain
 - Arun Jacob (Internal Director) 2 votes, 0 against, 5 abstain
 - Marguerite Marline (Internal Director) 7 votes, 0 against, 1 abstain
 - Gina Robinson (Director at Large) 6 votes, 0 against, 2 abstain
 - David Moore (Director at Large) 7 votes, 0 against, 1 abstain
 - Laura Whinton (Director at Large) 5 votes, 0 against, 2 abstain

Motion to appoint the above mentioned 6 Directors to the Board of Director; first by Firat, seconded by Roderigo, all in favour, motion carried.

8.0 Audited Financial Statements 2016 (10 minutes)

Review of statements

- Megan mentioned that KPMG had submitted a qualify audit for the GSA and the Phoenix financial statements. The reason this is done is because they can't confirm every single transaction carried, as the Phoenix has cash sales, inventories. Historically they have always provided the GSA with a qualified financial statements.
- Some of the points for improvement that they highlighted are the financial controls and responsibilities that are not perfect. For instance, ensuring that there are checks and balances in place for cheques and bank statements and ensuring that there is no one person that has access to the financials. Megan did note that this is currently the system in place in some instances, as it's the responsibilities of the Phoenix GM, Bookkeeper, and the GSA DoO to create separations of duties. This has allowed for more financial controls and more transparency, which permit the audit process to go much smoother; however, there is still room for improvement.

Motion to approve the Auditors report for the 2016 fiscal year; first by Megan, seconded by Firat, all in favour, motion carried.

Reappointment of Auditor

- Megan explained that KPMG has been auditing the GSA books for 3 years now and we have been satisfied with their work. Last year we asked for three additional companies to submit bids for the work; however, the council decided to continue with KPMG, as they were the better choice. In addition, KPMG audits McMaster university books as well, so there is ease in transferring information.

Motion to appoint KPMG as the Auditors for 2017 fiscal year and to approve the Auditors fees; first by Megan, seconded by Curran, 7 in favour, 2 abstentions, motion carried.

9.0 Review of Financial Statements 2016/2017 (20 minutes)

- Review of YTD income statements for the Phoenix and the GSA
No questions arose.
- Review of the Balance Sheet for the Phoenix and the GSA
- Roderigo asked if the GSA is looking to make any investments to buy new equipment for the office, and where would this be captured-assists? Megan explained that the GSA purchased 2 new computers a while ago, and the printer is leased, which is why it is not shown as fixed assets. Therefore, no computer equipment is immediately needed and the chairs, tables and desks inside the GSA office still work and are serviceable.
- Megan added that this statement was for the first AGM meeting which is why the expenditures are only showing until Jan 31st 2017, however, they have since had a finance meeting, and the financial position reported is much better in terms of the Phoenix performance. She also made note that not all expenses are captured as of this dates such as insurance, health and dental fees, etc.

- Review of the Statement of Owners Equity for the Phoenix and the GSA

No Questions were asked.

- Phoenix budget approval
- Megan mentioned that Randy slightly modified the budget from previous years. The Phoenix is trying to improve and be closer to the expected revenue by using a conservative approach for this year. Moreover, amortization was always included in the budget, which in previous year that amount was approximately \$36,000, but is now more. During the last audit KPMG moved a significant amount of capital assets from the Phoenix side to the GSA side, which is also worth noting.
- Rodrigo asked why there is \$6000 budgeted in the promotional line? Megan highlighted that these expenses were for things like getting an application for the restaurant to replace the stamp card process, launching a survey for customer satisfaction and discounts, karaoke nights, advertising and promotion on campus, Ashley added that advertising and promotion also includes all printing, the website updates, all social media advertising, buying promotional space in MSU annual calendar and or magazine's.
- Curran asked if the Phoenix was going to end in a negative position as the YTD shown is \$-4800. Megan explained that currently the Phoenix is in a positive position of approximately \$11,000. However, there are still some outstanding items, which have been presented in the bookkeeper interim report. Ashley added that the Phoenix's busiest month are April and March and at that time, there will be a full picture of how the business is doing.

Motion to approve the Phoenix budget for 2017/2018; first by Megan, seconded Curran, all in favour, motion carried.

10.0 Nomination to GSA Committees (5 minutes)

- Ashley mentioned that according to the new GSA Bylaw requirements each FRC has to sit on at least 1 committee. The call to join the GSA committee will be sent in the Thursday email to gain other graduate student interests. The committees standing resolutions are on the GSA website for those who want additional information.

11.0 Executive Review Committee (5 minutes)

- Ashley mentioned that continuing the discussion from the last Council meeting the document Arun requested was circulated to all members, regarding the composition of the executive review committee.
- The main idea of having this committee is to monitor the executives during the year and assess their portfolio's and make suggest changes accordingly.
- The committee will meet on monthly basis, and send recommendations to Council for approval regarding the executives and composition of portfolios.
- Composition for the committee is as follows: 5 Executive Officers (Chair- President), 3 Counsellors, 2 Members at Large and 1 Non-voting staff member.

Motion to have strike the Executive review committee as a GSA Committee; first by Curran seconded, by Lucia, all in favour, motion carried.

12.0 New business

- Angela requested to add the results of the mental health referendum for ratification.

Motion to add the ratification of mental health referendum results; first by Angela, seconded by Sara, all in favour motion carried.

Motion to approve the ratification of mental health referendum results; first by Angela, second by Firat, 8 in favour, 4 abstentions, motion carried.

Motion to discuss a proposal received from MSU regarding LRT; first by Angela, seconded by Curran, all in favour motion carried.

- Angela mentioned that MSU promoting the LRT and reaching out to councilors who voted no to encourage them to vote in favor of the project. The MSU researched out to the GSA asking if we are interested in joining the cause.
- Curran mentioned that he supports the idea of making a statement in support of the LRT.
- Tim endorsed the idea and mentioned that it will be in grad student's best interests to have the LRT service implemented.
- Ashley suggested that Angela could put a statement together and send it to Council by today and Council should send their comments to her by tomorrow. Upon confirmation of the approval of the statement she could send it to all stakeholders.

Motion to endorse the LRT by the GSA; first by Curran seconded, by Maleeha, all in favour, motion carried.

- Tim requested to add the discussion for student representation on the following advisory committees:
 - Protests and Freedom of Expression.
 - International Students Strategy Working Group

Motion to allow the incoming GSA president to discuss all of the mentioned committees; first by Curran, seconded by Sara, all in favour, motion carried.

- Protests and Freedom of Expression.
- Tim mentioned that the Protests and Freedom of Expression committee was proposed by Dr. Deane, the president of the University. The university put this ad hoc committee in place, and has begun to construct a policy on how to deal with protests, violent situations, etc. He mentioned that if any of the Council members are interested in joining this committee to send him an email. Curran and Alex mentioned they are interested in joining.
- Rodrigo mentioned that the university is trying to be proactive on policy on how to deal with tricky situations, such as those Tim mentioned. He added that freedom of speech is important but they need to make sure everyone will be safe.
 - International Students Strategy Working Group

- Tim mentioned that McMaster is currently developing an International Students Strategy with the goal of improving the educational experience of international students. There will be three working groups contributing to this project, and students will be asked to attend twice per month starting in May. The categories they are going to be directing their efforts towards are as follows:
 - > Careers
 - > Learning & Academic Skills
 - > Student Life
- Vi mentioned that she is interested to join all the three committees.

Motion to nominate our voluntary members for the committees mentioned; first by Curran, seconded by Lucia; all in favour, motion carried.

Motion to allow Tim to speak on the ThinkGrad conference; first by Lucia, seconded by Sara, all in favour, motion carried.

- Tim mentioned that both himself and Ashley attended the ThinkGrad conference. It is a national body comprised of 15 Graduate Students' Associations who are focused on spearheading research, sharing resources, exchanging information and discussing pressing problems affecting higher education in Canada. The purpose of this conference is to bring together graduate student representatives from across Canada and provide them with a platform to network, share best practices and strategically plan research themes for the upcoming year.
- He noted that the exchange of information was very beneficial, and encouraging specially between all the GSAs. Some of the larger topic's discussed were mental health, as the University of Montreal generate a survey based on student mental health and understanding how many people are affected. There were also very general recommendations for improvement.
- Overall, Tim noted that the thought it was an extremely valuable experience.
- Rodrigo asked if these attendees are from research intensive university from the U15 universities? Ashley mentioned that this group formed out of the what use to be called the GU15, which attendees were from the U15 schools; however, now it is an open group to all schools.

13.0 Adjourn

Motion to adjourn at 7:16 p.m.; first by Curran, seconded by Lucia, all in favour, motion carried.

Action Item:

Item	Action by	Due date

Lucia Lee,
VP External

Date

Recorder

Date