Graduate Students Association of McMaster University

Council Meeting

Monday, November 28th, 2016
GSA Office, East Tower Refectory
6:00 p.m.

Minutes

Attendees: Natalie D’Silva (President), Lucia Lee (VP External), Ashley Ravenscroft (DoO), Jonathan Tran (FRC Science), Sara King Dowling (FRC Science), Marguerite Marlin (FRC Social Science), Arun Jacob (FRC Social Science), Rodrigo Narro (BoG), Colette Nyirakamana (VP Services), Firat Sayin (FRC Business), Maleeha Qazi (FRC Health Science), Vi Dang (International Representative), David Bakhshinyan (FRC Health Science)

Guests: call in; Luke Dotto (OGSA ED)

Regrets: Angela Orasch (VP Internal), Philip Tominac (Senator Engineering), Hanie Yousefi (FRC Engineering), Alexander Nielsen (Senator Science), Samira Farivar (FRC Business), Mohamed Zaher (FRC Engineering), Jitka Bartosova (International Representative), Megan Murphy (VP Administration).

Absent: Mariam Munawar (Senator Business), Sid Nath (Senator Health Science)

1.0 Call to Order at 6:05 PM

2.0 Acceptance of the Agenda

- Natalie recommended moving item number 6 followed by item number 9, item 5, and item number 7 at the beginning of the agenda as some members have to leave early.

Motion to amend the agenda first by Firat, seconded by David, all in favour, motion carried.

Motion to accept the amended agenda first by David, seconded by Firat, all in favour, motion carried.

3.0 Approval of Minutes from the Council meeting of October 26th, 2016

Motion to approve the minutes from October 24th, 2016, first by Firat, seconded by Lucia, 11 in favour, 1 abstention, motion carried.

4.0 Reports from the Board

4.1 President’s Report

4.1.1 Board of Directors

Natalie sent a report mentioning the following:

- The Board inquired about funding groups outside of the clubs umbrella, however, they were concerned regarding liability issues since they wouldn’t fall under the GSA clubs insurance. The Board asked that more research be conducted before allocating funds to groups not considered GSA clubs.

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• Payroll - The past presidents, Fran Lasowski and Talena Rambarran, along with Ashley and Natalie met with Doug Welch and Roger Cauldry to discuss how MOSAIC and payroll has impacted students since its implementation on campus. More importantly we discussed how it would impact students going forward, and the hardships faced by students. They also discussed how international students were affected, since many had to seek loans from friends and family.

• As it currently stands scholarships are divided equally amongst the 3 terms, as are tuition fees, however, ancillary fees are charged as a lump some at the start of the term. Since ancillary fees cannot be divided equally over the 3 terms they suggested changing how scholarships are paid such that students receive a higher amount for the first term (or the term they enroll) so as to be able to pay their tuition in its entirety. Doug and Roger will get back to them on whether it will be operationalized for all grad students. As it currently stands, graduate assistants can change the formula for individual students on a case-by-case basis.

4.1.2 Bylaws Committee
Natalie sent a report mentioning the following:

• The Bylaws committee met in November. A couple of members suggested that the AGM be the main deciding body of the GSA, instead of the Board. Other members voiced concerns regarding liability; they felt that every student at an AGM may not have enough information or the resources to do due diligence and to exercise duty of care. The committee will meet again to discuss this proposal as more information regarding the requested changes were asked from the proponents.

4.2 Senate Report
• No new business

4.3 Board of Governor’s Report
• No new business

5.0 Vice President (VP) and Faculty Representatives to Council (FRC) Reports
5.1 VP Administration Reports
5.1.1 Finance Committee
• No new business

5.1.2 Phoenix Executive Committee
• No new business

5.2 VP External Reports
5.2.1 Events and Trips Planning Committee
• No new business

5.2.2 Students Issues Action Committee
• No new business

5.3 VP Internal Reports
5.3.1 Academic Affairs Committee
Angela sent a report mentioning the following:
• She is working with SGS to create a rubric for the evaluation of GSA awards.
• She is working with Women In Science to connect students with skills to students who want to acquire those skills.
• She is planning January welcome week - soup fest.
• She completed evaluation rubric for FRC funding
• She completed graduate handbook for January welcome week

5.4 VP Services Reports
5.4.1 Graduate Student Services Review Committee (Co-Chaired with President)

Colette sent a report mentioning the following:
• The GSA met twice with the University in order to discuss the reinstatement of mental health (MH) services if graduate students are willing to pay a higher fee.

• The main requests are:
  1. The reinstatement of MH for graduate students as soon as possible.
  2. The organization of group therapy sessions with only other graduate students as mentioned by good majority of students in the survey
     a. This is feasible if the sessions are well advertised and they are able to get a group of more than 6 people.
  3. Continuity of Care- Care for students during the summer, which the university agreed to.
  4. A formal proposal for the new fee increase and MH services provided to students, the material to help students understand the wait times externally and other empirical information and a communication strategy to inform students of their options.
  5. The discontinuity of the divisionary language of “undergrad versus grad students”.

• The University assured us that in the case they reach an agreement with the GSA and GSSRC, a referendum will be organized during the Winter 2017 (January-February instead of April), and will request MSU to allow students the access to Counsellors and Psychologists in May 2017, even though graduate students will start paying SWC fees in September 2017 if the referendum passes.

• The university confirmed that currently graduate students still have access to a psychiatrist outside of emergency situations through a physician referral.

• In terms of costs, the university explained that a fee equivalent to the undergraduate fee for graduate students would contribute approximately $225,000 to the SWC budget. Given projected budget that is almost “break-even”, this would them to hire approximately 2 Full Time Employees (FTE) additional mental health professionals. Each additional FTE adds approximately 1,000 hour of student mental health support per year.

• In the case of reaching a new agreement, the infusion of $500,000.00 that the GSA requested that the University have an amount earmarked for the SWC going forward.

Including graduate students in the administration of CAFs fees
• The GSA asked the University to provide the CAFs agreement of the 1990’s where contributions for Athletics and Recreation and SWC were decided as well as an explanation on how CAFs fees are actually redistributed between A&R and SWC.
• CAFs fees cover A&R and SWC fees. The University makes an administrative decision of allocating a portion of CAFs fees to A&R and SWC so that these departments can serve grad students. Records related to this process would be 20+ years old.

• Graduate students pay $121.08 for students’ services and $36.57 for Sport and Complex Building Fee, which makes a total of $157.65. In addition, 25% of these fees is allocated to SWC.

• To the question of allowing graduate students to decide the re-allocation of CAFs in collaboration with the University, the University replied that this is an administrative decision that might not be practical or effective. In fact, the service is used by a large percentage of grad students. The types of programs and services A&R provides helps keep students mentally and physically healthy, complementary to mental health wellness. Hypothetically, re-allocating a portion of A&R fees would imply raising SWC fees to meet the increased graduate student demand.

Moving forward with GSA MH services initiatives for graduate students

• The GSA can contribute a one-time $10,000 to MH students’ initiative

• In its attempts to concretize the peer support line services project, the GSA approached the MSU in order to discuss the possibility of having a partnership.

• Option 1: the GSA provides a space of working since the MSU has a temporary space now. This proposal was rejected due to the small size of the space.

• Option 2: the GSA gives a financial contribution to the MSU for the administration of the PSL and the training of volunteers. The MSU asked for an amount of $6000-$7000 calculated at a per unit cost of what we believe each student should contribute towards the service in addition to training and operational costs of offering the service to a larger populace.

• Meanwhile, the $10,000 is only available for this year. Knowing that grad students were also in favour of providing a reimbursement package to students who accessed a private counsellor, this option should be considered. In fact, 52.2% were in support of a PSL whereas 62.1% are in favour of the implementation of a one-time mental health bursary of $10,000.

• The GSSRC will look into feasibility, as well as privacy and liability concerns regarding students having to self-identify to the GSA, and the cost associated with training of the staff that will handle these requests.

• The reimbursement criteria should be:

  • Graduate student who is not a CUPE member (TA or RA)
  • Have accessed to a counsellor after the cut of mental health for graduate students between May 2016 and April 2017 (in case of the reinstatement of services in May 2017).

  5.4.2 GSA Summer Leagues Committee

• No new business

  5.4.3 Health & Dental Committee

• The legal services survey was released at the beginning of November

Clubs recognition