GSA Council Meeting MINUTES
Monday, July 17, 2017 at 6:00 pm
2-100 University Hall, Van Vliet Complex

IN ATTENDANCE:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Babak Soltannia (President)</th>
<th>Michael Armstrong (Chemistry)</th>
<th>Kris Joseph (Library &amp; Info Studies)</th>
<th>Janita Frantsi (Phys Ed &amp; Recreation)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Firouz Khodayari (VP Academic)</td>
<td>Fereshteh Talaei (Civil &amp; Environmental Engineering)</td>
<td>Michelle Michelle (Math &amp; Statistical Sciences)</td>
<td>Sneh Monga (Physical Therapy)</td>
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<td>Royle Feng (VP Student Services)</td>
<td>Natalie Mahé (Communication Sciences &amp; Disorders)</td>
<td>Fahed Elian (Medical Genetics)</td>
<td>Drew Shepherd (Physics)</td>
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<td>Darcy Bemister (Chief Returning Officer)</td>
<td>Melissa Woghiren; Michael Disyak (Computing Science)</td>
<td>Ben Kostiuk (Medical Microbiology &amp; Immunology)</td>
<td>Yilun Wu (Physiology)</td>
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<td>Dasha Smirnow (Councillor-at-Large)</td>
<td>Benjamin Denga (Educational Policy Studies)</td>
<td>Richard Feddersen (MLCS)</td>
<td>Megan Aiken (Political Science)</td>
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<td>Andrews Tawiah (Councillor-at-Large)</td>
<td>Chantal Labonté (Ed Psych)</td>
<td>Misha Bandet; Hailey Pineau (Neuroscience)</td>
<td>Michal Juhas (Psychiatry)</td>
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<td>Brayden Whitlock (Councillor-at-Large)</td>
<td>Nicole Jamison (Elementary Education)</td>
<td>Jaclyn Hutchinson (Occupational Therapy)</td>
<td>Kevin Lien (Public Health)</td>
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<td>Talisha Chaput (Anthropology)</td>
<td>Neil Prather (History &amp; Classics)</td>
<td>Radim Barta (Oncology)</td>
<td>Cassidy Fleming (Rehabilitation Science)</td>
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<td>Swai Mon Khaing (Biochemistry)</td>
<td>Mohammed Abdul-Bari (Human Ecology)</td>
<td>Ty Kim; Ashley Bahry (Paediatrics)</td>
<td>Ryan Stanfield (Renewable Resources)</td>
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<td>Michele DuVal (Biological Sciences)</td>
<td>Kenzie Gordon (Humanities Computing)</td>
<td>Andrew Woodman (Pharmacology)</td>
<td>Yangzhe Cao (Resource Economics &amp; Environmental Sociology)</td>
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<td>Rongrong Zhang (Business PhD)</td>
<td>Shivam Srivastava (Networking)</td>
<td>Hamdah Al Nebahi (Pharmacy &amp; Pharmaceutical Sciences)</td>
<td>Robert Piazza (Secondary Education)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Karl Roeser (Cell Biology)</td>
<td>Ruqayyah Almizra (Laboratory Medicine and Pathology)</td>
<td>Vladimir Dukic (Philosophy)</td>
<td>Antonio Bruni (Surgery)</td>
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Guests: Tom Gee (GSA Auditor, Collins Barrow LLP); Heather Capel (Physiology)

Acting Speaker Roy Coulthard in the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 6:01 pm.

Roll Call
1. Roll Call of Council Members in Attendance

Approval of Agenda
2. Approval of the 17 July 2017 Consolidated Agenda

Members had before them the 17 July 2017 Consolidated Agenda, which had been previously distributed on 14 July 2017. N Prather MOVED; K Gordon SECONDED. Motion PASSED unanimously.

Approval of Minutes
3. Minutes from the 19 June 2017 GSA Council meeting

Members had before them the 19 June 2017 GSA Council Minutes, which had been previously distributed on 7 July 2017. M Armstrong MOVED; F Khodayari SECONDED. Motion PASSED unanimously.

Changes in Council Membership

Prepared by L Hareuther and F Robertson for the Council Meeting of 17 July 2017
4. Changes in GSA Council Membership
   i. Introduction of New Councillors: J Hutchinson (Occupational Therapy); J Frantsi (Physical Education and Recreation; N Jamison (Elementary Education); H Pineau (Neuroscience); M Disyak (Computing Science); R Feddersen (Modern Languages and Cultural Studies).

   ii. Farewell to Departing Councillors
   This was the last meeting for a number of Councillors: last meeting for Ashley Bahry (Paediatrics).

Councillor Announcements
5. Councillor Announcements
Speaker announced that due to lack of sufficient agenda items and expected low attendance, the August meeting of GSA Council was cancelled.

Action Items
6. 2016-2017 GSA Audited Financial Statement
Babak Soltannia (GSA President) presented the item and introduced the guest (Tom Gee, GSA Auditor).

   MOTION BEFORE COUNCIL: That the GSA Council RECEIVE FOR INFORMATION the 2016-2017 GSA Audited Financial Statements.

   T Gee was happy to present good financial statements. He noted that he would make general comments and that we welcomed questions.

   He noted that Collins Barrow LLP (CB LLP) conducted a standard independent audit of the GSA and were satisfied that the statements comply with Canadian standards for not-for-profits. He stated that the GSA was in an overall strong position and had improved their financial position from the previous year. He added that the 2016 ratio was 1.96:1 and that not-for-profits should ideally have a ratio of 2:1 to have more than enough resources to cover liabilities. He indicated that the 2017 ratio was 2.34:1, which was a strong overall position.

   In the Statement of Operations, T Gee noted pointed out the operating surplus and explained that this was due to the increase in total revenues. He further explained that when overall increasing revenues and no changes in expenses remain the same results in an operating surplus. He specified that there was significant growth in the Graduate Student Support Fund (GSSF) and in administrative and GSA fees but that GSA expense remained flat. He added that, a few years ago, there used to be an operating deficit and that changes implemented by the GSA staff corrected this. He noted that the GSA was operationally sound. He added that positive reserves for not-profit organizations were good as they could be reinvested in existing and future programs.

   T Gee noted that the Statement of Cash Flows showed that cash increased by $293,000 in 2017 compared to a reduction in 2016. He added that the financial situation of the GSA had improved over the previous year.

   M Armstrong asked how the GSA increased their surplus. T Gee explained that revenues increased by $130,000, the expenses remained flat and that this resulted in an increase in surplus.

   T Gee concluded that every year following the audit, he issued a letter to management to identify areas of improvement for internal processes. He indicated that, this year, there was no recommendations and added that the GSA had strong and budget and processes.

   MOTION: That the GSA Council RECEIVE FOR INFORMATION the 2016-2017 GSA Audited Financial Statements.
   B Soltannia MOVED. N Prather SECONDED.

   Motion PASSED unanimously

7. GSA 2017-2018 Budget and Expenditure (Quarterly) Report
Babak Soltannia (GSA President) presented the item.


Prepared by L Hareuther and F Robertson for the Council Meeting of 17 July 2017
B Soltannia noted that the quarterly financial report had been reviewed in depth by the GSA Budget and Finance Committee (GSA BFC). He noted that the data contained within the report reflected the first two months of the GSA’s current fiscal year and that, according to estimates, the 2017-2018 GSA Budget was on track and it was anticipated to remain on track for the rest of the year.

**MOTION:** That GSA Council RECEIVE FOR INFORMATION the GSA 2017-2018 Budget and Expenditure (Quarterly) Report. B Soltannia MOVED. F Khodayari SECONDED.

Motion PASSED unanimously

8. GSA Board 2017-2018 Strategic Work Plan

Babak Soltannia (GSA President) presented the item.

**MOTION BEFORE COUNCIL:** That GSA Council, on the unanimous recommendation of the GSA Board, RECEIVE FOR INFORMATION the GSA Board 2017-2018 Strategic Work Plan, as attached.

B Soltannia noted that the GSA Directly-Elected Officers had started working on the GSA Board Strategic Work Plan (SWP) in early May and that the 2017-2018 Plan built upon the 2016-2017 SWP. He reported that GSA Board (GSAB) reviewed the SWP, that the GSA had planned a Town Hall to discuss the SWP, and that the SWP was discussed with GSA Council in June. B Soltannia reported that comments and suggestions received from GSA Council had been incorporated into the SWP, and invited additional comments or questions from GSA Council members.

D Smirnow asked why the cover letter still noted that the team goal to examine funding packages was restricted to all thesis-based students, when the suggestion was raised at the previous GSA Council meeting to also examine funding packages for course-based students. B Soltannia responded that they had decided to start working on the proposal to examine funding packages only for thesis-based students as a starting point and that these questions surrounding funding for course-based students could be explored once the funding review started.

D Smirnow followed up by asking why the funding review was separated into thesis-based and course-based graduate students. B Soltannia responded that the majority of financial support from the University and departments went towards thesis-based graduate students and that currently the majority of course-based graduate students paid tuition but did not receive funding. F Khodayari noted that the GSA was already aware that course-based graduate students did not receive funding but that more data was needed to better understand thesis-based graduate students funding, since the funding situation for these graduate students varied greatly by department. F Khodayari indicated that after completing this first step, the next step would be to consider the creation of a minimum amount of funding.

D Smirnow asked why active participation on the Mandatory Non-Instructional Fees (MINFs) Oversight Committee was singled out and highlighted as an individual goal for the GSA President’s portfolio, instead of other committees. F Khodayari responded that in previous years, the GSA President, the GSA VP Academic, and the GSA VP Student Services had attended these committee meetings. He noted that it was highlighted as a goal for the year due to University’s budgetary cuts, which could result in cuts to services and that, as these services are partially or fully funded through MINFs, cuts to services would be discussed at the MINFs Oversight Committee. He indicated that these important discussions were the reason for highlighting that specific committee in the individual portfolio goals.

D Smirnow followed up by asking if only the GSA President would serve on the MINF Oversight Committee and F Khodayari responded that there would continue to be three GSA representatives on the committee, and noted that the committee would start meeting in September.

D Bemister asked if there were any suggestions as to how the University would pay for minimum funding package, as the University would see this as an increased expense, and that the request for minimum funding packages might not be successful as a result. F Khodayari responded that, while they did not know if the University would have the funds to establish minimum funding packages, in past conversations with senior administration the DEOs had emphasized the role that minimum funding packages could have in marketing the University to both domestic and international students. He also noted that they could examine potential sources of funding for these packages in the future.

D Bemister asked if there would be value in starting an *ad hoc* committee to look at current graduate student funding and costs and noted that a student perspective on comparatives and living costs could be useful, and might indicate if graduate student
funding was currently an issue at the U of A. F Khodayari responded that if the review was initiate it would be something to consider.

A Tawiah noted that during the June GSA Council meeting, there was discussion about including more specific timelines for achieving particular objectives. He indicated that currently most timelines were listed as 2017-2018. A Tawiah asked if more specific timelines for projects could be included. F Khodayari responded that some projects, such as participation on the MINFs Oversight Committee, would potentially be completed before December, but that other projects, such as the funding package review, could take two – three years, and noted that specific timelines for SWP outcomes were not necessarily appropriate.

A Tawiah followed up by asking if it would be possible to associate more specific timelines with some of the action steps. F Khodayari responded that the GSA Board would continue to update GSA Council on the progress of the SWP goals, as this had been the practice in previous years.

D Smirnow noted that an individual goal listed for the GSA VP Labour was to negotiate for increased compensation assistantships in the Collective Agreement (CA) and indicated that an issue raised in the past year was the importance of focusing on compliance with the CA, rather than on compensation. D Smirnow asked why compensation was a focus in the cover letter. F Khodayari noted that requesting an increase to compensation was included as a priority for this year, as 2017-2018 was a bargaining year, and indicated that the issue of compliance was included in the full SWP. He noted that he would share D Smirnow’s feedback with S van der Klein.

**MOTION:** That GSA Council, on the unanimous recommendation of the GSA Board, RECEIVE FOR INFORMATION the GSA Board 2017-2018 Strategic Work Plan, as attached. B Soltannia MOVED. N Prather SECONDED.

Motion PASSED unanimously

**Elections**

9. **GSA Council Elections**

Radim Barta (Chair of the GSA Nominating Committee) presented the item. He explained the election process and noted that members had three ballots to consider.

**GSA Standing Committees**

a. **GSA Budget and Finance Committee** (1 vacancy)

R Barta presented the item and introduced the nominee, who was given the opportunity to address GSA Council by responding to a question provided in advance.

The question for the nominee was as follows and the nominee had 45 seconds to respond: “please tell us why you’d like to serve on the GSA Budget and Finance Committee.”

**Nominee for GSA Budget and Finance Committee:**

Michele DuVal (Biological Sciences).

b. **GSA Governance Committee** (1 vacancy)

R Barta presented the item and introduced the nominee, who was given the opportunity to address GSA Council by responding to a question provided in advance.

The question for the nominee was as follows and the nominee had 45 seconds to respond: “please tell us why you’d like to serve on the GSA Governance Committee.”

**Nominees for GSA Governance Committee:**

Michael Armstrong (Chemistry).

c. **GSA Labour Relations Committee** (1 - 5 vacancies)

R Barta presented the item and noted that there were one (1) to five (5) positions available on the GSA LRC and that two nominations had been received. He noted that neither of the nominees were able to attend GSA Council and encouraged GSA Council members to read the bios and resume included in the Council package, prior to casting their vote. He explained that if they checked on their ballots a nominee and “none of the candidates” their ballot would be counted as spoiled.

**Nominees for GSA Labour Relations Committee:**

Prepared by L Hareuther and F Robertson for the Council Meeting of 17 July 2017

For Discussion
None at this time

Reports

10. President

i. President’s Report:

Members had before them a written report, which had been previously distributed on 14 July 2017. The report stood as submitted. In addition B Soltannia stated that highlights of his report included recent meetings with the Dean of the Faculty of the Graduate Studies and Research, Heather Zwicker and Provost and Vice-President (Academic), Steven Dew. He noted that both were in favour of the funding review proposal and that they had agreed to have further meetings to start reviewing the issue and see which committees should be involved.

Regarding the SWP, A Tawiah asked for additional details about Michener Park and who did B Soltannia meet with this respect, what was discussed, and what was agreed upon. B Soltannia explained that Michener Park was one of the action steps of the SWP, both with respect to transit issues and the conditions of the residency. He added that the meeting was mostly concerned with the conditions of Michener Park. They discussed the process and pace of resolving the issues. He added that there were no new outcomes but there were follow-up actions to be undertaken.

B Whitlock asked if in his meeting with the Dean of Students, they discussed student group freedom of expression. B Soltannia responded that this had not been discussed and asked B Whitlock if there was an issue he would like to bring forward. B Whitlock stated that the Dean of Students was proposing amendments to the Student Group Policy and that it look that the project had stopped over the summer. B Soltannia noted that he would follow-up with B Whitlock and the Dean of Students.

ii. GSA Board

Members had before them a written report, which had been previously distributed on 14 July 2017. The report stood as submitted.

iii. Budget and Finance Committee

No meetings this reporting period.

iv. GSA Governance Committee

No meetings this reporting period.

11. Vice-President Academic

i. Vice-President Academic’s Report:

Members had before them a written report, which had been previously distributed on 14 July 2017. The report stood as submitted. In addition F Khodayari highlighted the Study Hall Program run by the Dean of Students Office. He noted that the Dean of Students Office was looking at services already available (writing classes, tutoring, etc.) to identify gaps and that they intended to hire graduate students as part of the Graduate Student Internship Program to run it so there would be paid positions for graduate students available. He added that paid tutor positions would also be available for graduate students.

Following a question by K Lien, F Khodayari noted that the first step for the Study Hall Program would be to review what was currently available and that, as the review moved forward, they would look at gaps and considered specific needs. K Lien explained that they would like to see statistic workshops for Public Health.

M Abdul-Bari asked if the services would be free and F Khodayari responded that yes it would be free for students accessing the program and that tutors would be paid.

12. Vice-President External

i. Vice-President External’s Report

Members had before them a written report, which had been previously distributed on 14 July 2017. The report stood as submitted.

ii. GSA Awards Selection Committee’s Report

No meetings this reporting period.
13. **Vice-President Labour**  
   i. **Vice-President Labour’s Report**  
   Members had before them a written report, which had been previously distributed on 14 July 2017. The report stood as submitted.  
   On VP Labour’s behalf, Speaker noted that the second Town Hall on Bill 7 would be held on July 24 and that an RSVP link was included in the GSA VP Labour’s report and in the GSA newsletter. R Coulthard added that outcomes from Bill 7 would impact the GSA in unknown ways so it is very important for students to stay informed. He encouraged GSA Council to read S van der Klein’s report and to email her with any questions.
   
   ii. **GSA Negotiating Committee**  
   No meetings this reporting period.
   
   iii. **GSA Labour Relations Committee**  
   Members had before them a written report, which had been previously distributed on 14 July 2017. The report stood as submitted.

14. **Vice-President Student Services**  
   i. **Vice-President Student Services’ Report**  
   Members had before them a written report, which had been previously distributed on 14 July 2017. The report stood as submitted. In addition, R Feng stated that during the U-Pass Administrative Committee meeting, he emphasized that the GSA Board would continue to pursue the Michener Park Transit issue and that it would remain a standing item on future U-Pass Administrative Committee agendas.
   
   He noted that, at the UPass Advisory meeting, no update on smart fare was offered and that the 2017-2021 U-Pass agreements were provided and would be distributed to institutions for signing.
   
   R Feng asked GSA Council to be advised that the United Way campaign would kick off soon and that the committee had requested to attend GSA Council to offer a brief presentation on their work.
   
   ii. **GSA Student Affairs Advisory Committee**  
   No meetings this reporting period.

15. **Senator**  
   i. **Senator’s Report**  
   No written report at this time.

16. **Speaker**  
   i. **Speaker’s Report**  
   No written report at this time.

R Coulthard explained that it was typical for many items to take three to four years to come to fruition and most items roll over from one year to the the next. As an example, he noted that the professional development was first discussed in 2010 and only implemented in 2016.

M Woghiren asked if it was possible to opt-out of the current mandatory professional development requirements. F Khodayari asked M Woghiren wanted to opt out. M Woghiren responded that she was not sure how the Individual Development Plan (IDP) was useful. M Armstrong added that students did not receive credits for professional development activities they had participated in until their IDP had been created. F Khodayari noted that both Masters and PhD students were required eight hours of professional development activities and that doing activities that students were interested in could be beneficial for now and their future careers.

M Abdul-Bari noted that graduate students in his department found the IDP really useful. M Woghiren explained that, in Computing Sciences, students took a full course on professional development and that she felt that adding these extra eight required hours was repetitive. B Whitlock responded that he was one of the people who debated this issue at the GFC Academic Planning Committee two years ago and he noted that his preference would have been to not make it mandatory. He added that Department Chair could opt their graduate students out fairly easily. He also noted that if the IDP had been optional it might have been difficult for certain students to take advantage of this opportunity if their supervisors were not supportive.
R Almizraq noted that many students she knows feel positively about the IDP but she suggested extending the time to complete it. She pointed out that currently the IDP needed to be finished six months before graduation but that Masters students had more time to devote to this in their second year.

17. Chief Returning Officer
   i. Chief Returning Officer’s Report
   No written report at this time.

18. GSA Nominating Committee
   i. GSA Nominating Committee Report
   Members had before them a written report, which had been previously distributed on 14 July 2017. The report stood as submitted. In addition, R Barta stated that there were still a number of vacancies, including the Deputy Speaker and Deputy Returning Officer positions. He encouraged GSA Council members to watch for advertisements in last August and early September and to reach out to graduate students who would be interested in the various positions.

19. GSA Elections and Referenda Committee
   ii. GSA Elections and Referenda Committee Report
   No meetings this reporting period.

20. GSA Management
   i. Executive Director’s Report
   Members had before them a written report, which had been previously distributed on 14 July 2017. The report stood as submitted. In addition, J Tanguay stated that the next Bill 7 Town Hall would take place on July 24, 2017 and that there were various GSA Bylaw and Policy changes that would be brought forward to GSA Council in September and October.

Question Period

21. Written Questions
   None at this time.

22. Oral Questions

A Tawiah noted that graduate student engagement and maintaining a robust social media presence and investigating innovative new methods for communication were included in the 2017-2018 SWP. He indicated that he thought the GSA website could be improved to increase engagement and suggested that the GSA website, Facebook, and Twitter pages could feature graduate student work and achievements. He also suggested increasing the use of pictures on the GSA’s social media accounts in order to better engage students. B Soltannia thanked A Tawiah for his suggestions and noted that the GSA website was a formal representation of the GSA and that they could consider the suggestions to include stories from graduate students in different faculties and departments on the GSA Facebook and Twitter pages.

R Coulthard reminded GSA Council members that the August meeting of GSA Council had been cancelled at the discretion of the Speaker and President as there were no urgent agenda items for the upcoming month.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:24 pm.