

Graduate Students Association of McMaster University

**Council Meeting**

Wednesday, February 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2016  
GSA Office, East Tower Refectory  
6:00 p.m.  
**Minutes**

**Attendees:** Natalie D'Silva (President), Lucia Lee (VP External), Ashley Ravenscroft (DoO), Sara King Dowling (FRC Science), Marguerite Marlin (FRC Social Science), Rodrigo Narro (BoG), Angela Orasch (VP Internal), Hanie Yousefi (FRC Engineering), Colette Nyirakamana (VP Services), Samira Farivar (FRC Business), Curran Egan (FRC Humanities), Kara Tsang (GSA CRO)

**Call in:** Megan Murphy (VP Administration)

**Regrets:** Philip Tominac (Senator Engineering), Firat Sayin (FRC Business), Maleeha Qazi (FRC Health Science), Arun Jacob (FRC Social Science), Alexander Nielsen (Senator Science), Johnathan Tran (FRC Science), Vi Dang (International Representative)

**Absent:** Mariam Munawar (Senator Business), Sid Nath (Senator Health Science), David Bakhshinyan (FRC Health Science), Mohamed Zaher (FRC Engineering), Lyia Niu (FRC International)

**1.0**      **Call to Order** at 6:06 pm

**2.0**      **Approval of the agenda**

**Motion to accept the Agenda for February 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2017 first by Samira, seconded by Sara, all in favour motion carried.**

**3.0**      **Approval of the Minutes from previous Council meeting (5 mins)**

**Motion to approve Minutes from the Council meeting of January 11<sup>th</sup>, 2017, first by Sarah, seconded by Hanie 9 in favour, 3 abstentions, motion carried.**

**4.0**      **Reports (Consent agenda) (20 mins)**

**4.1 Reports from the Board**

**4.1.1 President's Report**

**4.1.1.1 Board of Directors**

- BOD discussed many items, but no decisions were made. Some of the items discussed were – investing the health and dental reserve fund, increase in GSA insurance to 10 million, amendment of organizational health and dental policy, GSA risk management, website and Phoenix lease.

#### **4.1.1.2 Bylaws Committee**

- Bylaws committee met multiple times. The proposed changes to bylaws will be discussed under item 10 on this agenda.

#### **4.1.2 Senate Report**

- No new business

#### **4.1.3 Board of Governor's Report**

- No new business

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

#### **4.2.1 VP Administration Reports**

##### **4.2.1.1 Finance Committee**

- They discussed the items necessary for the AGM - budget, audit, and financials for both the Phoenix and GSA. They need to find ways to improve cash flows on the Phoenix side to help reduce some of the outstanding liabilities including accounts payable. They have also requested the Phoenix GM to put together an actionable financial plan for the next three months in terms of increasing revenue and decreasing costs such as COGS and labour. They reviewed the GSA budget amount and discussed options for member fee increases to cover increasing costs in the GSA. Lastly, Tim presented an idea for investing some of the H&D surplus, creating some income, which may be used for future programming. More information is needed before drafting a policy regarding this, along with a risk assessment and tolerance of our members. As we are focusing on AGM preparation.

##### **4.2.1.2 Phoenix Executive Committee**

- The main focus is on reviewing the budget prepared by the GM in preparation for the AGM. They went through line-by-line and expect an adjusted budget shortly. They also discussed the new website and Phoenix app - currently available in the app store. These should be ready for launch around the week of Feb. 13th.

#### **4.2.2 VP External Reports**

##### **4.2.2.1 Events and Trips Planning Committee**

- In February, the GSA hosted a trip to Chicopee Snowtube Park in Kitchener. 40 students have attended.
- They have planned the annual trip to Snow Valley which will be opened to 84 students.
- Facebook and Twitter pages have been visited a lot this month. The new website was launched a week ago, and they can now use Google Analytics for improvement.

##### **4.2.2.2 Students Issues Action Committee**

- Have not held a meeting due to scheduling problems.

### **4.2.3 VP Internal Reports**

- The Health Science Federation has requested a club status and they decided that they can proceed.
- The DDSA has requested a club status and they are still negotiating.
- The Health Science Inquiry (an online publication) requested sponsorship for their journal and it was approved.
- GSA sponsorship policy package was redone.
- GSA awards rubric has been redone.
- The GSA Handbook is shaping up.
- Graduate Council --> University think that students will have no problem paying their tuition on time with the new system.
- School is thinking about new ways to understand graduate education – provincial funding will be tied to student numbers so student recruitment a priority.

#### **4.2.3.1 Academic Affairs Committee**

- The AAC met with Luke Dotto from the OGSA – he is presenting a written proposal to council regarding the future of the OGSA.
- The proposal is an additional student fee which would amount to double the money that they are currently giving to the OGSA from the GSA operating budget. In return Luke promised that OGSA would pursue more lobbying efforts with the government.
- The AAC decided that, pending council's approval, they will not push the issue to a referendum.
- The AAC thought that the fact only one initiative has been presented in the past couple years, and the fact that the OGSA has not met with policy makers or lobbying interests, indicates their lack of advocacy viability.

### **4.2.4 VP Services Reports**

#### **4.2.4.1 Graduate Student Services Review Committee**

- The GSSCR is meeting weekly this month to discuss SWC fee proposal, SOBI Bikes proposal, HSR Bus passes new agreement for graduate students, the funding\scholarship model for graduate students, Legal expenses coverage and A&R fees.  
The conclusions of the meetings so far are:
- The legal expense coverage seemed to not be of graduate students' interests
- The committee agreed on keeping a 40-30-30 funding\scholarship formula
- The committee required more information regarding the opt-out options and accommodation info from SOBI as well as an in-house survey with graduate students with a threshold of 60% before considering bringing the proposal to a referendum.
- Regarding SWC fees, the committee is still discussing the university's proposal while considering off-campus services in order to compare and see what would be the best options for students.

#### **4.2.4.2 GSA Summer Leagues Committee**

- No new business

#### **4.2.4.3 Health & Dental Committee**

- Ashley and Colette met with Studentcare representatives Del and Azim regarding the renewal of our Health and Dental Plan. Since it is being used by a large number of students, especially the dental portion (measured by the number of claims), the discussions turn around considering an incremental fee increase of the plan.

#### **GSA Clubs Committee**

- The Graduate Students' Anti-Poverty Working Group (GSAW) applied for Club recognition. The group is committed to raising awareness and produce practical knowledge of graduate student poverty issues with a university-centric focus. The Club wants to ensure that policies at McMaster around fees, payment schedules and other areas account for these realities and do not exacerbate them.
- As a Club that would provide support to graduate students concerned about aspects like fee increases and austerity measures on-campus, it deserves to be recognized as a GSA Club.

#### **Various meetings in February:**

- Meeting with Andrea Cole and Pete Self for the GSA endorsement on a Peer to peer supervisory program.
- Meeting with Ana Kovacevic and Vanessa Ha from Graduate Wellness Initiative. The GWI will partner with GSA and SGS for their closing event of their 1<sup>st</sup> year of funding in April.
- Meeting with Hana Faidi (an undergraduate student member of the Board of Governors), regarding the Quebec massacre. She intends to collaborate with the GSA, the MSU, Faculty members, the Muslim students' association, PACBIC and other groups on what kind of support the University's administration could provide to concerned groups in such situations.

#### **4.2.5 FRC reports**

##### **4.2.5.1 International**

- For the month of February, they were working on the following:
- International craft night on March 15, 6-9pm, ABB274 (collaborating with CUPE International Officer)
- Immigration seminar with Elizabeth Long on March 30 at 5:30 pm in Hamilton Hall 305
- International Panel Discussion in April (collaborating with Political Action Committee from CUPE 3906)
- Setting up the graduate module (in collaboration with IGSAG) in Macinsiders website (a student-run online community for MAC students)

#### **4.2.5.2 Business**

- DDSA members are still working on "affiliation with the GSA", they had one social night which was held at the phoenix (social nights are monthly events for PhD students and faculty members of Business department)

#### **4.2.5.3 Engineering**

##### **EGS news:**

- Call for nominations for new representatives from engineering departments.
- The annual general meeting was held in end of January and 90 students voted for changes in the by-laws.

##### **Travel Awards:**

- EGS is forming a committee to manage travel awards, guidelines will be formed to process the applications. The guidelines will follow the GSA rules.

#### **4.2.5.4 Health Sciences**

- In collaboration with HSGSF, have scheduled to hold "bubble soccer" event on March 16<sup>th</sup>. Event details will be advertised through department emails and posters.

#### **4.2.5.5 Science**

- Organizing and promoting Science alumni social
- Fri Feb 24<sup>th</sup> 5:30-8:00 pm
- Registration is now open

##### **MOLE (McMaster Open Learning Environment) update**

- There are four courses offered Winter Term 2017
- Elementary Python Programming (9 students), Bioinformatics, Spatial statistics, and Population Growth and Aging
- They will connect with Arun Jacob about the open syllabus project and potential for collaboration

#### **4.2.5.6 Humanities**

- No new business

#### **4.2.5.7 Social Sciences**

- The last Council meeting, she has attended two meetings: The Academic Affairs Committee (as an observer) and the Graduate Student Services Review Committee (GSSRC).

- She has also played a leading role this month in an initiative to establish and grow a Graduate Students' Anti-Poverty Working Group (GSAW) on the McMaster campus. In its infancy, the working group consists of 14 committed members at present. They are also looking to work with other groups on campus, such as OPIRG McMaster and CUPE's Political Action Committee and Equity Action Committee, wherever their interests intersect on specific issues.
- During their first few meetings, the Working Group already brought forward and reached consensus on a number of things related to service user fees (i.e. for timely access to transcripts), other graduate student fees, graduate student payments through MOSAIC and university policies on advertising and renting of space.
- In response to the recent (temporarily suspended) U.S. travel ban on nationals of seven majority Muslim countries, I will also draft language for a letter expressing the Council's opposition to this presidential executive order – emphasizing the hardship it has brought on many international graduate students. Along with other Council members, I will be suggesting actions that can be taken closer to home to help those who have been negatively impacted by the ban, before bringing this letter to Council to pass as a group.”

**Motion to accept all reports and add them to the minutes first by Marguerite, seconded by Lucia, 11 in favour, 1 abstention, motion carried.**

**5.0** *In camera*

**6.0** **FRC faculty budgets (15 mins)**

- Marguerite mentioned that there is a budget of \$600 for each FRC to be spent on FRC events, she noticed that historically this money hasn't been used. She recommended either remove the budget line and reallocate the funds toward another budget line, or decrease the amount. Natalie highlighted that historically, FRC Engineering, FRC Science, and FRC International have been using their full FRC funds for their FRC events. Ashley added that in the past it was well utilized, and some of the FRCs have used their full amount, and requested to add more money to this budget line. However, for the past 2 years, the full amount hasn't been used. The exact amount spent till Jan 31, 2017 is \$1000 from the \$4000 budget. This is for the current fiscal year ending May 2017.
- Marguerite mentioned that \$600 is a lot for each FRC, Ashley explained that International FRC for example, have an event at least once every month, usually a couple, also some of the money is used to travel back and forth for immigration seminars, to bring information back to international students. Sara added that sometimes SAM rent a space within the university premises and that cost big chunk of the FRC money, in addition, the only way to have students to attend these events is to offer food and beverages.
- Curran asked what sort of events this amount can be used for? Ashley gave an example: IGSA usually use their FRC funds for social events with CUPE, and SGS. They purchase food and beverages to allow a setting to discuss international students' issues or socialize. Another example; SAM and Engineering have a lot of social events with in their faculties. Sara added that they are having alumni social night coming up, and EGS also does programming workshops, in which FRC funds is used toward these events. Ashley highlighted the main goal from FRC funding events is to have students reach to the council table through their FRCs and vice versa.

- Ashley suggested to have a pool of money in which each FRC can have a limit of \$400, shall they request to exceed this amount they have to go back to council to get it.
- Ashley mentioned that if the council members are not interested in reducing the money, she recommended to reallocate the money in case it is not used to sponsor events or travel scholarships.

**Motion to have all unused funds for the FRC faculty budget to be reallocated to travel scholarship as of the end of this fiscal year first by Marguerite seconded by Samira, 10 in favour, 2 abstention motion carried.**

## **7.0 Budget approval**

### **6.1 Phoenix (10 min)**

- Ashley mentioned that the high level things to look at in the Phoenix budget, is that it has been steadily declining in the amount of revenue it had. The facility was open in 2012 at the current location the revenue was \$1.7 million, and it steadily went down by 100 K every year, forecasting based on this information the revenue will be 1.4 million.
- Theoretically to reach the same revenue, the Phoenix need proper site management, which is currently in place, the GSA is hoping to have 53 K profit of the Phoenix. Historically, the Phoenix haven't done so well in the last few years. The GSA have to consider that some of the costs have to go back to the Phoenix for capital costs, example, replacing chairs, fridges...etc. This all were reflected in the GSA budget, some money comes back to this house and put directly into programming, and the hope one day to get the Phoenix to be able to fund a lot more of the GSA services.

### **6.2 GSA (OMBUDS, FRC, etc) (20 mins)**

- Megan mentioned that looking into 2017/2018 column there is an increased of a few things to accommodate the increase cost like wages and salaries, more money was allocated into social events, travel expenses...etc. Also an increase in the insurance policy which is required by the university.
- The current CPI is 1.8%, if the budget calculated according to this increase, there will be a 22 K deficit, the GSA can't sustain such a loss on the long term.
- The GSA do have a better money in the GSA operating account, however, considering the Phoenix requirements, it is not something the GSA should use, as there are account payable, debit outstanding, and a money owed to the GSA side and to the university.
- In order to balance the budget some services and expenses will be cut from the budget, in addition, some of these expenses can't be reduced any further. However, to avoid that, the GSA need to increase above CPI. The GSA have to go to membership to allow the current increase. The proposed increase is 4%, nevertheless, this increase will not balance the budget, but it will make a smaller deficit, and allow the GSA to get a little bit high on some of the expenses.
- Marguerite mentioned that she has read couple of the board minutes, and there was a reference to a surplus in the GSA account. Megan explain that the surplus is in the GSA bank account, although, the deficit is for one-year budget. Marguerite asked what does the GSA have in the bank account? Is it a surplus or a deficit, and how much? Megan explained that it is difficult to

say at this moment because there are fees that will count out of that bank account shortly. There are 202 k cash in the bank account, this is amount is used for the GSA operating expenses, and that can go up and down depend on the time. Marguerite asked if the organization can say whether they have a surplus or deficit in general? Ashley explained that it is a positive position in the bank account, and the reason to why we keep a positive position is because, if the university release late fees the GSA will stop to pay insurance, health and dental fees, ...etc. That is why it is important to always keep some sort of positive position in the bank account, to deal with these sort of expenses. In addition, depending on the Phoenix situation and owning an entity which deals with money and employees, as an organization it is a responsibility to have some money in a positive position that could be used in emergency situation.

- Curran asked if there is a projection of where the GSA budget will stand at the end of the fiscal year? Ashley mentioned that it is expected that a lot of the budget items should be exactly where we expected, for example, the insurance item shall be the same as before. However, some items the GSA have no control over, for example, the FRC funding or social events.
- Curran asked if there is month to month performance, to give a sense where the Phoenix and the GSA stands from the projected budget? Ashley added there is a finance meeting every month and a bookkeeper that is on staff, they are work with him to try to forecast the expenses. So this year current position from positive 4k from the phoenix, that was tracked month to month to show exactly what the expenditure are, however, this is a very interesting fees, for example, this summer the Phoenix lost money, but historically it didn't. If you looked in every single month we still can't give a number, as for example; March is a great month for the Phoenix, but if March goes to more a winter climate, the Phoenix will lose money.
- Colette asked what are the social events income? Ashley replied that if the VP External have a social event the GSA try and cover as much cost as possible. Colette asked if the 5k for the GSA grad students initiatives is for this fiscal year, Ashley mentioned that so far the GSA received 5k from SGS, however, for the incoming Light up the night event SGS will give 2 k contribution, it is a preplanned initiative, it is usually based on the year, however, there are no agreement with SGS, it is an informal relationship to contribute some money.
- Colette asked if SGS will contribute clubs funding expenses, and shall the GSA expect to receive \$5000 from SGS? Ashley replied that the GSA hope to receive this amount which is a part of grad students' initiatives fund. The GSA display only \$4500 as a budget, this amount includes the club admin salary, and \$100 seed money for each club, starting the new fiscal there will be some increases as the club administrator will be an employee and GSA will have to pay CPP, WSIB, and EI, she added club insurance isn't included in this amount, it is paid from a different budget line. Natalie added the GSA also have to increase club budget in case the number of clubs increases.
- Colette asked about meeting expenses and the photocopier service contract? Ashley explained that the budget is a snapshot of 6 months, the GSA budget high for these lines, however, up till now the GSA is paying less, as the photocopy contract rent payment for instant, is not until another 3 months. Same for meeting expenses, when the GSA get billed from the Phoenix for meals and services, it is captured in a different time.

**Motion to approve the budget first by Sara seconded by Lucia 11 in favour 1 abstention, motion carried.**

- Ashley mentioned that OMBUDS is budgeted 50-50 from the University and MSU, the MSU currently pay \$62000, and levy the fee from students to pay for OMBUDS. The GSA doesn't levy a fee to students and don't contribute to OMBUDS, but it is being utilized by Grad students.
- OMBUDS is looking for some sort of financial contribution to allow grad students to be part of OMBUDS, in saying that this particular year, if the council is interested, some money could be taken from sponsor activities budget, or making some sort of in time donation, with the understanding we get service in return, this will be discussed with the MSU to understand how this will look like, weather that will be services of hours or sitting on the management committee. Going forward the GSA have to come up with a formal proposal if the council is interested to continue with OMBUDS.
- Ashley asked the council if they think that grad students need access to OMBUDS and is it useful to pay for? Natalie mentioned that grad students use OMBUDS, however, there is a mess on how they deal with grad students. They don't receive the type of help they are expected to receive, she added most grad students visit OMBUDS with problems with their supervisors, however, OMBUDS are not equipped to deal with it, so if the GSA going to contribute money we need to know what sort of services they will be able to provide the grad students regarding the supervisors-students' problem.
- Ashley mentioned that the reason OMBUDS came to the GSA is because they would like to potentially start a pilot program of peer to peer conflict resolution, which is mainly down with supervisory relationships, in which grad students will be receiving training on how they deal with conflict situations with their supervisors. She added that OMBUDS president noted the GSA doesn't pay anything and they are not mandated to help graduate students.
- Colette highlighted that, OMBUDS speak to peer to peer initiative. The GSA are willing to be part of this project and communicate financially, however, OMBUDS have to be more concrete on how they will deal with grad students. It is a good initiative she suggested to contribute if the GSA have a room in the budget. Natalie added that OMBUDS is being paid by the university and can be discounted entirely free, however, it is the problem of the equation of who pays how much and what they should get in return. She added that the GSA can request a list from OMBUDS about what will grad students gets in return if the GSA contributed.
- Marguerite mentioned that the university should have OMBUDS as a core element of the institution in which tuitions pay for, she suggested to look into other universities. Rodrigo explained that some university got rid of OMBUDS. As there are other places students can go to, for example; if it human rights it goes to human rights office.... etc.
- The council agreed that OMBUDS discussion goes to ACC.

#### **8.0 Referendums – Sobi, HSR, GSA fee, DBAC, legal, EAP (employee assistance program)- Health and Dental, OGSA (35 mins)**

- Sobi: Colette mentioned that the offer Sobi gave the GSA is, students to pay \$30 per year, this was discussed at the GSSRC and students seemed not interested into this service. Sobi proposed to issue a survey to know grad students their interest, since the time is very limited, this will be postponed to next academic year.
- HSR: Colette highlighted that the bus passes fees will be increased by next September. GSA is still negotiating with HSR, to see what is in it for students. The GSSRC meeting is scheduled

next week to discuss the same topics and discuss the administration of passes. The referendum question will either be on April or May.

- Hanie asked if the referendum result for HSR is No, what will happen? Ashley replied that there will be no bus passes for grad students. She added the GSA currently in a position where the under graduate voted in HSR fee increase, because of that the HSR send the GSA a data mentioning students haven't been being paying equal share, and so they offered a similar deal in which we grad students will pay more, as they are considered in campus during the summer. Currently the GSA is negotiating with HSR to try and get the most aggressive rate. Colette added she thinks the HSR are open to suggestion otherwise they will lose hundreds of thousands. Curran asked what is the proposed HSR fee increase? Ashley answered that the increase is an aggressive increase, currently students are paying \$198.60 annually, they are proposing a step in increase over three years to \$ 232.70 annually, however this number started at \$330 and was decreased to \$232.70 after negotiation. The undergraduate students pay less as they are only charged for 8 months at the same rate. Ashley explained the equation is we take a percentage of the adult monthly bus pass, so 210% is the current agreement of \$94.60, next year the adult bus pass is going to increase to \$101. So the proposal came from 300% to 225% and that will get stepped in. She added if any council member is interested to talk about it, have any question she is open to ideas.
- DEBAC: Colette explained that the undergrad voted against the fee increase. The GSA will be in contact with the university and see what is the impact on grad students and how will negotiate around the fee increase as it is related to Athletic recreation and Puls membership. In the meantime, the GSA planning to ask the university if they can guarantee there is no fee increase on Puls. Ashley added the MSU confirmed that this year they will not be bringing back DEBAC or Sobi.
- Legal: Colette mentioned that Studentcare (health and dental provider) offered a legal expense coverage for extra \$28 per academic year, this is going to be bring to a referendum.
- EAP – Health and Dental: Colette mentioned that after discussing the referendum question during the GSSRC meetings the proposed questions are as follows:
  - Do you want to pay \$101.85 (\$33.95/term) per annum for access to mental health services at the student wellness center? Yes/No,
  - Do you want to pay up to \$10 per annum for student assistance plan through student care? Yes/No.
- Ashley explained if students went for student assisting plan, students will be getting a short term care option, it would be allotted amount of session to deal with issues, however, it isn't a long term care option, students can't call them back with the same issue, they can't deal with one year any sort of guidance or consulting. It is 24 hours access with 150 different languages, in phone, email, or video call, they don't have in persons options, 100% coverage.
- CUPE as noted they did bargain for student assistant plan; their plan does have in meet in person portion. The reason it says up to \$10, is because that isn't quite finalized yet. Colette added that they added more nurses for grad students, they proposed a grad only group counselling session, if the number of student' criteria is met. The wait time is from 3 - 4 minutes for emergency appointment, however for regular one is between 3 - 4 weeks. Ashley added that the GSA need to get additional information regarding how long they deal with issues like, anorexia and depression.

- Angela mentioned that there should be more explanation if the referendum questions as students will go for the cheaper plan. Ashley mentioned that was discussed at the GSSRC, some of the members felt that this will bias students. Magritte added that the survey results shows that grad students are willing to pay, however, a certain amount. She suggested having a brief very neutral information about each question, i.e. mentioning how to access the service and time.
- Ashley mentioned the questions can be pushed back to GSSRC for the wording discussion. She added this wording can be approved at the council with the caveat that GSSRC approves a statement to attached at the beginning of it.
- Natalie added with these 2 questions students have the option to go for both, she suggested to put as option 1, 2, option 3 you can go for both, and option 4 neither. Ashley mentioned this was discussed during the GSSRC meetings, members felt that it will complicated the situation and will confuse students.
- Sara recommended changing the wording to pay additional fee instead of the total amount.
- The Council agreed to change the wording of the first question to **“pay an additional \$23.86 per term (\$ 71.58 per annum) for access in person mental health services at McMaster SWC?”**
- The Council agreed to change the wording of the second question to **“Do you want to pay a new fee up to \$10 per annum for student assistance plan through Studentcare which provide remote mental health services? Yes/ No”**.
- Natalie recommended not comparing the two plans, instead list out what each one provide, no need to be in a paragraph form, they also should be a clear sentence advising students if they say yes to both they are combining both plan.
- Hanie mentioned that students will probably choose the cheapest option. Ashley mentioned that there will be a campaign about the Yes side and No side, and will explain what happen historically, and the discussion around the question fundamental.
- Ashley suggested if the Council agree to the wording and the referendum question, the next part is to circulate the wording during the next 5 days as this how long the GSA have to publish the actual question, and the brief summary can be attached later.
- The Council agreed to have the 2 referendum question on the same page along with the information on each.

**Motion to have these 2 question go to a referendum on condition that the informational infographic will be sent to Council with the next 5 business days, and subject to an email vote that information go out as is first by Colette seconded by Lucia, 11 in favour, 1 opposed motion carried.**

- OGSA: Angela mentioned she met with OGSA ED, he requested from the GSA to send one item in which he can provide. ACC will decide for a referendum for OGSA as currently the GSA pay \$5000 to OGSA from the GSA operational budget, and the question whether the OGSA levy a fee from student or not.
  - Natalie suggested that ACC shall meet every week to discuss OGSA and propose the referendum question, in case ACC decide to opt out of OGSA, stay at \$5000, or bring in the fee model. And send their recommendation to Council. In addition, checking with Luke whether is it possible to stay with OGSA at the \$5000. This should be brought to next Council meeting in March.

## 9.0 Call AGM date (5 mins)

- Council members suggested to have the AGM on March 23 of March at 5 pm and Council meeting at 4:30 pm.

**Motion to call AGM date on March 23 at 5 pm and a Council meeting at 4:30 pm first by Lucia, seconded by Hanie, all in favour, motion carried**

## 10.0 Proposed bylaw changes (70 mins)

- Natalie mentioned that the proposed Bylaws changes was circulated to Council members last week. Ashley commented about **Section 5 of Article IV: Membership fees adjusted for Inflation**, the proposal by the Bylaws committee is to allow the GSA to go above CPI, however, if the council desire to have an increase to membership fee above CPI, it must go through a vote at the AGM or Special Meeting and the fee increase will expire after 12 months, upon expiration, the fees return to the base year inclusive of subsequent yearly CPI increase.
- Marguerite asked why the wording of up to 4% part is not in the proposed change? Ashley answered that the idea of the up to 4% fee increase wasn't endorsed at the Bylaws committee meeting. Marguerite added that if there is a 25% increase at the AGM that going to be objectionable, and should be referendum, however, for the 4% it makes sense. Natalie mentioned that they had a discussion during the Bylaws meeting on the same subject, and members agreed that they don't want the increase to be tied to 4%. She added if the concern is to tie the increase to an amount that could be discussed at the Council, however, their bigger concern is that it will hurt back and the GSA budget will not carry on with the base amount.
- Ashley mentioned that the language their concern around is the resetting every 12 month. In saying, the 4% increase passes, next year Sep to Aug the 4% is collected in September and that is, this proposal states clear 4% after 1 year and start over with CPI and if the GSA need any other increase, this should be have to go AGM or special meeting, so it clearing the base and any additional funds will go above that base, but this suggestion to clear it and start over does reduce what is collected in future year. The current language states increases come to the Council table to decide on. So if the Council decide the increase is too high it has to go to a referendum or whatever the peoples discussing Bylaws words around to say the notion of referendum fatigue, so having a referendum every single year to increase fee is going to bring apathy. This fee can be put to AGM, because the AGM is the membership body to make decision. She added the rational when creating budget and levy a fee, it is done based on inflations. If the fee reverted back that affects the whole budget expenses.
- Natalie mentioned the current model proposed by the Bylaws Committee is
  - 2017/2018 increase 4% which is 4\$ -104 fees for 2017/2018
  - 2018/2019 reset to 1.8% \$1.8 - \$101.8 fees for 2018/2019
- Ashley gave an example the GSA increase the budget to can continue with club's initiative, however, if the fee is reverted back to the proposed model, we will need to fire the club administrator as the GSA will not have the funding that is in place for the initiative.
- Marguerite mentioned that the current proposed model is to be used for emergency measures. It is not supposed to be for structural budget, the GSA have to work with what budget they currently have. Ashley mentioned that the problem is currently the GSA fee is one of the lowest

in Canada, unfortunately some of the GSA structure items will not be covered. Rodrigo added that resting will cause a deficit to the budget, he suggested to have the 4% increase year after year. Ashley suggested to take out expiry date for the increase, and adding any increase above CPI can go to a referendum instead of AGM. Ashley mentioned that CPI isn't an emergency increase, the GSA cost year over year is increasing more than 1.8 %, so it isn't an emergency funds, it's a different basket of goods, a real structure, for instant, employees contract is increasing more than 1.8%, photocopier increasing more than 1.8% it is a year after year inflation and happen in each organization.

- Curran suggested to have this in a referendum, Ashley mentioned that the whole point of the proposed bylaws was the referendum fatigue, which is we have a referendum every single year to increase fees. Natalie gave an example if the GSA want to carry on with clubs, using the proposed model and revert back then that will build a deficit over time.
- Colette asked if the GSA assuming the Phoenix will not be sustainable? Ashley replied that we can't bank on that, as this not financial planning. Colette asked if the GSA increase fee above CPI through the AGM, but outside CPI is through a referendum, Ashley mentioned that this wasn't the essence of the question. She explained anything with the CPI doesn't go to any thing, however, increase above CPI will go to AGM or special meeting. Natalie added anything above CPI and want to become the new base fee in future that is reason for 3<sup>rd</sup> clause.
- Ashley added the discussion she had with Megan around the financial part is that if you build an increase and then cut your budget there is no way to sustain the model when the GSA basket of goods isn't CPI basket.
- Marguerite suggested that to add the fees return to the base year inclusive of that year and subsequently CPI increases. Ashley recommended to take the 12 months' expiration instead to avoid redundancy.
- Ashley mentioned that if a reverse is done in any budget, that will result in avoiding to sustain the organization and handcuffs your limit. For example, UBC increased according CPI every year, then after a number of years they go to membership for 20% increase because they missed up previous years, as they weren't able to sustain that model.
- Ashley mentioned that if the Council agreed to striking the expiration to not exceed 12 months, what will happen that, the AGM can do up to X amount and they can't increase for X years and above X% goes to referendum.
- Natalie explained the current model is an automatic increase according CPI every year without going to AGM or referendum.
- The Council agreed to leave the current language of **Section 5, Article IV: Membership**, and add "fee increase up to 4% to be approved at AGM or Special Meeting, anything above 4% goes to a referendum".
- **Section 5 of article XXIII, Nominations for General Elections**. Addition of Faculty Representatives, and Each nominee may be nominated to not more than one position.
- **Section 2 article VIII: General Meeting**. Addition of CRO nor the executive Officers or qualified delegate". Removing "by the CRO, pursuant to Article XII, section 3 (c)"
- **Section 6 article VIII: Proxies**. Adding" After adjournment of the General Meeting"
- **Section 1 article VI: FRCs**. Adding the following sentences
  - In addition, Faculty Representatives are required to sit on at least one GSA committee during their term in office

- **Section 7 article VI**: Term of FRCs. Adding “Prior taking office FRCs required to sign FRC consent to act”.
- **Article VIII** new amendment is” Members may overturn any resolution passed by the Board”. Natalie explained that, currently the Board have the power and council can overturn transaction. The proposed Bylaws amendment is that at the AGM members can overturn the board decision. Council can overturn resolution to Board by 2/3 majority. This will be allowing the AGM to overturn the Board by 2/3 majority. In order for that to happen quorum would be 5% rather than 1%. Ashley added the decision will be binding, so as a Board if they decide to fire someone the director can be held liable along with the cooperation. By giving the AGM the ability of overturning the Board decision then the entire membership is responsible for that decision of those present at the AGM, in saying, all present members can get sued if the decision is challenged, it is all about risk tolerance.

**Motion to approve the proposed bylaws changes and bring it to AGM first by Angela, seconded by Curran, all in favour, motion carried.**

**11.0 Standing resolution – Merging Health and Dental committee with GSSRC (10 mins)**

- Ashley mentioned that the GSSRC committee approved \$100 per visit for counselling up to \$400 a year, and the cost is \$1.31 per students will be deducted from the Health and Dental reserve fund. This will not be given to students as a premium increase.

**Motion to increase the current coverage of psychologist to \$100 per visit up to \$400 per year, for a fee increase of \$1.31 which will be taken health and dental reserve a month, first by Colette, seconded by Marguerite, all in favour. Motion carried.**

- Colette mentioned that most of the health and dental discussion took place at GSSRC meetings, she suggesting merging the 2 committees.

**Motion to merge GSSRC along with Health and Dental, and call it GHSSRC first by Colette seconded by Marguerite all in favour, motion carried.**

**12.0 GSA handbook (2 mins)**

- Comments will be sent to the VP Internal.

**13.0 Endorsement of Peer-to-peer conflict resolution program (1 mins)**

- Item tabled for next agenda.

**14.0 Sponsorship policy – Form and handbook (2 mins)**

- Comments will be sent to the VP Internal.

**15.0 Approval of new clubs (2 mins)**

- Colette mentioned that Anti-poverty working groups requested to be recognized by the GSA. The group is committed to raising awareness and produce practical knowledge of graduate student poverty issues with a university-centric focus. The Club wants to ensure that policies at McMaster around fees, payment schedules and other areas account for these realities and do not exacerbate them.

**Motion to approve GSAW first by Colette, seconded by Angela, all in favour motion carried.**

**16.0 Immigration ban- letter (1 mins)**

- This will be worked on internally, and be brought back to next council meeting

**17.0 Timely access to transcripts (4 mins)**

- Marguerite mentioned that this was brought up at a Graduate Students' Anti-poverty Working Group meeting. It costs \$15 per transcript to get transcripts printed out on the same day at the registrar's office, despite the fact that it is a simple operation to locate and print out transcripts on MOSAIC. She spoke to the Registrar's Office about this, and there did not seem to be any reason to have the wait of 3 business days for those who did not pay the \$15 per transcript. Thus, it seems like it may be a good idea to recommend that they get rid of this fee – particularly considering that inter-departmental mail time can add a week or more to the 3 business days for graduate students applying for scholarships.
- Ashley suggested that this can be discussed at the ACC, in addition to meeting with SGS and office of the registrar to start a discussion around eliminating the fee.

**18.0 University policies on external summer job recruitment (4 mins)**

- Marguerite highlighted that some companies such as Property Stars continue to be granted space in MUSC to recruit for summer work. The main problem with Property Stars is that they exploit a false “independent contractor” model to pay employees less than minimum wage for hours worked. She was recruited for this work one summer because she mistakenly thought that McMaster would not sanction a company that is operating dishonestly. This is essentially a scam and McMaster should not be allowing them to recruit students on-campus.
- Ashley mentioned that she contacted the director of MUSC, she said MUSC is separate from the University, they have policy of who can book, however, more the term of the policy speaks to non-compete. She advised us to talk to SOCKS regarding that issue. Ashley recommended to discuss this item further at ACC, in addition to follow up with SOCKS.

**19.0 New business**

**20.0 Adjournment**

**Motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:04 pm first by Lucia, seconded by Sara, all in favour, motion carried.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Lucia Lee, VP External

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Recorder

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date