

Graduate Students Association of McMaster University

Council Meeting

Monday, March 27th, 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), Colette Nyirakamana (VP Services), Samira Farivar (FRC Business), Curran Egan (FRC Humanities), Kara Tsang (GSA CRO), Vi Dang (International Representative), Tim Van Boxel (Incoming GSA President), Alexander Nielsen (Senator Science), Firat Sayin (FRC Business), Maleeha Qazi (FRC Health Science), Arun Jacob (FRC Social Science)

Regrets: Johnathan Tran (FRC Science), Hanie Yousefi (FRC Engineering)

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

1.0 **Call to Order** at 6:02 p.m.

2.0 **Approval of the agenda (2 min)**

Motion to give Tim speaking rights but not voting rights, first by Sara, seconded by Curran, 13 in favour, 1 opposed, motion carried.

Motion to accept the Agenda for March 27th, 2017 first by Curran, seconded by Arun, all in favour motion carried.

3.0 **Approval of the Minutes from previous Council meeting (2 min)**

Motion to approve Minutes from the Council meeting of February 22nd and February 28th, 2017, first by Firat, seconded by Lucia, 11 in favour, 3 abstentions, motion carried.

4.0 **Reports (Consent agenda) (2 min)**

- Arun suggested for the GSA to have a form on the website in which students can access if they have issues and send anonymous, as communicating through the website will be more effective and might make people more comfortable to send comments. Arun will follow up with Lucia and send her information in this regards.

4.1 Reports from the Board

4.1.1 President's Report

4.1.1.1 Board of Directors

- BOD discussed the pending Phoenix lease agreement and set up a lease review committee. The BOD also reviewed the GSA and Phoenix financials and budgets. They also recommended that the GSA continue with KPMG as the auditors for the upcoming year.

4.1.1.2 Bylaws Committee

- No new business.

4.1.2 Senate Report

- No report received.

4.1.3 Board of Governor's Report

Rodrigo sent the following report:

- The Vice-President (Research), Robert Baker, presented an outline of what the Office of the VP Research will be doing this upcoming year. This includes the creation of a strategic plan for research at McMaster. A push is for researchers to think about commercialization and the support his office can give to these faculty members.
- The adoption of the Okanagan Charter. This charter commits the university to being an institution that prioritizes the health and well-being of its students, staff, faculty and broader community. While many initiatives are already ongoing regarding this manner, this charter will push many other units in the university to align their goals with those of the charter.
- The adoption of the terms of reference for the new administrator Associate Vice-President (Equity and Inclusion). He was the most vocal about this position, mostly due to the fact that he has found the rhetoric of diversity and inclusion at McMaster focused on empowering white women and the lens of race and colour being completely erased. He talked about the many macroaggressions he has experienced, both by graduate students and by faculty/staff, to illuminate the point that McMaster has a long way to go regarding this issue. While nothing necessarily changed regarding the terms of reference for this position, the rest of the board echoed that a lot more support and attention needs to be brought forth in this issue. He will update the council as work surrounding this area continues.

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

4.2.1 VP Administration Reports

4.2.1.1 Finance Committee

Megan Sent the following report:

- The finance committee will be meeting on April 11th as they are waiting until after the rush around the AGM meeting (preparing documents and reports) to meet. The bookkeeper has been very busy as it is tax season for his clients, she mentioned. As such he has been in the office for minimal hours.

4.2.1.2 Phoenix Executive Committee

- The next PEC meeting will be on April 11th.

4.2.2 VP External Reports

4.2.2.1 Events and Trips Planning Committee

- No report received.

4.2.2.2 Students Issues Action Committee

- No report received.

4.2.3 VP Internal Reports

4.2.3.1 Academic Affairs Committee

Angela sent the following report:

- The AAC met Tuesday March 21st to discuss the OGSA and ombudsman issue.
- It seems as though, at this point the recommendation is to decline further involvement in the OGSA.
- The representative has not been able to provide her with any information with regards to what they have accomplished. She was pushing for some more advocacy from them, but felt at this time that they did not have enough wins for us to continue as members.
- A recommendation on how to proceed will be presented to council.
- *Graduate council* met Tuesday March 21st as well.

Other notes:

- Graduate Students are being represented on the MSU Valedictorian selection committee – one from each faculty.
- The Discrimination and Sexual Harassment policy is continuing along in its discussions and will be completed within the next month. Once this is done, she can send a final review for council.
 - A recommendation was made to the GSA to review our discrimination and harassment policy
- The Light Up the Night event is scheduled for April 6th. The GSA is putting money towards this event. The event has scheduled the entertainment and speaker (which is now up on the website), and the hope of the event is to build community.
- Chemistry Graduate Students have requested \$500 in funding for a Regional Chemistry Info Session – she recommend the GSA commit to the funding and as such we will proceed forward doing so.

4.2.4 VP Services Reports

4.2.4.1 Graduate Student Services Review Committee

Colette sent the following report:

- The committee met twice this month to finalize the informational document that explains the “why” of the mental health referendum. The document is finalized and available on the GSA website alongside other information from the University and StudentCare. The second meeting was aimed at discussing the questions related to the CAFs agreements, DBAC fees, HSR bus pass agreement and the reimbursement of a scooter for a graduate student.

- CAFs agreements: Sean Van Koughnett the AVP Student affairs attended the meeting. He explained that CAFs fees are increased by CPI (1.8% this year). Due to the fact that wages and costs increase above CPI, fees levied on graduate students are not equal to the normal costs of business (wages and other costs of providing these services). Without an increase that is equal to the costs of providing services, the University will have to take the decision of cutting some services again in the future (as a deficit will build). If keeping this model of fee increasing only by CPI it will have a negative impact on a long run (i.e. a huge fee increase 10 years from now), to avoid the negative long term effects, the university is proposing to the GSA the following points:
 - to increase fees following the costs of providing services and allowing Council to vote on the fee increase above CPI (up to 4%) for services governed by the CAF agreement without calling a referendum every year for this.
 - Structure: having a Graduate Students Services Advisory Committee (GSSAC) that meets with the university regarding student services and fees and acts as an advisory committee to Council in terms of the fee increase and services improvement (same as what is recommended in the 2016 agreement, point no.3).
- The committee agreed with Sean’s explanation as it seems reasonable and realistic. They recommend these actions:
- The GSS Advisory Committee membership and its subcommittee could come from the GHSSRC committee and Council members who have a better awareness of services and fees discussed (as it might have been discussed during council or GSSRC meetings prior to bringing the points to the GHSSAC) and who can follow up easily.
- Allowing Council to approve a fee increase on this specific matter by creating a special provision in the by-law that specifies which services are subject to this special decision
- Asking Council to fix a threshold of the percentage of fee increase above CPI in this specific situation. Not necessary the 4% proposed by University. This can be 2.5% for instance.
- HSR bus pass agreement: HSR is proposing these fees for a 3 years’ agreement with the GSA.

	The rate based on the monthly adult bus pass	Total	PRESTO Integration (\$5 for Presto)
2017/2018	225%	\$227.70	\$232.70
2018/2019	239%	\$252.38	\$257.38
2019/2020	254%	\$279.40	\$284.40

- If the question is brought to a referendum, the memo explaining the agreement, services and fees must include the reason why HSR is proposing a fee increase.

4.2.4.2 GSA Summer Leagues Committee

- The committee met to formalize the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) that describe how leagues are run. They also started advertising the new season and recruiting players and teams.

4.2.5 FRC reports

4.2.5.1 International

Vi sent the following report:

- Reschedule International craft night due to the snow storm last week (collaborating with CUPE International Officer)
- Immigration seminar with Elizabeth Long on March 30 at 5:30 pm in Hamilton Hall 305 (168 people registered so far)
- International Panel Discussion in April (collaborating with Political Action Committee from CUPE 3906)

4.2.5.2 Business

Samira & Firat sent the following report:

- During the past month, DDSA committee has held one social night at phoenix and one lunch and learn talk at DSB. There will be an event for Business PhD students called research day, in which students and faculty members of DSB are going to have research related talks. The event will be held in late April.

4.2.5.3 Engineering

Hanie and Zaher sent the following report:

- EGS added 6 new members to its council. Now there are three members sitting on each departments' chair
- EGS will have an event in Phoenix for April. Details to come
- EGS wants to ask GSA about space to use for its website data storage
- EGS will have \$20000 to give out for travel awards, which is funded by the department of Engineering.

4.2.5.4 Health Sciences

- No report received.

4.2.5.5 Science

Sara and Jonathan sent the following report:

- **Open Access Workshop Collaboration with OOO Canada Research Network.** Will be held on March 28th at 4PM. This will be an interactive workshop to discuss the benefits of making your scholarly work open access along with the steps needed to do so. Tips on how to make your work compliant with the Tri-Agency Open Access Policy will also be provided.
- **Industry Link Collaboration with Health Sciences.** Plan to hold an inter-departmental career day catered for the health science industry. SAM would share resources for running the event. The purpose is to bridge the gap between the health science industry and academia.
- **SAM AGM/elections.** Will take place on April 18th at 4PM. An info session to promote election and position roles will be held on April 4th. Contact information for incoming FRC science will be provided when confirmed.

4.2.5.6 Humanities

- No new business.

4.2.5.7 Social Sciences

Marguerite sent the following report:

- This past month she has continued to be active on the GSSRC, and has held many discussions with those in the faculty on the upcoming referendum. The Graduate Students' Anti-Poverty Working Group (GSAW) has held several meetings, after being approved as an official club at the last Council meeting. In addition to taking positions on campus-related matters -- particularly regarding fees -- they are planning to do a "social audit" of the university and potentially host a speaker in October of next year. She also has been in touch with student lobby groups such as the CFS, to discuss a particular focus of lobbying for the student movement: For the Ontario government to dedicate a portion of the \$1.9 billion federal transfer for mental health to be allocated directly to mental health services on-campus -- instead of letting universities themselves manage the funds for the public interest (since this has not gone well at universities like McMaster).
- In other news, graduate students in my faculty continue to experience payment inconsistencies and mistakes through MOSAIC. They continue to emphasize the need for the GSA to keep raising this issue with the university.

Motion to accept all the reports first by Marguerite, seconded by Sara, 13 in favour 1 abstention, motion carried.

5.0 In camera

- Tim excused himself from this section

6.0 Referendums – HSR, DBAC (40 mins)

- Colette mentioned that in case council agrees to the HSR proposal, then HSR fee increase will be taken to a referendum. She added the initial proposal was quiet high in terms of bus fee increase, however, this was negotiated during many meeting and the GSSRC believes we have reached a reasonable agreement.
- Ashley explained that the HSR started the initial increase at 320% for the student pass with no step in, this was negotiated down to 225% of the cost of one monthly adult pass, and a stepping in period. The rational for that increase is that they have a deficit caused by some of the student traffic, unfortunately, the HSR is lacking analytics due to the burden of the system in place. However, when implementing Presto the GSA hopes to have a firmer negotiation platform going forward. She added the Presto fee is \$5, in case Presto isn't implemented this year (2017/2018), this fee will not be assessed. Also if students already have Presto card, there is an option were they can go online and link their membership, but this is NOT confirmed as of yet.

- Arun asked if the HSR proposal will allow students to use the Presto system? And will the system store student cards? Ashley mentioned that this is currently under discussion. They discussed to have students' picture on the Presto cards, and students would then need to show their student ID as well, however, they moved away from this idea as the university will not give out student picture for confidentiality reasons. HSR proposed another idea; in which grad students can log each month to Presto to confirm their student status, as they are afraid of fraudulent activities, which is why they need a system in place before students start using Presto. The current discussion is that students will tap the Presto card and shall show their students ID in case the driver asked, as HSR believe this method to be an internal audit system.
- Sara asked why Presto is charging \$5 fee? Ashley explained that there is an administrative component to Presto, currently the GSA is trying to mitigate some of this costs, however, that is the current system in place. The caveat on that is that the university will have to work on how they will assess the fees.
- Ashley explained that the GSA requested an increase in bus services to ensure that students were getting value for their pass; which the HSR agreed improved services would be their mandate and currently for the rate quoted the HSR will have increased service on bus 51 and extended services until 3 a.m. She added that there are things that are still being negotiated in regards of all benefits.
- The council agreed to take 2-minute recess to decide on the referendum question.

Motion to take a 2-minute recess first by Curran, seconded by Lucia, all in favour, motion carried.

- Do you agree to pay the following fees for HSR service over the next 3 years?
 - ✓ 2017/2018 - \$232.70/annual
 - ✓ 2018/2019 - \$257.38/annual
 - ✓ 2019/2020 - \$284.40/annual

N.B: In the absence of approval of the above fees graduate students will not receive an HSR pass at a preferred rate for the three years.

Motion to bring this question to a referendum first by Lucia, seconded by Colette, all in favour motion carried.

DBAC Fees:

- Colette mentioned that this was discussed before. She asked if the council if it was interested in bringing the DBAC fees to a referendum?
- Arun mentioned that the GSA council wasn't consulted at any stage when the university decided to increase the DBAC fees, on the contrary they advised the GSA of the fee increase decision after the discussion ended. He added that the university should have consulted grad students upfront.
- Colette highlighted that the university brought this up to the GSA because the fee increase could affect the Pulse membership for grad students. She explained that this discussion was brought to the GSSRC and the committees opinion is that it is not an urgent case, but rather it

needs further discussion, as fees should be adapted to grad students need. There might not be an appetite for grad students to embark on the project, hence launching a survey to get graduate students' opinion before starting the discussions with the University. The committee decided to keep discussing this topic into next academic year.

- Arun mentioned that this situation is similar to the McMaster Student Center, when grad students opted out and disengaged from sharing in creating the wellness center. Similarly, right now the university is requesting from the GSA to engage in a discussion where the GSA wasn't consulted in the capital investment project in the first place. If grad students would like to access the facility they will be denied, because they didn't pay to it, similar to that of MUSC (space) and the SWC. In order to avoid similar situation like this in the future it would be best that a grad student representative be available in the discussion and before the decisions are made.
- Ashley mentioned that she and Colette met with Sean last Monday. The University noted that they approached the GSA during the fee discussions regarding this 3 year ago, however, students in the council position at that time said they were not interested. Ashley added that she doesn't have any documentation regarding this point of discussion, but nonetheless, consider the scale of the project more consultation would have been appreciated throughout.
- Arun mentioned that undergraduate students have voted no to fee increase, however, the university was able to provide \$10 million for capital and also pay for the entire operational costs, then they voted yes. Ashley mentioned that they asked the same question to Sean, as to how the university "found the money," to fund the project and he said that the university policy is that they are willing to take a loan for capital built, but they will not take a loan for operational (like the operation of the building). She also requested to know the financial requirements in order to bring this to students, for instance, how much Pulse cost would be if students did not vote this in and also how much for renting room and club table would be... etc. She added that in regards to DBAC and moving forward she recommended to GSSRC to understand the implications in case the referendum results is a no, and if this would mean that some services inside this facility can be accessed and or nothing could be accessed by Graduate Students.
- Curran mentioned that in the MSU referendum, both the building fee and the activity fee are being consider together. However, it is in the grad students bester interest to disaggregate those fees. There will be a push back to try and link them, but it is really about weather or not grad students collectively should be subsidizing each other's Pulse user ship, which is different than Pulse membership separately and building a facility. In regards of the activity fee in particular, a fee for use model for access to the Pulse will be much more popular than the ancillary fee model, in which many segments of the graduate population would be against. The reasons are that a lot of grad students spend time off campus, and a lot of others don't use the Pulse for various reasons and don't want to pay this fee. The council should discuss if grad students would be interested in participating in the capital building project, and how to structure fees regarding access to Pulse.
- Marguerite mentioned that grad students need to know what they are getting from the exciting athletics fee, and the capital building fee they already pay for. There have been projects that grad students paid for and students do not know what they are receiving. Students need to know when this fee will expire also. There is no transparency and accountability from the university side in this regard.

- Arun recommend to have a survey about what the grad student population looks like, demographics, and usage, as the council lack analytics about how many students feel and even if they are interested in Pulse membership. He added one of the points to be considered, will TA students agree to have the same changing room with the undergrads? Will they be willing to pay extra to have a separate changing room?
- Sara mentioned that some grad students asked her if they will be voting on this fee increase? Ashley mentioned that the council needs to exercise due diligence before deciding to send DBAC fees to a referendum, as the council simply doesn't have enough information. Curran added that he spoke to one of the campaigner at the MSU table and he said that one of the major points of the activity fee was providing subsidies for the university teams (varsity and non-varsity). He added this point needed to be considered by the council and having access to the facility ad whether or not to buy into access. The council needs to be sure of what grad students will get in return in order to make the right choice. He added in his department there is a lot of push back around the idea of subsidizing competitive teams and athletic facilities.
- The council agreed to revert back this discussion to GSSRC and the committee will communicate with the university further on this top.

7.0 Executive review committee (15 min)

- Natalie highlighted that it is important to have a committee to ensure help the Executives to be on track in their portfolio. She added SGS will be giving a \$2500 bursary per Executives when they finish a 12-month term with the GSA. This was discussed previously with the university by the past president, as Executives do a lot of work within the GSA and aren't paid enough. The committee will decide on how the Executives will be paid this money. They will meet once a month before each council meetings to review what each Executive achieved and there will be a sliding scale of this amount if an executive didn't complete the 12-month term.
- Arun asked if this was functional of leadership and the functional of operational executive and if was the same or not? Natalie mentioned that is not necessarily the same. Arun mentioned that since operational executives are voted in members, then using the term bursary is incorrect, as bursary are considered on a financial need basis. Natalie mentioned that SGS didn't choose a term for it yet.
- Arun mentioned that the composition of this committee should be from the grad students' council and not Executives members. Ashley explained that the Executives members are for a peer review portion of the process, because they work so closely with each other however, FRCs take the rest of the position in the committee. During discussions with SGS this money is considered an award in which SGS is willing to give to the Executives. Arun asked if the money is an award why it needed to be scaled? Natalie explained that some awards can be scaled, for instant; travel awards.
- Ashley mentioned what SGSs only contingency was that they are in their roll for the full 12-months. The review committee will take action if an Executive have not fulfilled his/her duties, it will be up to the committee to propose to council, and to take action to remove the person in the position, hence not serving 12-month.
- The council agreed to table the item to the next agenda until documentation is circulated to council members.

Motion to table this discussion to the next agenda first by Arun, seconded by Curran, all in favour, motion carried.

8.0 Endorsement of Peer-to-peer conflict resolution program (5 mins)

- Ashley mentioned that part of this was discussed last meeting. SGS communicated with the University of Toronto (U of T) regarding peer-peer counselling program for grad students, as they currently have a program in place. For instance, if a grad student has a supervisory issue, they can go and talk to another grad student about the said issue. U of T paired with the OMBUDS office around this in order to execute the program. They will be the body that gives advice in case direction is required. Otherwise training is provided. For instance, how to send claim to ministry of labor.... etc. The main purpose is to help students deal with conflict management and conflict resolution. They are asking for no physical contribution, however, the GSA to support the idea through the GSA avenues.

Motion to endorse the peer to peer support program as a supplement to existing conflict and resolution supports, first by Curran, seconded by Arun, all in favour, motion carried.

9.0. new business (15 min):

OGSA

- Angela mentioned that the council needs to decide whether they want to continue or discontinue membership with OGSA. In case the council decides to continue with OGSA there will be an increase in fees, and if this is the case this will need to be taken to a referendum.
- Marguerite mentioned that OGSA have claimed that they are lobbying to government, however, they are not. In addition, the council has requested a follow up from OGSA ED, and he didn't follow-up with this.
- Angela suggested to discontinue membership with OGSA. Natalie added that the ED mentioned that in case the GSA council decide to discontinue, the GSA will still have the option of staying and charged the \$5000 from the GSA for 1 year, in order for the council to think this subject through and see what they have achieved within the year. And the OGSA can then can levy the fee from grad students the year after, should the council decide this is how they want to proceed forward.
- Arun mentioned that the council needs to know what the grad students are actually getting for their money. Angela added that everything the ED said was planning to do this and will try to do, however, there is no physical achievement, as she understood

Motion to discontinue form membership with the OGSA, but continue to engage in the group and see if progress is made, and if it is, then the council can reconsider their position within the group, first by Angela, seconded by Marguerite 12 in favour, 2 abstentions, motion carried.

AGM

- The last meeting didn't meet quorum. The council agreed to call the AGM meeting on April 11 at 4:30 p.m., and this will be sent to the Board for consideration also.

Motion to call AGM for April 11 at 4:30 p.m. first by Angela, seconded by Maleeha 13 in favour, 1 abstention, motion carried.

Mental health referendum

- Marguerite mentioned that there was some wrong information circulating in regards to the No campaign, especially regarding the hours of counselling provided to students. She explained that the documents communicated to her mentioned 1000 hours of counselling; however, Sean said this information is incorrect as the correct number is 2000. Students have been complaining that the No campaign is misrepresenting information. She added that she has emails and documents that the number communicated to her is 1000 hours. She requested the GSA support her on this as it is not fair for to have incorrect documents presented to her, then students accuse the No campaign of circulating lies.
- Natalie mentioned that the Yes and No campaign are GSA campaign, however, she recommended that the discussion in this regard should be through the CRO and election / appeal committee.

9.0 Adjournment:

Motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:30 p.m., first by Arun, seconded by Curran, all in favour, motion carried.

Item	Action by	Due date
Send information regarding online forms to Lucia	Arun	By next council (April 24)
Review our discrimination and harassment policy	Angela	By next council (April 24)

Lucia Lee, VP External

Date

Recorder

Date