



GSA COUNCIL
 Notice of Meeting
 January 15, 2020
 4:00PM – 6:00PM
 NH 3318

AGENDA

Time	Item	Action
4:00PM	1. Speaker's Welcome and Opening Remarks	-
4:01PM	2. Adoption of the Agenda	For Approval
4:03PM	3. Attendance	For Information
4:08PM	4. Approval of Minutes a. December 4, 2019	For Approval
4:10PM	5. Reports a. Update from the Board – Stirling (5 mins) b. Advising the President - Samuel (15 mins) ◦ VP reappointment ◦ Funding increases	For Information and Decision
4:30PM	6. Presentations a. Advocacy and Policy Overview – Ryan (15 Mins) b. Councilor Roles & Responsibilities (15 mins)	For Information
5:00PM	7. Decision Items a. Commissioner and Committee Structure – Billedeau (15 mins) b. Unionization – Billedeau, Samuel, Sargent (45 mins)	For Decision
6:00PM	8. Adjournment	-
RECEPTION FOR COUNCIL 6:30PM – 8:00PM Grad House, Second Floor Free Food + Drinks!		

MINUTES

1. Speaker's Welcome and Opening Remarks 4:02

Billedeau takes the chair and calls the meeting to order at 4:02.

2. Adoption of the Agenda 4:02

Motion to approve the agenda. Approved.

3. Attendance 4:03

Billedeau and Little take the attendance.

4. Approval of Minutes 4:04

- a) December 4, 2019
Approved.

5. Reports 4:05

- a) Update from the Board

Job posting for chief returning officer; please inform constituents about the position. Information is available on the GSA website.

- b) Advising the President

The President delivered an update about the student choice initiative. Changes to fee structures are being proposed for the spring term with consultation from Council and Board prior to university approval. Organizational updates were provided on the following topics: grad house improvement, cultural event (postponed from March to Fall term), vital signs survey (February 2020), townhall, advocacy, and events.

The consistency of SCI and political position 11 was discussed. The fee opt-out system will be maintained for spring; whether this system remains in place after that time will be up for discussion. Social initiatives are separated into their own fee category due to student feedback. Opt-ins to social initiatives are monitored via averaged departmental data; however, the equity of this was questioned. The President decided to move social initiatives back into association fees after Council consultation. Core GSA activities are included under mandatory fees and portable Watcard readers are used to monitor who has paid the fee. Mechanisms for determining who has paid their fees can be discussed in future meetings. The option of including the grad house in mandatory fees was discussed. The optional fee system has not changed GSI funding opportunities.

VP Reappointment

As per policy, the President must consider the reappointment of the VP prior to the end of their term. The President advocated to reappoint the current VP through to the 2021 term.

Motion to reappoint Billedeau as Vice President of the GSA for the 2020-2021 term (Samuel/Robbins). Approved unanimously.

Funding Increases

Funding level increases that support costs of living in the region were proposed. The data sources informing funding level increases are available in the supporting document attached to the president's report – 'GSSAC Funding'. The implications of endorsing a minimal increase were questioned. The amount of money estimated for shelter seems too low. Further, after tuition is deducted from funding, the amount of funding does not appear to match the current reality of cost of living. The methods behind this calculation were also discussed, e.g. adequate living versus bare minimum.

Motion to approve the funding level increases for the GSSAC 2020-2021 term (Samuel/Sargent). Unanimously disapproved. Motion does not pass.

Revision: Encourage the University of Waterloo to revise their funding levels to match current cost of living estimates for the average graduate post-secondary student.

6. Presentations

4:37

a) Advocacy and Policy Overview

An overview of Policy 33: Ethical Behaviour, Policy 70: Student Petitions and Grievances and Policy 73: Intellectual Property Rights were presented. The flow charts included in the presentation will be posted on the GSA website.

b) Councilor Roles & Responsibilities

Expectations for ambassadors of the GSA were outlined. The process for the following activities were described: engaging constituents and handling and sharing feedback, council meetings and business, advising the GSA President, and serving on committees. Social media and communication strategies for GSA members were listed. Updates to the GSA website are expected to launch next month.

7. Decision Items

4:54

a) Commissioner and Committee Structure

There are two acting commissioners for the Standing Advocacy Committees, bringing into question their financial value to graduate students. A proposal was made to abolish CP-2(2.b) and CP-6 and replace them with short-term research contracts. The requirements for these contracts were outlined. Councilors would be given priority for contracts and if none respond, then the call goes out to the larger graduate student body. Current commissioners will not be eliminated from council; their positions and voting rights will be maintained.

In instances where more than one councilor wants to apply for a research contract, the procedure would be to form a team for larger projects and divide funds. A difficulty that was noted for the SAC was the combination of environment and diversity: a call for committee members was put out but the diversity political position was not well represented in applications. Another issue that was noted was the ambiguity surrounding the process of communication between commissioners and council. Feasibility of drawing up contracts for commissioners was discussed; long-term retention of commissioners cannot be guaranteed, and engagement over time has remained

low. Further, asking councilors to dedicate more time to committees is not reasonable. Council voting would be used to determine the “as-needed” basis for research contracts.

Motion to eliminate CP-2(2.b) and CP-6 (Commissioner Positions and Standing Advocacy Committees) in favour of short-term research contracts, on an as-needed basis (Billedeau/Salahub). Vote (y/n/a) 14-0-2.

b) Unionization

Background and process for unionization were presented. The council’s role in the negotiation process was discussed; finer details would be decided if unionization passes. An e-vote for beginning the process of unionization was proposed for the following reasons: feedback from constituents is needed, 24-hour period for voting, and anonymous voting. Only Billedeau, Samuel and Sargent will have access to the individual votes; Sargent declared that they are willing to not be provided with access if anonymity is desired. Regarding how feedback from constituents could be gathered and considered, members stated that an email is sent to their constituents detailing the proposed changes, followed by an online vote.

Motion for the GSA Council to recommend that the GSA Board of Directors review and organize the unionization of graduate TAs, RAs, and sessional instructors at the University of Waterloo.

Revision: Motion for the GSA Council to support the formation of a union of graduate TAs, RAs, and sessional instructors at the University of Waterloo and to recommend that the GSA Board of Directors review and organize the unionization.

The advantages and disadvantages of unionization were presented.

If unionization passes, it is unclear who would be included in the union, as well as the extent of involvement of third party oversight. Data from third-party sources for graduate student funding was requested in addition to IAP sources, as well as a breakdown of the variability in minimum-maximum funding within and across institutions. Wass will send out third-party data sources that analyze union costs and outcomes. Costs of living in the pay scale table was noted as being possibly lower than current estimates. The table showing pay scales can be made available to share with constituents. Validity of not receiving support from FAUW was questioned.

Motion to extend the meeting by 20 minutes (Sargent/Bjelan). Approved unanimously.

More research for the disadvantages behind unionization was requested prior to the vote. For instance, what are the conditions involved in strikes and how would seniority be considered? Another consideration that was brought up was a situation in Earth Sciences, where undergraduate TAs are hired to compensate for the expense of graduate students; would undergraduate bodies need to be included in discussions? For a union to be successful, strong bargaining skills are required. Given student turnover, how do we ensure that these skills are cultivated and maintained? The process of tracking hours at institutions with graduate student unions is unclear; at one school, a TA would work for another course if they were drastically under-working. The union could discuss these details if voted through.

Motion to extend the meeting by 5 minutes (Yeung/Robbins). Approved.

Council discussed overlap between the the GSA and a union, as well as the benefits and consequences of having a union versus pursuing alternative solutions as the GSA stands now. If a union advocated for greater pay rates, could it be expected that UWaterloo decrease funding packages as a result? It is possible that decreases in funding are made to those outside the union, but examples from other institutions demonstrate that this is not always the case.

Motion for the Council to hold an e-vote on January 23rd starting at 12pm, which will be open to councilors for 24 hours (Beaudry/Sargent). Vote (y/n/a) 18-0-3. Motion approved.

8. Adjournment

6:30

Meeting adjourned at 6:30