



Graduate Students Association of McMaster University

Council Meeting

August 22nd, 2019

GSA Office, East Tower the Refectory

5:00 p.m.

Minutes

Attendees: Shawn Hercules (GSA President) Ashley Ravenscroft (DoO), , Caroline Seiler (FRC Health Science), Maxwell Lighstone (Senator Engineering), Olive Liang (VP Administration),, Mohammed Chowdhury (FRC Engineering), Wei Zhao (VP Services),Anthony Quarshie (FRC International), Ish Jain (FRC Science), Unnati Trivedy (VP External),

Guests: Pedrum Mazahri, Sadjad Sarhadi, Kathleen Steeves

Regrets: Anita Acai (Senator Science), Tiffany van Lieshout (FRC Science) Mia Zhang (VP Internal), Kara Tsang (GSA CRO)

Absent: Mariam Munawar (Senator Business), Rodrigo Narro (BoG member),

Call to order 5:02

1. President's Remarks

- Next Meeting – tentative date 26th of September 2019 at 5 pm.

2. Call for New Business

a. **MOTION:** Approval of Agenda

- Shawn requested to moved agenda item 6 and 8 to the top of the agenda, and adding thinkGrad to new business,
- Max suggested to add the discussion about bargaining with CUPE for TA students, and adding the standing resolution to creating ad hoc committee for external partnership and confederation to new business

Motion to approve the amended agenda moved by Tiffany, seconded by Mia, all in favor, motion carried.

b. **MOTION:** Approval of Minutes

Motion to approve the minutes of last meeting as circulated moved by Anthony, seconded by Unnati, all in favor, motion carried.

3. Thesis toolkit

- Kathleen gave a presentation regarding student who have issues with writing their thesis. Students usually have confusions about formatting and technical aspects for writing. Their group received funding from Macpherson institute. They are using these funds to create a tool kit to assist grad students writing their thesis.
- The information is presented as pdf and it has also an online version and accessible to all students.
- She requests from council members to send their feedback by email regarding any suggestions.
- Shawn suggested to put this information on the GSA website, social media, and mailer.
- Olive suggested to add a table of contact in the beginning of the document to assist students find what they are looking for.
- Mohammed suggested to send a copy of this document to the departments secretaries to distribute a virtual copy.

4. Tuition for SEPT:

- Pedrum mentioned that the program is 1-year, professional course-based program, and not a fully funded program. The university increased tuition by 14% for international students. In addition, there is an increase into the supplementary fees.
- Ashley highlighted that the new Government reduced 10% of tuition for students that have a fully funded program. Professional programs are known to institutions as means of generating income, hence they are not fully funded. The issue is the way the acceptance letter was set for January – December students, in which the fees is prorated from Jan to August then, students have to pay the supplementary fees again in September, however, students who come in September -August pay only 1 set of supplementary fees.
- From an advocacy standpoint the GSA need to communicate with the university regarding these professional programs, specially the acceptance letter needs to be more transparent and disclose how students will be charged.
- Mohammed highlighted that tuition increase discussed is for the new students only. The supplementary fees charges in September for January students are the current issue. The question is, can the university waive this fee? UHIP fee can get prorated but the rest of supplementary fees unfortunately can not. Ashley added that there has been ongoing discussion if the supplementary fees be paid over 3 semesters, but this is difficult to achieve on the H&D plan, that why it can't be prorated.
- Mohammad highlighted that the due date to pay the fees is till far. He suggested to reach out to the department chair and discuss reducing supplementary fees for students started in January. Ashley added that if students see the full supplementary fees amount on MOSAIC; this means it has been assessed. The GSA will discuss this with Mike Thomson to try to waive this additional fee.

- Sadjad representing coop students, mentioned that students who got coop had to defer their graduation to December and pay the full supplementary fees in September in addition to the increased tuition.

5. President remark:

- Shawn mentioned that there was a team building activity last month at the altitude; it was very successful.
- The GSA did a lot of work last month focusing on SCI and how to communicate it to students. That included attending meetings with the university to have a clear vision on how students will opt out of nonessential fees.
- The HSR agreement is renewed. There is an option now to opt out of the bus pass, however, it is very limited to students who reside outside GTA.
- In replying to Max's question if HSR fee is mandatory by the Government? Ashley explained that it is, however, it is pre-existing, the original terminology given out make it seem like it is one statement transit. The actual document say that an existing transit system is covered, and now students can go to opt out system. Max asked if the HSR fee will increase by 10% over the next 3 years? Ashley explained that this isn't guarantee, the GSA will go over the structure of the fee, and what council project the fee to be. The GSA will also look what other institutions charges, in saying, the fee isn't set into 10% increment it could be different.
- Welcome Week is in 2 weeks, the GSA have Executives and FRCs volunteers, if any one still interested to volunteer can sign his/her name into the excel sheet on google drive.

6. VP reports:

- Wei mentioned that he is still working on the website update, he suggested to members if they have experience or know someone who has experience in coding and website generation to connect with him. In addition, he is currently updating the grad student's handbook. Mohammed added that EGS is working on a similar idea like the GSA handbook he suggested to share their ideas for both projects.
- Unnati mentioned that they had an ice cream festival last month and it was successful, she didn't plan for September as it is Welcome Week. She added that an email was sent to all GSA clubs to renew their status with the GSA.

FRC Update:

Health Science:

- Caroline and Zarwa are currently in communication with the president of HS club, they are in the process to apply to be a recognized club within the GSA. They have a deadline for recruiting members to the club, once they have enough number of members, there will be more communication going back and forth between the club and the current FRCs.

EGS:

- Metric Conference on September 5th. They have a lot of volunteer to present in the conference.
- There is now seminar credit for engineering faculties.
- EGS gave out 11 travel awards for the summertime
- There was a squash tournament last month and bargaining event
- Planning to run a workshop regarding conflict resolution.

SciGSA:

- Hosting a club fest for incoming student on September 5th at the phoenix.
- Working on promoting SciGSA more through social media.
- They are currently looking to switch their bank account; Shawn suggested to apply and have their bank account hosted under the GSA as it will save them bank fees.
- Planning a sport event; each department within faculty of science will have a team to compete
- Planning beer and donuts event next month

International:

- Arranged for hiking event but, it was cancelled due to the weather condition.
- Managed to get discounted ticket so students can attend a soccer game
- CUPE is arranging free dinner for international students in September
- Preparing to have a soccer tournament on Welcome Week for international students.

7. GSA CUPE working group:

- Max, circulated term of reference with the agenda. Ashley added that the GSA is hoping to do 2 social initiatives; composting around the Phoenix and breakfast event.
- Max mentioned that CUPE have significant financial reserve, and the GSA is running events. CUPE create the GSA CUPE working group to fund events related to work, social and professional events, the most important one will be run on October, a major party MP candidates will come to Hamilton for political engagement.
- Ashley mentioned that the GSA sent an email to meet with CUPE president and we are waiting for his respond.

8. New business:

Ad hoc committee:

- Max highlighted that the GSA is not part of any larger students union organization like CFS, CASA, it might be to the GSA interest to join one or create one or investigate further.
- Shawn highlighted that the GSA were part of OGSA but it dissolute. He added lobbying was expensive, and it dissolved last year.

- Shawn explained that the GSA are not officially members of this bigger groups; however, the GSA is member of thinGrad, which is group of universities graduate unions that share initiatives and ideas together. For instant the GSA heard about the SCI even before it was disclosed on the table, as it happened at University of Calgary.
- Ashley added that during thinGrad meetings universities shares a lot of valuable information that saved the GSA a lot of legal fees.
- Max mentioned that this committee will report back to council. According to constitution, council can't appoint members to sit on this committee only board of governor.
- The council agreed to have a committee to investigate the feasibility to join or create a larger student organization.

Motion to establish an ad hoc committee to investigate the feasibility of forming a confederation for GSA to boost advocacy effort moved by Max seconded by Mohammad all in favor motion carried.

TA bargaining:

- Max mentioned that, CUPE only has power with the university; if they can show they are backing graduate students who are Tas, but, the are not good at marshal any of that. They need to marshal student voices to be able to show the university that students have chosen them but, they haven't been able to show that.
- EGS is writing a letter to the university mentioning their concern as TA pay will be decreased, this was communicated to CUPE office, however, CUPE hasn't been very communicative.
- Mohammad mentioned that CUPE is bargaining with the university to see what the TA base will be over the coming year, however, the university giving them trouble, due to bill 124, even though the bill didn't pass yet. The university is willing to pay 1.25% increase on TA pay, nonetheless, this increase is still less than the CPI which is 2.5%.
- It is expected that the university might propose other policies, like decreasing the minimum TA hours, so the minimum hours might not be guaranteed any more.
- Interim of CUPE they have their barging team meeting with the university, but no one knows what their action plan looks like. However, when FRC engineering went to a general meeting with CUPE they were calling for a strike, however, still there is neither an action plan from CUPE side nor a support.
- Max suggested that the GSA could write a letter to the provincial governor mentioning the situation and ask for assistance.

thinkGrad updates:

- Ashley mentioned that she went to thinGrad on August 2nd in Montreal. The main priority discussion was federal election. The specific coming back to McMaster is to make sure to tell students to go out and vote. Informing them about the platform available specifically the local MPs.

- Engagement is an issue with student association, the suggestion is to keep a record available on the website were prospective employers know who set on council board...etc.
- There were a lot of conversation regarding SCI.

9. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn at 6:27 pm moved by Tiffany, seconded by Max, all in favor, motion carried.

Action Items:

Item	Action by	Due date
NA		