



Graduate Students Association of McMaster University

***Council Meeting***

March 6<sup>th</sup>, 2019

GSA Office, East Tower the Refectory

5:00 p.m.

**Minutes**

**Attendees:** Tim van Boxtel (GSA President) Ashley Ravenscroft (DoO), Sara Oikawa (VP Internal), Anthony Quarshie (FRC International), Mohammed Chowdhury (FRC Engineering), Rachele Ho (FRC Science), sasha Kovalchuk (FRC Social Science), Shawn Hercules (VP External), Maxwell Lighstone (Senator Engineering), Anita Acai (Senator Science), Xiaomin Huang (FRC International), Yi Wang (FRC Health Science), Kara Tsang (GSA CRO)

**Regrets:** Fran Lasowski (VP Administration), Tiffany van Lieshout (FRC Science)

**Absent:** Mariam Munawar (Senator Business), Taylor McKenzie (Senator Social Science), Rodrigo Narro (BoG member), Sanyia Mansuri (FRC Health Science), Julia de Lange (FRC Engineering), Maleeha Qazi (Senator Health Science)

**Call to order 5:03**

1. **President's Remarks**

- Next Meeting – tentative date Wednesday, April 24<sup>th</sup>, 2019 5:00 pm
- AGM meeting on March 21st at the phoenix, at 9 am, breakfast will be served.
- Students can sign a proxy vote 2 days in advance, only 1 proxy per 1 student.

2. **Call for New Business**

- a. **MOTION:** Approval of Agenda

**Motion to approve the agenda as circulated moved by Shawn seconded by Anita, all in favor, motion carried.**

- b. **MOTION:** Approval of Minutes

**Motion to approve the minutes of last meeting as circulated moved by Sara, seconded by Anita, 11 in favor, 1 abstention motion carried.**

### 3. FRC Updates

#### a. SciGSA

Rachelle mentioned:

- Alumni event was very successful.
- Election is coming up soon, they are still looking for new president.
- Physics department planning Human of New York style called Human of Physics, it is starting in Physics and trying to implement it in the rest of science departments.
- The new departments are looking to hiring new professors
- looking for more representation at CUPE for faculty of science.
- Planning for more collaboration between SciGSA and WISE in the future.

#### b. Health science,

Yi mentioned:

- Planning a week of reflection activities by the end of March, the activities will include, meditation, discussion group and peaceful painting.
- Planning to use the FRC funds to do distress package.

#### c. Engineering

Mohammed mentioned:

- Planning AGM on March 14
- Changing the rules of bylaws and constitution, will be done by the AGM
- This Thursday they are planning comedy night at phoenix
- Latex work show was in January
- Planning to host academic event workshop, however, they are still looking for instructor, the event will be by the end of March
- Maxwell requested the list of engineering grad students for the AGM, Ashley explained that with new policies with SGS this is currently not easy, however, Tim can set up a swipe system to identify engineering students.
- Ashley will discuss with Doug to have grad students list that includes have emails and students numbers.

#### d. International

Anthony mentioned:

- Last week they had a board game night.
- They put a call for nomination for FRC international position, since they are doing election separately from the GSA.
- The GSA offers them the MSU platform for the elections.

#### e. Social Science

- Now new business

#### 4. Senate / BOG Updates

Anita sent the following report:

##### 1. **Senate Re-Election Update**

- Anita is re-elected for the Senate as the Graduate Representative (Science) for another two-year term.

##### 2. **Federal Update**

- Dr. Patrick Deane shared with Senators an update on federal priorities as we move into an election period. The last federal budget saw the government make significant investments in research; thus, the focus in the budget currently being tabled is expected to shift to other issues.
- The federal government maintains a great deal of interest in the cultivation of the workforce and wishes to do something to enhance work-integrated learning across the country.
- This will likely appear in the upcoming budget. The government has also indicated an interest in increasing the number of scholarships and fellowships available for graduate students and in funding inbound and outbound student mobility, although it is as of yet unclear what investments in these areas will look like from a budgetary perspective.

##### 3. **Provincial Update**

- Following up on last month's meeting, Dr. Deane shared with Senators recent changes made by the provincial government that affect the post secondary sector.
  - a. Tuition** – There will be a 10% reduction in tuition to most fundable programs in 2019-20, and tuition will be frozen in place in 2020-21. The government has not announced any reductions to operating grants this cycle. The total impact on the sector as a whole is estimated to be \$360 M, while the impact on McMaster amounts to roughly \$21 M (approximately 3% of the operating budget). More specific impacts are likely to be revealed over the next year as McMaster works through the differential cuts to faculties. The university will also make it a priority to admit more international students in order to compensate for the loss in revenue.
  - b. Ancillary fees** – The provincial government intends to designate some ancillary fees mandatory and some optional. While mandatory fees will constitute core services such as student healthcare, it is unclear as to what exactly constitutes a “core” service. More details are expected to follow in the coming months, and the university has been working with the appropriate bodies (e.g., McMaster Students Union, Graduate Students Association) to deal with these issues.
  - c. Student financial support** – A number of changes have been made to the OSAP program. The province's focus has shifted to “demonstrable” financial need. Students with a family income of \$140,000 and above will now only be eligible to receive repayable loans, not grants, and students with a family income below \$50,000 will receive 83% of grants, but no students will receive grants alone. Instead, they will get a

mix of grants and loans. Additionally, the six-month interest free grace period after graduation has been eliminated. A number of stakeholders within the sector remain concerned with these changes and the impact that they will have on the affordability of post secondary education in Ontario.

#### **4. Changes to Graduate Programs**

- During its February meeting, Senate, on recommendation from University Planning Committee, approved the following changes to graduate programs:
- Cancellation of the Advanced Design and Manufacturing Institute program within the Faculty of Engineering as McMaster University is no longer affiliated with this program and it is now only offered as a collaboration between Queen's University and Western University.
- During its February meeting, Graduate Council also shared the following information items:
  - Change to calendar copy — elimination of unpaid internships (Master of Biomedical Discovery and Commercialization)
  - Change to course requirements — removal and addition of courses (MSc and PhD – Health Research Methodology)
  - Additionally, the following new fund for graduate students was established: McMaster Graduate Students Association Emergency Bursary

Side Note: McMaster will be running listening sessions to get people input on what kind of policy they think it is important and priority they think McMaster should focus on. The event is on March 26 from 10 am to 12pm.

Side Note, Max noted:

- The SAS registration procedure for grad students is different for undergrad students. This was quiet confusing for undergrad students who are continuing their grad studies at McMaster. There is no process to tell undergrad containing their grad studies that their registration process is separate from undergrad, except on the graduate calendar.
- On the grad calendar it refers to the university policy and accommodation which mentioned that the registration process is outlined in a few sections and those section haven't exist in that policy since the policy update in 2017.
- He is currently in contact with the Students Accessibility Services and the Secretariat to try and find solution to make this information exist and available.
- This information will be introduced to grad council as well.

#### **5. AGM Documentation for consideration**

##### **a. Bylaws:**

- The new bylaws are clearer and more concise, the GSA hired a student from outside McMaster to help in writing the new Bylaws, there was extensive conversation over every line to make sure it is clear and concise.

- The Bylaws will be forward to AGM to vote on.

b. Elections

- Call for nominations for the Board, the GSA received one application from Jennifer Williams, and it will forward to vote on at the AGM. The GSA is still open for 2 internal board members, if anyone is interested, s/he can apply.
- Call for nominations for Executive/FRC positions, Tim noted that there are many positions still open and the current FRC are welcome to reapply and encourage other students to apply to open positions.
- Kara added that she received 2 applications for the president and vice president External positions, other positions are still open. She is working with MSU CRO again this year to run the GSA election through the MSU platform, students will receive user name and password to log into a link and vote.

**Motion for approve Director appointments, and other positions moved by Sara and seconded by Anita, all in favor motion carried.**

b. Audited Financial Statement

- Presentation of Audit statements, the audit was done by KPMG, as per the board recommendation to continue working with KPMG to audit the books for 2018-2019, the GSA will forward this recommendation to the AGM for voting.
- Appointment of Auditors and Audit costs, The GSA reached to other auditing firm, although the quote was less compared to KPMG, nonetheless, KPMG already knows the university internal operation and the GSA operations which will save time during the audit.

c. Review of Financials

- In replying to Maxwell question, Tim explained that the non essential fees are approximately 10% of the budget and the GSA have a strong reserve to cover this portion for the first year and the Capital build fees will be reduced by 50%.

d. Approval of Budgets

- There are no massive changes in the GSA budget compared to last year.
- The Phoenix numbers is more ratio, based on the amount of profit. There is a big increase in rent. It is going to be quiet a challenge, however, the Phoenix is planning wedding and it is expecting to have a larger revenue compared to this year.
- In replying to Rachelle question regarding how the Phoenix GM knows that other restaurants revenue is down by 35%? Tim explained that Conrad is in touch with other

restaurants manager and hospitality services at McMaster and they provided him with this information.

**Motion to approve the GSA budget and the Phoenix budget, moved by Sara, seconded by Shawn, all in favor, motion carried.**

e. Approval of Fees

- The proposed new fee structure was circulated to members.
- Tim mentioned that the provincial government delegated the University to accept the fee structure for the student's unions, accordingly the GSA restructured the fees to essential and non essential. For instant, H&D fees, Capital Build, financial aid fee (current awards and bursary), academic fee (supervisory issues, consultation with university, etc) and HSR fee are deemed essential fees.
- Certain fees are changing, for instant, H&D will include administration cost, previously, the GSA charged the premium fee and from the operating fee the GSA would administer.
- There is going to be an opt out period for the non essential fees after the course add drop. During those 2 weeks the GSA will campaign to inform students about the opt out of the non essential fees.
- Non-essential fees include travel award, club funding, events funding, advocacy and community enhancement.
- Ashley explained that every time the GSA is approached by community group, in campus or off campus, the funds is allocated to community initiative, for instant, previously the GSA shared some fund for Homecoming event and celebration internally from McMaster community. In addition, international student initiatives (refunding the Go bus ticket from the airport) goes to this budget line as well. Tim added that there is going to be a detailed explanation on the website related to each line of the fee structure.
- Tim mentioned that funding from SGS will be cut, hence there is going to be Welcome Week and events re-budgeting.
- The GSA is a member with other students' union for instant, thinkGrad and AMMICCUS travel expense and membership to these groups are recorded under advocacy.
- Ashley noted that, when the government mention 10% reduction, SGS in return had to cut funding to the GSA, this funding used to go to student's life enhancement, now as per the new fee structure those funds will no longer exist.
- Tim and Ashley met MSU and MAPS to discuss the possibility of submitting full fees. However, they were not comfortable to submit full fees to the university and MSU mentioned that they will get a legal opinion.
- In replying to sasha's question regarding hiring a lawyer, Tim explained that the GSA resources isn't big enough to do so, however, the GSA will lean on the advocacy groups and AMIICUSS will be the first one to start with.
- Maxwell mentioned that CUPE Ontario is having a Conventional evening in May, CUPE will send 10 delegates fully funded from McMaster. Maxwell will send the information to Ashley.

- The GSA will go through 3 to 4 years transition period to increase the H&D fees and the reserve will cover the loss for those year, the new H&D fee starting September 2019 is \$406.88.
- The GSA is expecting an increase in the fee from the insurance company in April, the GSA will pay for this increase from the reserve. In replying to Anita's question regarding continuing subsidizing the increase from the reserve, Tim explain that this is operationally difficult to achieve, however, the GSA will be subsidizing some of the fee to cover part of the increase.
- Ashley mentioned that historically the capital build funds is used to pay for the renovation at the phoenix, the loan is paid off this year, the new fee is reduced by %50 compared to last year.
- The capital build fee is for planning big ticket like subsidizing a child care centre for grad students, this fund is expecting to be allocated in the next 8 to 10 year.
- In replying to Anita's question if the child care will be partnership with someone that have child care experience with community? Tim explained that this is mainly how it will be as the GSA doesn't have the experience to run child care centre.
- Maxwell suggested to put this information on the website and ask students to submit ideas.

#### 6. New Business

- sasha mentioned that one of the members of McMaster Indigenous Alliance reached out to him to request a sponsorship from the GSA, Evan is an undergrad student, he will travel to Alberta to attend Think Indigenous 2019, he is requesting up to \$1000 sponsorship from the GSA to cover the conference expense.
- In replying to Maxwell question regarding how many people is travelling? sasha explained only Evan is going to the conference in March.
- Sara explained that the GSA sponsor events that have both undergrad and grad students, however, if council members agree we can make an exception.
- Ashley suggested to sponsor Evan with the mandate to bring initiative to the Council table by April council meeting. Sasha mentioned that he can get extensive note from Evan and share it withe next Council.
- Maxwell suggested to give \$400 and up to \$500 in reimbursement, sasha explained that the time is very limited as the conference is in 1 week and applying for MSU funding will take a month and half to respond to sponsorship form.
- Ashley suggested to advance the money, then he can submit receipts that covers \$1000.

**Motion to approve funding \$1000 to Evan to attend the Think Indigence 2019 conference with the mandate to bring initiative and ideas to the GSA council by April, moved by Maxwell seconded by Anita, all in favor motion carried.**

#### 7. Adjournment

**Motion to adjourn at 6:43 pm moved by Shawn, seconded by Rachelle, all in favor, motion carried.**

**Action Item:**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Action by</b>	<b>Due date</b>
NA		