Life in Computer and Software applied for recognition and meets all the criteria to be a GSA Clut

5.5 FRC reports

5.5.1 International
Vi sent a report mentioning the following:
• For the month of November, we are working on the following:
• December orientation (in collaboration with SGS) for students that miss the Sept orientation or arrive early for the winter term.
• Setting up the graduate module (in collaboration with IGSAG) in MacInsiders website (a student-run online community for MAC students).

5.5.2 Business
Samira sent a report mentioning the following:
• DDSA committee had discussions in regards with affiliating DDSA with the GSA, and DDSA president and Samira (DDSA vice president) had a meeting with Ashley and Angela on November 9th. Some issues were discussed, which DDSA committee asked for more clarifications (the possible budget expenses and not representing master students in DDSA). They will have another meeting soon to reach an agreement.
• Another thing related to business department she has heard some complaints about the GSA travel award from some PhD students. She also recently had a bad experience. She had applied for this award this semester, but someone else from business department got it; even we both have similar situations regarding the reason of travel and even they wanted to go to a same conference, the difference is that she has no other financial support from our faculty but the other person has. She'd like to raise this concern to the GSA committee; as she believes the decisions regarding this award are not fair.

5.5.3 Engineering
• No new business

5.5.4 Health Sciences
Maleeha mentioned:
• She and David met with Valerie and Nick, Co-Presidents of the HSGSF on November 7th.
• They discussed collaborative events between our two groups.
• HSGSF has a Facebook page running where they will post an FRC profile to introduce us to the FHS grad student community.
• They are organizing an in-door bubble soccer event for end of January 2017, as an ice-breaker event for FHS students.
• They are leads on organizing the event and it will be run in conjunction with HSGSF.
• Ashley asked if HSGSF represents all Health Science students, and if they will be interested in being recognized as a faculty association? Maleeha confirmed that they do; this point was discussed, however, the two Co-Presidents were elected this September, and they are still familiarizing themselves with the process. Ashley recommended connecting them with herself and Colette to be able to help them understand the process.

5.5.5 Science
• No new business

5.5.6 Humanities
• No new business

5.5.7 Social Sciences
Marguerite and Arun sent a report highlighting the following:
• In addition to the continued lack of access to mental health care for graduate students (which continues to be the most discussed issue in the faculty related to GSA operations and fees) the recent move of some social sciences departments and classes to the new social sciences facility is an item of increasing interest and in some cases, concern -- since some are seeing reduced office spaces as a result.
• As the two social sciences representatives, they put together a proposal for an audit committee that would facilitate increased transparency and accountability in the GSA budgetary process. The details and rationale for this committee proposal were shared in an earlier email.
• Arun also discussed and developed an Open Syllabus proposal for the graduate community; he has been doing significant outreach among the undergraduate population on this issue also and it is having an impact at that level already. He also had a meeting with Dr. Ameil Joseph the chair of the PACBIC committee and told him about how the graduate and undergraduate student unions on campus have expressed interest in pursuing this repository. By way of an update, he will be making a presentation about the OpenSyllabusProject.org to the PACBIC planning and priorities committee on Feb 8th.

6.0 In camera

7.0 OGSA:
• Natalie gave a brief introduction about OGSA. The GSA has been with OGSA for 3 years, the membership fee is $5000 per year, which is currently paid by the GSA. The new OGSA ED is proposing a fee increase per student, and therefore removing it from the GSA budget. She highlighted this proposal will have to go to a referendum. The fee will be $2.37 per term (Fall and Winter).
• Luke Dotto is the current Executive Director. He gave a brief description about OGSA “OGSA is a post-secondary education lobbying organization and is supported by seven member associations. OGSA was created with the intent of being the leading advocate for graduate students in Ontario”.
• He added that OGSA has not met this mandate since its inception four years ago. Financial constraints and organizational gaps have made it difficult to be an effective advocate for graduate students. The funding model that supports OGSA is unfair to some of our member associations.
• He is currently part time; he has been brought in as the OGSA Executive Director specifically because he has experience working with student advocacy groups and member associations. He highlighted there is absolutely nothing between OGSA and McMaster that need to be agreed on anytime soon. The reason this was brought to the OGSA Board is because each member association has very specific rules regarding referendum questions regarding how, and when they are to be brought forward.
• Marguerite mentioned that few months back she checked OGSA website, to have an idea what OGSA has done for grad students. She noticed that there is a submission paper for the free budget consultation, however, there is no follow up on the website to show what has been carried out.
Other items she believes are very concerning - the board members of OGSA, have a past President of the McMaster GSA, and the McMaster GSA VP External. Luke explained that the GSA past President is no longer one of OGSA Board members. In addition, the Board is exclusive to one member of every institution, usually the respective VP External (or equivalent) plus the OGSA President.

- Marguerite asked if there is going to be a follow up for the paper submission mentioned on the OGSA website? Luke mentioned that he was working as an OGSA ED for 1 month now, and that he cannot speak to the position of OGSA on the previous budget consultation, however, he has booked a day with the government. He will seek the input of all OGSA members in this consultation. The OGSA website is currently a mess, it is designed for an organization that is able to populate constantly everyday with more information, it will be under construction, to focus on what OGSA is, contact information, and improve the policy position.

- Luke mentioned that his pitch is going to be from last week till next March. He added that his pitch is the value adds of OGSA, and trying to achieve that from now until the referendum comes up. He understands that OGSA haven’t done much, and he is working to fix that.

- He mentioned that he will still devote time to provincial-facing issues like lobbying the provincial government on much needed changes to the Ontario Tuition Framework, for example, changing the 10-hour rule on graduate student employment on-campus. His primary focus during his term will be to be a resource for OGSA member associations to help them build capacity at their respective organizations, for example, provide Board training, write bylaws, etc.

- He added that he asked OGSA members what do they have coming up in the next 4-6 months on campus, and how OGSA can be an advocate, and resource. He believes working locally is more beneficial for the associations, because that what allows OGSA to create value quickly and more easily.

- Arun asked what value proposition for the GSA at McMaster by joining with OGSA as opposed to CFS? What would the GSA be missing by not being a member of OGSA? How does the OGSA interface their policy work with OUSA? There are four student policy advocates at the provincial level, OUSA, CFS, OGSA, and CASA, all working to lobby the Government.

- Luke mentioned that he would hope to never speak about what CFS does, as they have a very different ideology when it comes to advocacy for students, however, they had some success and some failure in the past, same as OUSA.

- He said. OUSA member schools decide the direction of the organization, and then the organization goes and lobbies on those priorities, and that is what he would like to achieve with OGSA, which is what OGSA hasn’t been able to do in the past as they lacked the capacity and human resources.

- He highlighted that he can’t reply to what the GSA gains from OGSA versus CFS, and it depends on the approach for McMaster, and what the GSA thinks is a value proposition. However, he will focus on saying what OGSA provides a singular focus on Ontario grad students, which CFS and CASA doesn’t provide. He added it’s a beneficial to have a smaller organization of 7 schools instead of a larger organization of 46 schools. Luke commented that the new funding model he proposed is for a 2 years membership, i.e. every 2 years students can vote to leave OGSA.

- Rodrigo asked about OGSA’s operating budget? Luke answered that the operating budget for this year hasn’t been finalized yet, as enrollments at each university hasn’t been finalized, however, it is estimated to be $25,000 per year.

- Rodrigo asked what is OGSA’s solution to tackling both provincial and federal lobbying? Luke answered that when lobbying the Federal Government, OGSA doesn’t have an opportunity to hear from Ottawa every week to meet with MPs, it is much easier to do that provincially than federally, because education is a provincial priority. Generally, they open their doors at Queen’s Park a lot more often than in Parliament Hill. CASA for example blocks of a single significant block of time