

Graduate Students Association of McMaster University
Council Meeting

Wednesday, February 28th, 2016
GSA Office, East Tower Refectory
10:30 a.m.

Minutes

Attendees: Natalie D’Silva (President), Lucia Lee (VP External), Ashley Ravenscroft (DoO), Sara King Dowling (FRC Science), Rodrigo Narro (BoG), Colette Nyirakamana (VP Services), Firat Sayin (FRC Business), Arun Jacob (FRC Social Science), Curran Egan (FRC Humanities),

Observer: sasha Kovalchuck

Call in: Marguerite Marlin (FRC Social Science), Megan Murphy (VP Administration)

Regrets: Maleeha Qazi (FRC Health Science), Angela Orasch (VP Internal), Mohamed Zaher (FRC Engineering), Hanie Yousefi (FRC Engineering), Samira Farivar (FRC Business), Vi Dang (International Representative), Kara Tsang (GSA CRO), Johnathan Tran (FRC Science)

Absent: Mariam Munawar (Senator Business), Sid Nath (Senator Health Science), David Bakhshinyan (FRC Health Science), Philip Tominac (Senator Engineering), Alexander Nielsen (Senator Science)

Continue from the last council

Call order 10:38 am

Language attached to the referendum question (23 minutes)

- Ashley mentioned the referendum language discussed is circulated, the referendum language discussed in the last Council meeting, a few bullet points were added, trying to make them speak to the exact things discussed, the language discussing having the different between the short term and long term, when we spoke to both SWC and student assistant program provider, they noted that they are not comfortable with language, the rational was you could technically call in to student assistant plan for anxiety or something similar which is long term care potential. What they prefer is to say that you are seeing people within the scope of expertise and as such, the language imposed is used.
- Arun asked about CAFs agreement within the website, schedule b, “at the discretion of the graduate student services, listed under there is the health services”. He asked if health services are part of the CAFs agreement, then how that interface? Natalie mentioned that mental health services isn’t included, as there were no mental health services at that time,

it was added on later. Arun asked if CAFs clearly states that it doesn't include mental health? Natalie mentioned that this wasn't out to writing, this agreement was sent to the lawyer got their opinion, and asked whether or not we could argue about mental health falls under this agreement. All the document related with the VP Services.

- Ashley mention that during the GSA discussion with Sean, he has a full new documents which will specify exactly what will be covered under SWC. Natalie added that this agreement doesn't have an end date when it was signed, the GSA consulted the lawyers in this regards, the lawyers' recommendation was we would potentially lose the case if it came to the university, even though there is no end date it doesn't say you will have mental health services, it does say you will have access to SWC, which grad student continue to have, so the GSA is still following this agreement, but to add mental health services, this have to be added to that agreement. Also according to this agreement the GSA don't have representation on any of the committee. However, this year the GSA do have representation on the committee.
- Colette mentioned this was discussed at previous council meetings, the new agreement was supposed to be sign if the referendum last year was yes, however, it wasn't. Ashley added that she will resend the new agreement, as the last year GSSRC disagreed with some of the terminology, such as increasing the SWC fee up to 4% within council without going to AGM, and the GSSRC noted that would be an issue. This was brought up to Sean, as there is still negotiation on what the contract will look like. The discussion point was the MSU agreed to the 4% increase to SWC fee, however, the GSA council thought to bring to AGM if it is above CPI. That created a fee in equality between undergrad and grad students.
- Arun asked in order to mollified the SWC fees in equality between undergrad and grad students? And how to do it without causing financial distress on grad students? He added in order to this fee to be mollified it need a window of time to smooth it out. There is no logic behind choosing the 4% increase, and we don't know if it is tied to the operating cost.
- Ashley mentioned that the proposal Sean sent in April 2016, it encompassing what increases will look like. Going forward if there is to be a fee increase, it will not go to a referendum, but will go to Council. Marguerite commented that it is not clear whether part time students will be charged this fee. She added counselling hours is not clear, and doesn't guarantee its for grad student, they also mentioned hiring 2 mental health professional, what is the benefit of hiring them? and does the 1000 hours counselling per year?
- Ashley mentioned that what was written to the proposal the GSA received was 1000 additional hours for counselling, and that wasn't just for grad student, it is for both. For part time students it will be a different levy.
- Arun mentioned that the existing CAFs agreement and the proposed agreement have some kind of bridge which brings both of these documents together and that need to be clarified and put into place. Ashley suggested to add the following to the referendum "the

GSA is pending the review of existing agreement and the proposed agreement, the GSA will call the following referendum questions with the inclusion of part time fees”.

- Natalie mentioned that as soon as the referendum is called, there will be a Yes and No campaign and not run by the GSA, however the GSA will fund them. There will be also a number of information sessions.
- The Council approved the following questions

- Question 1

Do you want to pay an additional \$23.86* per term (\$71.58 per annum) to access in-person mental health services at the McMaster University Student Wellness Centre?
[Yes or No]

*Part-time students will pay an additional \$11.93 per term (\$35.79 per annum).

- Question 2

Do you want to pay an additional fee of up to \$10 per annum for a Student Assistance Plan provided through the GSA Health and Dental provider, which provides remote (phone call, online) mental health services?
[Yes or No]

Motion the GSA is going to put referendum question forward pending review of the exciting CAF document and the new proposal and bridging them first by Firat, seconded by Sara all in favor, motion carried.

GSA fees for the upcoming year (44 minutes)

- Ashley mentioned that the GSA is going to the consentience of too much money information, and students weren't quiet sure what exactly they were looking at. She will be working with the bookkeeper regarding this. She added the reason is the budget is until Jan 31st, to be 6 month expenses and 6 months in advance. Arun asked if the statement can be issued on monthly basis? Ashley replied that it could be done, and discussed before, however, it is about the cost point of the bookkeeper. However, Mona is doing it month to month, but need to be verified by the book keeper, so starting April Mona and the bookkeeper will meet every month to review the budget. Arun asked if the budget is reviewed by external auditor before the AGM? Ashley mentioned the third party is the CPA and the bookkeeper who generated it. Arun asked if they fiduciary sign off on the budget? Ashley mentioned that they don't sign, but we never went to that degree, the bookkeeper populates all the actual, the number presented in the current budget is his. Arun highlighted that the GSA need a financial signing authorities, he added when the GSA books presented the books to the CPA does the CPA sign off that this books is ok? Ashley replied yes, the bookkeeper sends the books to his Supervisor who is a CPA and CPA verify it. She added KPMG is the GSA external auditor and the report goes every year to the AGM.
- Arun asked what is the percentage increase and decrease in some of the budget line items? For instance, FRC events budgeted for \$4200 and actual \$892, this is quiet a

variance between what is accounted for and what actually spent. And does it stay in that item carrying over to next year? Ashley mentioned that there is actually a mechanism place for other FRCs get open up and take the funding and if not it will carry over, this was discussed last Council.

- Curran asked why the CRO line item is more than last year? Ashley replied now the CRO responsibility is more than tripled as she is responsible for referendum and election, chairing meetings, attending board and council meeting.
- Firat asked what is difference between the last 2 columns, as they both 1.8% increase, Ashley highlighted that on of the columns bottom line is -\$22000 deficit, whether the other column is a positive position, the reasoning for that is the substantial cut through out this line, for instant; social event and non fixed expenses is substantially cut. If the Council decided to go to with the CPI it will be from the last 2 choices, CPI with deficit or CPI with positive position noting that the operations is significantly decreased.
- Curran asked about travel grands funds allocation, Ashley explained that travel awards are endowment, she spoke with SGS and university advancement, the last 5 years of endowment is evaluated at \$18125, however, the actual endowment they were giving is \$12000 a year, they were taking it out of stacking endowment to top it up, the scraping on top of the endowment is \$18000. This news was received yesterday, that is why it is not reflected in the budget. She added currently in the endowment minus this award is \$25000 in the safety net the university had, in discussion with them \$5000 could be taken out from that safety net, and will still be able to cover awards that haven't been claimed. if the council is interested this money could be added to travel awards for this year.
- Arun mentioned the GSA were promised 18 k, Ashley explained that it was a miss communication in an email. It was more about fund to sustain the award, that's why they kept a safety net. Going forward the GSA have \$5000, she suggested to put this amount for this year award, but then we have to consider what next year looks like, because without dipping to reserve fund we only have 12K from the SGS.
- Ashley mentioned that the \$5000 could be supplement income this year for the GSA to the \$17500. But this should be decided for next year if that line item is going to be \$12000 or keeping it the same, but need to make sure we are making that extra income somewhere.
- sasha mentioned that travel grant in other university use first come first serve, Ashley mentioned that currently the VP Internal is working on that, if any of the council members are interested can email her to join the committee for discussing redoing travel grant.
- sasha asked about the Phoenix recovery, Ashley explained that this is the money the GSA expects to get out of the Phoenix when it is profitable after it pays whatever capital (Services and maintenance) it has to pay. There is a capital lone that is already paid through other avenues. sasha mentioned that the Phoenix is a profit generating ventures, does it generate profit? And what are the human resources cost, are they stabilized during the year or higher rated? Ashley mentioned that last year the Phoenix were in very good

financial situation. Last year the Phoenix have a large over turn last year, but for the most part it is a quiet steady organization.

- Arun asked what is election services? Ashley explained that the GSA do election on online platform in which the GSA have to pay for. Also referendums are run through it. The GSA opted in EGS and SAM to use it as well. She currently looking for using google and she is looking for security aspects for that.
- Curran asked about McMaster community initiatives, Ashley mentioned that these are items discussed during council meetings, for instant, Homecoming, OMBUDS, Light Up The Night. The last event fund was taken out of sponsored activities, however going forward when such events were discussing at council and the members agreed to Homecoming and Light Up The Night, it was decided to account for it going forward. Arun highlighted that spending money on community initiative can buy the GSA goodwill. In the sense of the GSA is getting more out of it than we spent.
- Ashley mentioned that they reached out and did the GSA sponsored activities, but it is also donation now, as per the policy Angela written, is now donation as per the policy Angela wrote, for instant Mac Bread Bin comes out from the \$8000 line and not the community initiative line.
- Arun asked what is recognition in office expenses, Ashley mentioned that in some cases if employees hospitalized the GSA sends flowers, and Christmas events.
- Sasha mentioned there is inequality of having 2 staff members and the pay rate between is high, Ashley explained that the GSA pay according to Payscale for every employee hired for both the GSA and the Phoenix.
- Arun asked regarding the GU15 income. Ashley mentioned this is a one-time event, universities GSA pays to come, all the registration fee goes to income, the actual entity goes right back to the GU15.
- sasha asked about GSA travel expenses, Natalie explained that this budget lines are for the GSA Executives to attend off campus meetings. Ashley added that since the GSA increased advocacy DoO and executives have to attend meetings.
- Curran asked about Meeting expenses, Ashley mentioned that these are expense for hosting Board and Council and AGM meeting, renting meeting space, paradise catering...etc. Curran asked if this could be economized, Natalie mentioned both the Council and Board meetings are at 6 pm and people are asked to stay for up to 3 hours, and it is economized as they are now bringing food from the Phoenix.
- sasha mentioned that every line item will have a rationalization, unfortunately, members will say you can't cut anything, and you got to have fee increase, Curran mentioned that he talked to students and they aren't interested in 4% increase, however, they agree with the CPI fee increase.
- Arun asked why TA award is \$600 only, Ashley mentioned that billing for this award haven't come though yet, most of this award is done by the end of the year, she is still waiting for SGS, as this line might be lower.

- Arun asked why there is 0\$ in prudence line? what is this line items do? When it was used? Why it is off the books? Ashley mentioned that this was rewrote few years ago, because some categories didn't cap such as miscellaneous expense, but it can be taken if it is zero, it is kept on the budget because we didn't want to remove something without consulting.
- Curran asked if there is a budget for subcommittee? Ashley mentioned that all within the finance committee the discuss the line items.
- Ashley requested from the Council to give her the increase percent to work on the line budget.
- Arun asked how did we come up for choosing 4%? Ashley mentioned that this is what the finance committee decide, and thought grad students would be tolerant of.
- Council agreed to keep travel awards, reduce social events and meeting expenses.

Motion for 4% increase to the membership fee pending the changes approved by council and get revert back to 1.8% first by Arun seconded by Curran all in favour, motion carried.

Meeting adjourned at 11:46 am.

Lucia Lee, VP External

Date

Recorder

Date