

Graduate Students Association of McMaster University

***Council Meeting***

September 24<sup>th</sup>, 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), Mia Zhang (VP Internal)

**Guests:** sasha Kovalchuk

**Regrets:** Anita Acai (Senator Science), Tiffany van Lieshout (FRC Science)

**Absent:** Mariam Munawar (Senator Business), Kara Tsang (GSA CRO), Zarwa Saquip (FRC Health Science)

**Call to order 5:02**

**1. President's Remarks**

- Next Meeting – tentative date 29<sup>th</sup> of October 2019 at 5 pm.

**2. Call for New Business**

- a. **MOTION:** Approval of Agenda
- Adding letter for support for CUPE bargaining
  - Nomination for Board Member

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

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

**Motion to approve the minutes of last meeting as circulated pending grammatical error to be amended moved by Unnati, seconded by Ish, all in favor, motion carried.**

**3. President remark:**

- Shawn mentioned that Welcome Week was a success, he thanked everyone for helping with Welcome Week.

4. **Vps report:**

- Mia mentioned that the GSA is working with the MSU to prepare an early voting booth, the voting will take place at the celebration hall on October 5 to October 9<sup>th</sup>. Mona will send a doodle so FRC can sign their name if they are available to volunteer.

5. **Opt out fees discussion:**

- Shawn mentioned that the university sent the opt out numbers of non-essential fees. Less than 15% of students opted out of the non-essential fees. Ashley added that there is a problem with the current excel sheet the university sent; the university was using MAPS numbers for the GSA. The GSA will have a better understanding of this when they send the final excel sheet.
- Unnati asked if the university will send a list of students who opted out and what item they opted out from? Ashley mentioned that the GSA can request this information. However, the only reason the GSA didn't ask for the list this year is because we would have to place HST on all our fees. If the fees are only offered for segment of the population, due to this we should not charge HST because there is no tangible thing sold to them, so for now this is not operationalized, we are waiting to see how the data will look like for future years and see if HST will be accessed.
- Wei mentioned that a lot of students approached him and asked about what the GSA phase in community enhancement is and what is the plan for this committee. Shawn highlighted that the GSA funds community projects depends on the projects and the liability piece. Ashley added that the GSA shared some funds before with a project that helped refugees.

6. **DDSA clubs Approval:**

- Olive commented that the club had a negative balance on their budget in-addition they didn't have a revenue, nonetheless, they have an expense of \$2000.
- Unnati will reach out to them to rectify these points and resubmit the application for review for the next council meeting.

**Motion to not ratify the club due to lack of revenue, they can apply again for ratification in the next meeting moved my Max, seconded by Mohammad, all in favor, motion carried.**

7. **FRC update:**

Health science.

- Caroline mentioned they are having a welcome week event at the Phoenix next week; they are advertising for it on the GSA mailer and they are expecting 30 students.
- She is currently in the process for preparing the club application for next meeting, to have a health science club. Ashley suggested to have a health science association instead; as HS being an association will allow them access to more funding opportunity through the university. Ashley will send Caroline the information about this procedure.

### Scigsa:

- Hosting a trivia night soon.
- Planning a soccer tournament for next year.

### EGS,

- Max mentioned that EGS is hosting a welcome month instead of welcome week, they are having Bon Fire event tonight at 7pm at the Phoenix.
- Elections are soon to include SEPT member on the EGS council.
- Metric event was very successful, 90 people registered.
- Partnership with Ontario society for professional engineers.
- Discussing a motion to have TA evaluation on course on mid term, nonetheless, this will require a CUPE consent.
- Finished summer travel awards and now working on the fall travel awards.
- Hosting a CUPE station in the EGS office tomorrow.
- Attended a meeting with Grad council; graduate programs are going to be capped at the current level, so the university will not be going to enrol any more grad students in programs that are funded by the government. It is expected for the next 2 years that there will be no grad students in these programs. The ministry also approved a bunch of grad programs that can be finished in 18 months.
- SGS received funding to purchase a software that can check papers and thesis for plagiarism before students submit them to the university. Mike Thomson spear head these initiatives in conjunction with an academic integrity office.
- Egs will host workshops regarding student supervisor conflicts, Mohammad suggested to meet with both the GSA and SciGSA to have one project to be delivered to students.

### IGSA

- Anthony mentioned that they had a game night for international students.
- International student's soccer game competition was postponed to next year.
- Ashley added that going forward IGSA EDL will be hosted under the GSA.

## **8. Senate**

Anita send the following report:

### **1. Transitions in University Leadership**

- The university is currently undergoing several changes in its leadership. Since Dr. Patrick Deane has left for his new role as President and Vice-Chancellor of Queen's University, Dr. David Farrar is now Acting President and Vice-Chancellor of McMaster University. Dr. Susan Searls Giroux is serving as Acting Provost and Vice-President, Academic and Dr. Karen Mossman as Acting Vice-President, Research.

### **2. Provincial Update**

- Colleges and universities in Ontario are currently transitioning to the Strategic Mandate Agreement 3, which introduces several performance metrics in the areas of skills and job

outcomes including graduation rates, experiential learning, skills and competencies, community and economic impact, etc. As of 2020, funding will be moving away from enrolment and towards these key performance metrics. McMaster is currently negotiating an agreement regarding which metrics, in addition to those already prescribed by the government, will be used to measure its performance. Once the agreement is finalized, two-thirds of the university's governmental funding will be tied to these metrics.

### **3. Magna Charta Universitatum**

- The Magna Charta Universitatum is a document that deals with the fundamental values underpinning universities; McMaster signed on in 2013. It contains principles of academic freedom and institutional autonomy as a guideline for good governance and self-understanding of universities in the future. The 2019 conference and ceremony (“University Freedoms and Responsibilities: Responding to the Challenges of the Future”) will be held at McMaster on October 16 and 17. Members of the university community can register for the conference or learn more here: <https://magna-charta.mcmaster.ca/>

### **4. Socrates Project**

- The Socrates Project is a point of convergence for artists, scholars, and diverse communities to engage in crucial conversations around the most pressing issues of our time. Encompassing a broad range of events and activities—from performances to lectures, from international conferences to community town halls—The Socrates Project is intended to stimulate and foster critical discussion across all disciplines, promote dialogue, and deepen the connection between the university and the broader community. For more information on upcoming events, please email Anita Acai ([acaia@mcmaster.ca](mailto:acaia@mcmaster.ca)) or visit: <https://socrates.mcmaster.ca/>

### **5. Graduate Enrolment**

- There are currently 4,080 full-time and 691 part-time graduate students at McMaster. This year saw an increase of 79 doctoral students and 83 Master's students.

### **6. Update from the Committee to Recommend a President**

- The Committee to Recommend a President is pleased with the work that has been accomplished and is making good progress. The Committee has functioned effectively since inception selecting an executive search firm, consulting widely across campus, and developing the Executive Profile and selection criteria. The Committee has also worked with Dr. Arig AlShaibah, Associate Vice-President, Equity and Inclusion, who is a consultant to the Committee on all aspects of the process. The Committee to Recommend a President is in the later stages of its work and expects to make a recommendation later in the fall semester.

## 9. New business

### Application for BOD, Yara Abdeen

- Shawn read loud Yara's statement of interest
- Members agreed to approve Yara's application

**Motion to appoint Yara Abdeen for the internal director position for the Board of the GSA moved by Mohammad, seconded by Max, all in favor, motion carried.**

### CUPE support letter

- Shawn mentioned that CUPE is calling for a strike because of Bill 124, this is related to wages. The GSA doesn't want the university to take a poor decision regarding the GSA. Hence that the GSA is bargaining with CUPE. Max generated a letter in this regard that include the GSA fee suggestions in agreement with CUPE about the strike vote.

**Motion to allow sasha speaking rights, moved by Max, seconded by Unnati, all in favor, motion carried.**

- sasha mentioned that he has been in touch with CUPE Executives. The main point discussed was the equality in wage between the undergrad and grad students' wages, in addition to wage increase. The university doesn't want CUPE to go on strike, so they are reaching out for discussion.
- Ashley added that in regards of undergrad TA wage, she agrees ageism isn't a criterion to decide how much the undergrad students shall be compensated for TA positions. However, there is a credential piece, in saying, a master or doctoral level students deliver a different credential and experience accordingly hence the wage difference. Caroline commented that the departments prefers to hire undergrads for TA positions as they are cheaper however, grad students are more qualified.
- Max added that sometimes departments goes for who is cheaper, nonetheless, the TA positions for undergrad requires lower experience that is why the departments prefer to hire undergrad students for those positions. Nevertheless, undergrad students are offered 32 hours, but grad students are offered 130. His personal view is that the wage difference and the less working hours are beneficial for the undergrad students.
- Mohammad highlighted that if the grad and undergrad students will be paid the same wage, then why will departments hire undergrad students when they have a grad student who is at a doctoral and master level, more qualified and have more experience.
- Shawn added that the GSA aligning with CUPE strike vote benefits McMaster undergrad students, nonetheless, Council needs to consider that this will heavy emphasis the Grad Students the GSA represent.
- sasha mentioned that it is important getting the undergrad support, the GSA needs to think as one student body not undergrad and grad, he brought to the council's attention that OSAP cuts did affect both grad an undergrad student.

- Wei asked if the increase is requested by the undergrad students?  
sasha explained that it's one of CUPE's requests, as they believe the undergrad is paid less because they are younger.
- sahsa added that it is pretty airtight, this law is designed to attack public service employees and that's what CUPE stresses on, the PC government have reversed laws before like the green built and autism funding.
- Ashley mentioned that the motion circulated is not just for the attention of the university, but there is also a link to provide a feedback on bill 124 to the government.
- Max suggested a separate motion as this is a separate initiative of the GSA. He suggested that CUPE national can set up a meeting with the providential minsters and invite all GSA universities to speak to TA pay.
- sahsa mentioned that McMaster bargaining committee is mandated. The next board of governor meeting is in November, he suggested to speak directly to BoG members and raise the case. He added that the University of Victoria stopped 25% of fee increase by doing the same.
- Max mentioned that the university doesn't recognize a time break in PhD programs for students who take mental health time off, and count the time as if students are enrolled, in saying it doesn't stop the clock for those students, and they will not be allowed TA if this is their 5<sup>th</sup> year.

**Motion to continue to negotiate with CUPE moved by Max, seconded by Unnati, all in favor, motion carried**

**Motion to urge the graduate student representative on the BoG to lobby the BoG to McMaster bargaining committee to change the mandate to reflect the GSA policy moved by my Mohammad, seconded by Caroline, all in favor, motion carried.**

## 10. Adjournment

**Motion to adjourn at 6:07 pm moved by Caroline, seconded by Max, all in favor, motion carried.**

### Action Items:

Item	Action by	Due date
NA		