



## **President Report**

The GSA has had a busy year. We have started graduate student run clubs that will be housed under the GSA, negotiated the Compulsory Ancillary Fees with the university and held a number of subsidised social events for graduate students and their families. The GSA VPs will give you a more detailed report regarding these initiatives.

### **Bylaws Committee**

The committee went over the GSA Bylaws and sent their proposed changes to Council, who then put forward their changes to be approved at AGM.

## **VP External Report**

### **Social Events and Trips**

GSA hosted monthly trips to bring students, and their friends/family members from all departments and faculties together in a fun social setting. These events included a trip to wineries in Niagara-on-the-lake, snow tubing, and much more! We have also continued to host a event at the Phoenix to give students a chance to meet with the GSA representatives to share any concerns they have or learn more about the GSA.

### **Promotion of the GSA**

This year, the GSA hired a consultant (Bobby Umar):

- To better communicate with its members and
- To be more transparent with the activities
- To become more visible on campus

The work included promoting our social media. The GSA Facebook webpage, the group page and the twitter have been updated daily. The monthly analytics of these pages evidently showed increased (more than 30 %) engagement by graduate students and other groups in the University such as Arrive and Thrive.

We have also overhauled the GSA weekly e-mail template and the website, allowing students to easily follow our work and activities.

### **External Affairs**

#### **GU15**

The GU15 is a meeting of the graduate student representatives from the 15 research-intensive universities across Canada to share best practices and collaborate on nationwide initiatives to support graduate students. In August 2016, the McMaster GSA hosted the summer conference, which was very well attended. At this meeting, the members noted a lack of representation of Graduate Student issues within the federal advocacy efforts and decided to form a think tank. It would be an official group of GSAs from any Canadian universities who will focus on producing content on graduate student issues along with sharing best practices and supporting graduate student life across Canada.



The McMaster GSA was also able to distribute the immigration petition, which was a joint project with the CUPE 3906, the iGSA and the GSA Student Issues Action Committee. The petition would allow international graduate students to receive more points for their immigration document. The petition required 500 signatures and we were able to get more than 1500 all across Canada! In January 2017, the petition was successfully submitted to the House of Commons.

Canadian Association for Graduate Studies (CAGS)

The VP External and the President of the GSA attended this year's CAGS conference in Toronto. The main topics were graduate student funding and mental health services.

## **VP Admin Report**

### **Overview**

The VP Administration has assisted with some of the ad hoc activities of the GSA this year including hiring a new GM for the Phoenix, participating in HSR negotiation meetings, and discussing changes related to the lease.

### **Finance**

We continue to use an external bookkeeping company for both the GSA and Phoenix financial transactions. This continues to improve not only our financial controls, but also our reporting abilities and transparency. We continue to work on processes and procedures to improve our use of this information for decision making purposes. Goals for the upcoming year include maximizing the GSA's use of the surplus in the Health and Dental account, determining our cash flow needs to forecast future needs related to the Operational account, and finalizing work on the financial responsibilities documentation.

### **Phoenix Executive Committee (PEC)**

A major change in the Phoenix this year relates to new management and kitchen supervision. This has led to wonderful menu changes, a new website, and even more entertainment opportunities. A major goal for the upcoming year is to create new forecasts to better allocate funds in order to ensure the Phoenix is able to cover all expenses, including a major increase in rent.



## **VP Services Report**

### **Graduate Student Services Review Committee (VP Services)**

The Graduate Student Services Review Committee (GSSRC) met continually since May 2016. After the referendum of April 2016 that led to the cut of mental health services for graduate students, the committee worked on two fronts: maintaining the discussions with the University's administration for the reinstatement of mental health services and providing supplementary mental health resources and wellness activities to graduate students. In September 2016, a survey on mental health services was sent out to graduate students and its results served as a ground of our discussions with the University's administration.

Following these discussions, the GSSRC committee decided to bring the question of mental health services and fees to graduate students through a referendum scheduled for April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2017. On the other hand, supplementary and free wellness activities and mental health resources were provided to graduate students in collaboration with Arrive and Thrive, Grad Wellness Initiative (GWI) and OpenCircle.

Finally, in order to facilitate the continuation of the GSA Health and Dental Plan committee responsibilities, the Health and Dental Plan Committee was merged with the GSSRC committee. Then, in March 2017, the GSSRC approved the enhancement of the GSA Health Plan with an improved psychological coverage of 100\$ per visit for a total of 400\$ per year, starting from September 2017.

### **GSA Summer Leagues Committee (V-P Services)**

The Softball and Soccer Leagues run by the GSA were well attended by graduate students during the summer games season. In collaboration with the Leagues Commissioners, Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) initiated in the previous year were formalized in March 2017. These SOPs describe the procedures of running these Leagues.

### **GSA Clubs Committee (V-P Services)**

The GSA Clubs Committee (GCC) was established following the implementation of a formal structure of recognizing graduate student clubs in October 2016. The committee aims to create a networking system between recognized GSA Clubs for the purpose of exchanging information and the pooling of resources within the clubs' structure and with other student organizations. Actually, 5 graduate student clubs have been recognized and the committee is ready to start its activities in the year to come.

## **VP Internal Report**

### **Welcome Week**



- Welcome week was well attended and included a BBQ and other social events.
- A pamphlet was compiled to help students with easy access to information on what the GSA does
- The GSA was an active partner in SGS sponsored events such as the resource fair.

### **Graduate Student Awards**

- The GSA successfully completed another round of awards
- The rubric for the TA award was modified to better adjudicate nominees.

### **Academic Affairs Committee**

- The AAC discussed matters related to the ability of graduate students to be able to organize events related to skills learning. A further assessment and push for this was decided.
- The AAC also debated the merits of participating in the OGSA. It was decided through consultation that this relationship be fully interrogated and perhaps the GSA retreat from this relationship.

### **Handbook**

- Handbook was compiled to help new (and returning) graduate students navigate the services that the GSA and McMaster University offers.

### **Sponsorship Policy**

- Sponsorship policy was re-vamped to better streamline the process of granting monies to student groups.

### **Graduate Council Meetings**

- The GSA was present at all university level graduate council meetings, making sure to ask questions and push for the concerns of graduate students at McMaster. Issues related to the Mental Health Service cut, graduate student pay, dissertation and comprehensive examination changes and tuition increases were discussed.

### **Discrimination, Harassment, Sexual Harassment**

- The GSA had a voice on the committee to discuss the DSHS policy that McMaster University is preparing to initiate.

### **Graduate Student GSA survey**

- The GSA initiated a survey asking graduate students what they knew about (and what they wanted from) the GSA in order to better represent the student population.

### **Welcome Week/Light Up the Night (partnership with the MSU)**

- The GSA partnered with the MSU to hold graduate student specific events alongside the events that the MSU held for Undergraduate Students.