Attendees: Talena Rambarran (President), Farhad Sadeh (FRC Business), Neha Dewan (FRC Health Science), Vi Dang (International Representative), Natalie D’Silva (VP Services), Megan Murphy (VP Administration), Lucia Lee (VP External), Ashley Ravenscroft (DoO), Shawn Hercules (FRC Science), Naby Nikookaran (FRC Engineering), Mai Yamamoto (International Representative) Anna D’Angela (Board of Governors Representative), Manraj Kaur (VP Internal), Tarushika Vasanthan (FRC Science), Philip Tominac (Senate Rep Engineering), Peter Gardhouse (Senate Rep Humanities), Maleeha Qazi (FRC Health Sciences), Angela Orasch (Incoming VP Internal), Colette Nyirakamana (Incoming VP Services), Liam Midzain-Gobin (Member at large)

Regrets: Theo Nazy (FRC Social Science), Andrew Kloiber (FRC Humanities), Sid Nath (Senate Rep Health Science)

Absent: Maryam Ghasemaghaei (Senate Rep Business), Azam Shamsho (CRO), Darko Ljubic (FRC Engineering), Hadi Esfami (FRC Business)

1.0 Call to Order at 6:00 PM

2.0 Acceptance of the Agenda

Talena mentioned that some members requested to add several items to new business. To add items to new business 2/3 of the votes of the majority is required.

1. Motion to add Indigenous Research Landscape Event to new business; first by Natalie, seconded by Naby, all in favour, motion carried.

2. Motion to add appointment to BOD of community housing in Dundas to new business- first by Peter, seconded by Anna, all in favour, motion carried.

3. Motion to add IT review part time job to new business- first Megan, seconded by Naby, all in favour, motion carried.

4. Motion to add discussing continuing with KPMG to do our financial audits to new business- first by Megan, seconded by Peter, all in favour, motion carried.

5. Motion to add CAFs draft protocol to be discussed in new business- first by Anna, seconded by Tarusikha, all in favour, motion carried.

6. Motion to discuss adding the draft PhD Student Supervisory Committee Meeting Report to new business- first by Natalie seconded, by Maleeha All in favour, motion carried.

7. Colette requested to add discussion of postponing the referendum, until students get clear and final budget from the University. Motion to add item to new business first by Peter, seconded by Farhad, all in favour , 5 opposed; motion failed to be added to new business as 2/3 of votes of the majority is required.

Motion to accept the amended agenda- first by Lucia seconded by Peter, all in favour, motion carried.

Motion to give all the observers attending today speaking right- first by Anna, seconded by Naby, all in favour, motion carried.
Motion to request that observers presenting material regarding the appointment of an auditor leave the room while council is voting so no member will feel pressured to vote for either side- first by Megan, seconded by Peter, 1 abstention, All in favour, motion carried.

3.0 Approval of Minutes from the meeting of March 28th, 2016.
Motion to accept the minutes- first by Shawn, seconded by Naby; All in favour, 1 abstention, motion carried.

4.0 Reports from the Board
4.1 President’s Report
4.1.1 Board of Directors
Talena mentioned the following:
- The board meeting was on March 31st, the following items were discussed:
  - The current lease proposal; the BOD feels that the New Budget Model may make the phoenix not be sustainable and as such they are enlisting the help of consultants to ensure that if the model is applied to the Phoenix that the operations are sustainable/reasonable and if it is not, to help demonstrate this to the University
  - The Phoenix capital budget and how that should be implemented moving forward,
  - Approval of $200 for professional photographs of the new Executives,
  - The membership in AMICCUS, an association for managers of student organizations.

GU15 meeting report;
- Ashley, Natalie, and Talena attended the GU15 meeting in Vancouver. The GU15 is a meeting of the 15 research-intensive universities in Canada. The group discusses best practices amongst graduate student groups, and Universities, and issues pertaining to graduate students. Topics discussed at this meeting were:
  - Student research copyright,
  - Student supervisor code of conduct,
  - Sexual assault on campus,
  - Graduate student data,
  - Student engagement and the future of the GU15.
  - McMaster also put forward a call for interest in signing a petition regarding reinitiating the FastTrack PhD stream for immigrants.
- Natalie and Ashley attended Admin Con. This meeting takes place 3 or 4 times per year. There were no notable updates from the administration, except for discussion of administration of the HSR bus pass for the fall.
- Anna asked Talena if it is possible to get a better price for the HSR bus pass for graduate students at the next HSR meeting. Talena said that this was brought up at a previous meeting, however, it was clear that the HSR administration didn’t believe this was reasonable because graduate students are here year round; whereas, undergraduates are here for eight months (and some throughout the summer, but nearly the same amount as graduate students).
4.1.2 Meeting with SGS

- Talena and Natalie met with Doug Welch (Dean of Graduate Studies). They confirmed that starting the next academic year graduate students will get a break down of their gross income. Scholarship payments will be once per term, and income from TA pay and research stipend will be on the bi-weekly schedule.

- However, it is uncertain at this time what will be done regarding tuition deductions. One possibility discussed was that students would get the entire amount owed to them, and they will be responsible for paying their tuition at the end of the term; noting that no interest would be charged if students pay their account within the academic year.

- Additionally, regarding the Student Supervisor Agreement – Talena noted during the graduate council, someone had recommended removing the requirement for signatures since it is not a legally binding document. Talena and Natalie disagreed with this, as signatures are considered to be an acknowledgement from both parties that this discussion occurred, and the content of the discussion should be noted and agreed upon, otherwise one party could claim the discussion never occurred.

4.1.3 University Campus Planning Committee Complete

- The final meeting took place last week. The University’s priority is a more pedestrian focused core campus. They also highlighted locations for potential new buildings on campus.

4.1.4 Sexual Assault Policy

- New sexual assault response protocol has been developed. Angela, Lucia, Manraj, and Talena reviewed the policy; it seems to be comprehensive and well developed. Talena added that the highlight of the policy is how to deal with and respond to, sexual assault incident(s).

- Angela mentioned that this policy went through many drafts and amendments; however, she felt those involved in the process clearly discussed what needed to happen, and also noted that it is a requirement of the ministry of education that all universities should have a sexual assault policy.

4.1.5 Referendum for CAFS— reminder to vote

- The referendum regarding ancillary fees voting will take place on April 28th, 29th and 30th. The GSA will send a reminder with information on the topic and on voting.

4.2 Senate Report

Peter mentioned

- There have been a few changes in the Health Science programs; however, they were cosmetic. Senate put together a task force to discuss ways to increase interdisciplinary collaboration. The taskforce looked at 3 faculties
which are Humanities, Science and Social Science; the discussion is about whether or not to merge these faculties or keep them separate.

- These 3 faculties became isolated in both the undergraduate and graduate levels, where students were isolated in their particular faculty and they don’t have many opportunities, or encouragement, to take courses from other faculties that are not directly related to their degree.
- Naby added that the Provost formed this committee. The mission of the committee was to explore all the options; it does not necessarily mean that the merge will take place. There will be more surveys, detailed research, and discussion before they make a final decision.

4.3 Board of Governor’s Report

Anna mentioned the following:

- The communication underway is about the University brand. The Board of Governors is updating the brand positioning statement, and their vision is advancing human and social health wellbeing. They received feedback from professors, staff, and students; they will continue developing their statement until they have a professional version.

- She is a member of the Human Resources Advisory Panel (HRAP); the committee requires collecting feedback on the above issues every year. As she is the grad student rep, her focus is on collecting the opinions and thoughts of grad students. Feedback from all represented campus groups is then compiled and shared with the President.

- She is hoping to solicit the council feedback on the following three questions:
  1. What are your perceptions of the mood/culture on campus?

     Students’ comments:

     - The current message grad students are receiving from the University is that they are not a priority. There have been multiple issues about payroll, and the University took too long to address these issues. It took a lot of effort earlier to get the attention of the University, and students didn’t have these issues before Mosaic; the University needs to work to improve it. The University needs to make some gesture to grad students to fix the perception of the mood and culture on campus because it is now broken.

     - The University is focusing on becoming an economic institution instead of learning and educating institution. The purpose of the University is to produce employment for the future, but the University has strayed away from that goal.

     2. How successful has Patrick Deane been as President of the University?
Students’ comments:

- Patrick Deane is successful. He has been doing a good job and emphasizing the educational and visionary aspects of the University.

3. What are your overall perceptions of the institution as a whole? What are some challenges and opportunities the University is facing?

Students comments:

- The University as a whole is very fractured; there are few opportunities for grad students to communicate with other faculties.

- Anna noted; no names will be tied to any comments and all feedback will be compiled in to a report by her and delivered to the HRAP Committee chair in the beginning of May. Students can send any additional feedback to her at dangea@mcmaster.ca any time before May 1st.

5.0 Committee Reports
5.1 Finance Committee (VP Administration)
- Megan mentioned that the Phoenix inventory has been scheduled for June 5th in preparation for the upcoming audit.

5.2 Phoenix Executive Committee (VP Administration)
- The GSA is hiring a consultant to help create a capital budget as there are a few items over at the phoenix that will need to be replaced soon. The committee is currently looking at how much this will cost.

- The consultant will also review the sustainability/reasonability of the New Budget Model in regards to the rent/lease.

- Students who are interested in joining the PEC committee can email Megan.

5.3 Events and Trips Planning Committee (VP External)
- On April 29th there is a Karaoke night at the Phoenix, and a planetarium show at Burke Science Building.

- During the month of May there will possibly be a trip to the Aquarium.

5.4 Students Issues Action Committee (VP External)
- No new report

5.5 Academic Affairs Committee (VP Internal)
Manraj mentioned the following:

- OMBUDS Workshop RE: Supervisory issues by Carolyn Brendon was organized on April 20, 2016 from 12-1pm and 3:30-4:30pm. Due to no participation in the 12pm-1pm session, the later event was cancelled. It was recognized through conversations with Carolyn Brendon that the awareness and
use of OMBUDS is minimal amongst the graduate students. As such, Carolyn expressed interest in participating in future workshops by GSA and also in presenting to the council at one of the future meetings.

- Manraj attended a meeting to discuss changes to the MIETL’s 2016 Teaching and Learning Forum scheduled for the Fall 2016 semester on behalf of the GSA President. The Forum, which is a half day teaching and learning training event held each September for new and returning McMaster undergraduate students, graduate students, and Teaching Assistants, offers a keynote address and various workshops on topics of relevance to post-secondary teaching. Historically, the event has been held during Welcome Week as part of the offerings available to graduate students. The positioning of Labour Day in 2016, as in 2015, will mean that most Welcome Week activities will occur post Labour Day. In 2015, we saw a drop in the number of participants at the Forum compared to previous years. We suspect this may in part be due to many students not yet having returned to campus, waiting until after the Labour day weekend to do so. We understand that Graduate Studies experienced a similar drop in participation in 2015 so they have decided to move their welcome activities to the week after Labour Day also. It was decided at this meeting that MIETL will hold an information session during the welcome week (likely on the same day as the GSA BBQ) and the forum itself will be moved to the Fall Break.

5.6 International Student Representative Report (International Reps)
Vi mentioned the following:
- They are organizing an immigration session on May 5th, from 11:30 AM – 1:30 PM.
- Still working on the petition to add PhD FastTrack stream for immigrants.
- They are currently planning to have an international students fair in September.
- Naby added that Faculty of Engineering is holding an immigration session for international Engineering students on May 10th; he requested that Vi send him her information.

5.7 GSA Summer Leagues Committee (VP Services)
Natalie mentioned that:
- They still require players for the soccer league.
- They ordered parking passes; they will receive them tomorrow.

5.8 Graduate Student Services Review Committee (VP Services/President)
- No new reports, still requesting members.

5.9 Health & Dental Committee (VP Services)
- A survey went out 3 weeks ago and only 56 people responded to the survey. To publish the survey, it requires 300 students at least; the recommendation is to redo the survey in January of next year.
- An email survey will be sent from Ihaveaplan to students depending on how quickly Ihaveaplan receives student information from the University. They will contact students regarding the survey either by phone or by email.
- Talena added that she had a meeting today with Bobby Umar; they discussed how to make students more engaged with the GSA, and how the executives
could reach out to graduate students in a more efficient way. The GSA has asked Bobby for a proposal for ides/cost of implementing a branding campaign for the GSA.

6.0 Annual General Meeting review of Motions passed
- AGM took place last week, passed resolutions are as follows:
  o Bylaws changes to include international representative as faculty reps to have a voting right on council.
  o CRO report and the ratification of election results both passed.
  o The new directors (members at large) appointed at the AGM are, Shawn Hercules, Rodrigo Narro-Perez, and Carmina Perez Romero.
  o Approval of the auditor’s report for 2015 fiscal year; however, the motion to appoint KPMG as auditor’s for 2016 fiscal year was not approved (the decision to appoint an auditor will be made at this council meeting as per the motion at the AGM).
  o The Phoenix and the GSA budgets were approved as well as the proposed student fees for 2016/2017.

7.0 Petition: International Student Immigration
- Talena mentioned; that currently the petition is not professionally worded, it needed to be more compelling.
- The GSA will send the petition to all other Student Associations in the GU15, to be signed; however, she noted it will take a couple of months for the other schools to sign off.

8.0 New Business
8.1 Indigenous research and environment in Canada:
  Talena mentioned the following:
  - It’s a meeting mainly for administration, but they requested to have a couple of grad students at the meeting, it’s on May 3rd and 4th, ideally Talena would like to send VPs, but she will inquire if the GSA can send one VP and a grad student at large.
  - Angela Orasch VP Internal is interested to attend the event. Interested students to attend this event should send an email to gsapres@memaster.ca.

8.2 Community housing in Dundas:
  - Is housing that was built in the 90s for grad students, but now it is turned to community housing. Their Board of Directors historically had one grad student sit on their board and as such they continue this practice, even though their mandate is no longer to house Graduate Students. They often meet once per month, Manraj in being the Graduate Student Representative.

8.3 IT review system:
  - There is a part-time position open for any student who would be interested in helping in the IT review. Currently they have two undergraduates who have shown interest in the position; however, should these individuals not take the position they wanted to reach out to graduate students to apply; however, at this time no one from the council has shown interest.

8.4 KPMG auditor:
  The GSA invited three different individuals to speak to the council regarding the appointment of an auditing firm. Liam Midzain-Gobin a McMaster graduate student,
John Pryke, Partner from KPMG, Fabian Grenning accountant for the GSA bookkeeping firm; Liam mentioned;

- His main concern is the recent allegation of KPMG. A CBC News investigation has shown that KPMG engaged in intentional tax evasion from the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) throughout the early 2000s. According to the available documents KPMG targeted these individuals, instead of these individuals seeking out help of KPMG to evade Canadian taxes.
- During the time that KPMG was being pursued through the courts for their actions, they further engaged in questionable action including;
  - Hiring former CRA executive in charge of the compliance division,
  - Hosting CRA executives and senior enforcement officials at two soirees in Ottawa.
- Concluding he is not comfortable with the idea of the GSA continuing to do business with KPMG specially after the recent allegation and in general because of their ethics.

John from KPMG replied to Liam comments noting:

- KPMG works with 700 people and has over 700 clients in Canada alone and they are a financial firm that provide auditing services to the GSA. Unfortunately, he noted he could not say much more due to the privacy of clients about the current legal situations; however, the issue in question is specifically related to tax fillings, in which individuals were involved in tax planning strategies, that allowed them to defer or eliminate tax, but the CRA decided they did not like that, and the case was escalated as such.
- The case in question was an income tax case, and this strategy was implemented for a number of clients, the rules that existed at this time allowed these strategies to be in place, and KPMG was working in accordance to the law; however, thereafter CRA identified these strategies as being problematic, and as such changed the legislation.
- As for the issue with hiring a former CRA executive to work for KPMG to benefit from his experience, as he knows the rules, Tax act etc; this is common practices as he suggested why would you not want someone who knows legislation well?
- As for hosting CRA executives; those executives weren't hosted by KPMG at industry events, such as the tax association for CPA (Charted professional accountant) in Canada, so KPMG was invited as many other member of the association, CRA executives were invited as they are a tax authority here in Canada; therefore, he did not deem this some sort of scheme to pay off the CRA.
- He added that, KPMG stood all of their clients, e.g. University of Calgary and Alberta, whom have been clients for 10 years now. They don't shy away and stand behind the work they do no matter what the controversy because they know they hire competent people who work within the law.

Liam mentioned that; in KPMG defense, this comes down to industry practice; as John has noted however, he notes that doesn't make it ok, as KPMG funds these industry organizations events, furthering the issue. He also added KPMG violated the code when hiring a former CRA employee.

- Anna asked if KPMG does personal Tax-John mentioned that KPMG is an audit partner specifically, but they do have 3 tax partners here in Hamilton, that would get involved in simple cooperate tax filling; however, he noted this issue was not with a division in Ontario.
• Manraj asked- how is KPMG going to make sure that they are complying with CRA? John mentioned that, KPMG is not getting involved in any way with respect to tax regarding our organization, as the GSA is not for profit organization. Moreover, KPMG presents very detailed audit finding reports, include a letter of appendices, explaining how they go through the regular quality control procedures. Concluding that the KPMG team members works hard to stay abreast to CRA rules, as tax rules changes all the time; however, he does note that in any field this in and of itself poses challenging.

• Megan added, KPMG has been auditing the GSA books for the last two years and the reason they choose them in the first place, was because the University is using them as their auditors. In addition; the cost of the services compared to other quotes offered from other comparable organizations was very reasonable.

Fabian mentioned that,

• He knows several KPMG offices, he noted; former CRA employees should be hired because they know the rules, and have tax experience. He added, this is not considered a code violation, but rather a common practice in the industry.

• Talena mentioned that; in order to receive the fees from the University, the GSA must have their books audited. The University doesn’t require the GSA to choose a specific firm and as such the GSA can choose the firm they want, as long as the GSA books are audited.

The Debate ended.

• Talena mentioned that; after the debated ended there were two potential motions, the first is ‘do we want KPMG to be our auditing firm or not’ if they yes, then this discussion item is settled, if the council disagree to continue with KPMG, then the second motion is to review the other auditing firm, and select one of the other quotes that the board received. Naby asked how comfortable Megan was when dealing with KPMG as an auditing firm, and she mentioned that she is very comfortable having KPMG as the auditing firms they done a great job and they had good turnaround time. Moreover, she noted that The GSA has always appreciate their willingness to reduced their fees based on the book keeping the GSA has in place and that they are always willing to come and talk to the executives (regarding any questions or concerns) and always demonstrate very good business practices such as sending their management letter and going over the controls in both houses along with noting things that can be improved financially and for transparency.

• Maleeha asked if the University did have any concern with KPMG, Megan mentioned that there was no concern from the University regarding them that she was aware of.

• Colette asked if the GSA have tried different firms, Megan mentioned that there was a previous auditing firm appointed to the GSA before she started her term and as such the GSA had so many issues with the financial documents; including but not limited to not having the ability to prepare financial statement out of these documents they generated because there were too many errors; however, they had Fabian contact three different firms and get quotes on the GSA behalf to ensure we are getting the best possible rate for the best possible services; which Megan noted the BOD felt KPMG satisfied.

• The council agreed to continue with KPMG to audit the GSA financial books for the fiscal year 2016.
• **Motion** to appoint KPMG as our auditing firm for the fiscal year 2016, considering all the discussion that occurred - first by Megan, seconded by Natalie, all in favour motion carried.

### 8.5 Draft protocol for Compulsory Ancillary Fees,

CAF's draft document was circulated,

- Talena requested feedback from the council regarding the CAF's document. There are items in this document that she felt were concerning, e.g. the referendum clause - if there is a new service, or a new fee, that would be proposed, undergraduates and graduate students are lumped together to vote, in the event all graduate students vote no in a referendum, they still will not win as they will forever be outnumbered by the undergraduate students.

- CAF's terms;
  - Fee increase by CPI is always possible in the old agreement,
  - Up to 4% goes to GSA council,
  - Representation on all the different subcommittees have 3 undergraduates and 1 graduate student, so the graduate students are outnumbered by undergraduate in subcommittees.

- The council needs to see equal numbers of grad students and undergrad students in the subcommittees where they pay the equivalent amount in fees, and also the referendum should be separated.

- Anna’s concern was the University can still call a referendum, even if the grad students’ council say no, Ashley added, in regards to the CAF’s agreement, the University has previously had the ability to call a referendum without the agreement of student organizations.

- Talena summarized the feedback of the council - additional things that need to be changed are:
  - The actual representation on the subcommittee,
  - The University can’t call a referendum if the GSA council doesn’t want to call a referendum on a fee increase.
  - The referendum should have some sort of separation that the graduate student says yes or no versus the undergraduate say yes or no, on a particular fee and it has to be both groups that would say yes to have a fee increase.

### 8.6 PhD supervisory meeting report,

- Talena mentioned that she will email the form to everyone in the council and they can send their feedback to her.

### 9.0 Adjournment

**Motion** to adjourn the meeting at 8:16 - first by Natalie, seconded by Peter, all in favour, unanimous, motion carried.

[Signatures and dates]