



GSA COUNCIL
 Notice of Meeting
 February 5, 2020
 4:00PM – 6:45PM
 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. January 15, 2020 | For Approval |
| 4:10PM | 5. GUEST SPEAKER a. Grad House Overview and Update – Bartel (15 mins) | For Approval |
| 4:25PM | 6. REPORTS a. GRT Update – McKay (5 mins) b. Update from the Board – Stirling (5 mins) c. Update from the JPRC – Reid (5 mins) d. Advising the President – Samuel (20 mins) i. Strategic Plan ii. Vital Signs | For Information |
| 5:00PM | 7. DISCUSSION ITEMS a. Rose Vogt Award – Billedeau (5 mins) b. CEC Meeting – Billedeau (5 mins) c. Update on union vote – Billedeau (15 mins) d. Short Term Research Contracts – Billedeau (5 mins) e. Political Positions – Robbins (20 mins) | For Information |
| 5:50PM | 8. SMALL GROUP DISCUSSIONS a. Vital Signs b. Board review of unionization c. Graduate House d. Future agenda items | For Discussion |
| 6:45PM | 9. ADJOURNMENT | - |
| RECEPTION FOR COUNCIL 6:45PM – 8:30PM 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 4:03

Motion to approve the agenda. Approved.

3. Attendance 4:04

Billedeau and Little take the attendance.

4. Approval of Minutes 4:07

- a) January 15, 2020
Approved.

5. Guest Speaker 4:07

- a) Grad House Overview and Update – Bartel

Bartel provided an overview of Grad House special projects, sources of revenue, value of the grad house, fees, and history. Completed and ongoing projects were listed, as well as revenue sources. With Student Choice Initiative (SCI), 18% opted out. Combined with an increase in sales, revenue was higher than initially predicted. Reasons include opening to UW community at large following closure of The Bomber, adjustments to shift length and sales per shift. Extra revenue will be used to benefit the grad student community. Reasons why the Grad House is useful to grad students were described. The Grad House has been subject to potential closure in the past due to low sales; was advocated for by faculty and alumni. Any questions can be emailed to Bartel.

6. Reports 4:31

- a) GRT Update - McKay

Potential refund coming back to the GSA due to transit strike; any break in service for more than 7 days is subject to reimbursement. The refund would amount to \$8.96 per student and be placed on Watcards; hopefully will be an automatic deposit set up through the Finance department. GSA staff will work with Communications to let students know if/when this will occur.

- b) Update from The Board – Stirling 4:33

The Board has held 2 meetings since the previous council meeting. Bylaw housekeeping was addressed. Annual General Meeting (AGM) date and location set: April 7, 2020 in EV3. AGM details will be displayed on the new GSA website, which is going live at a later date. It will also be put on GSA social media. Call for special items to be added to the AGM agenda. Chief Returning Officer will be nominated during the next board meetings. Currently drafting Terms of Reference for confidentiality of unionization working group.

- c) Update from the JPRC – Reid 4:37

The Board approved policy updates. The next JPRC report will include updates to governance policies and detail ongoing revisions to governing policies. Review of board management policies planned in March. Council will be notified of second readings of policy changes and be given an opportunity to provide feedback.

d) Advising the President – Samuel

4:39

Strategic Plan

The President described the process for the three-year strategic plan. Development, monitoring and implementation activities were identified. Outcomes of the strategic plan correspond to GSA mission, vision, values, ends, and strategic priorities/goals; indicators will be tracked using situational analysis. Vital Signs Survey will represent a major source of input from the grad student community. Other input sources were listed, as well as activities and outputs. Timeline was illustrated.

There is no sub-committee for development of the strategic plan; however, there will be a review committee formed at the 1-year mark. The GSA plan is separate from the overall UWaterloo plan because it does not explicitly detail needs of grad students; the GSA intends to fill these gaps. However, overlaps in strategic priorities and goals will be acknowledged. Council workshops will entail discussion on mission, values, and ends.

Vital Signs Survey

Survey was disseminated to council for feedback. Grad student experience and GSA as a corporation were the two main areas of focus. Longitudinal data obtained from survey sources will be used to determine whether experiences are improving or worsening over time.

For the survey, not applicable options were suggested for some areas (e.g. student experience, long-term issues). Potentially replace TA funding estimates with hourly rates to be more consistent across departments. Length of the survey was noted as a potential problem. It is currently estimated at 30 minutes to complete; how can we entice students to dedicate this time? In terms of the length of the survey, two suggestions were made: separate into three surveys and administer one a month, and combine similar questions to reduce the overall number. Regarding rewards for completing the survey, \$400 in prizes is proposed as an incentive (cash was noted as a preference). Possibility to add grad house coupons as a reward.

The strategy for reaching out to students from departments with no representing councilors will be an email blast, as well as increased social media efforts. Councilors in the same faculties can coordinate together to reach out to students. The number of students who read the GSA newsletters is unknown, so additional social media platforms are needed for communication. Statistical analysis will be conducted by a data analyst; frequency distributions and correlational analysis are planned. Councilors who wish to assist with data analysis of the survey are welcomed to join. Survey is open to all graduate students. Friday, February 7 is the deadline for receiving suggestions. Proposed launch date is February 13, 2020 and will be open for 2 weeks.

7. Discussion Items

5:03

a) Rose Vogt Award - Billedeau

Award named after Rose Vogt - a remarkable staff member who worked with the GSA for several years. Call for a councilor to join the nomination committee and review applications. Sanniti and Valipour volunteered for this position; email Billedeau to confirm interest after the meeting.

b) CEC Meeting – Billedeau

5:04

Governed by CP-5 - involves election of the council speaker. Members of CEC review election process and candidate resumes. Sargent provided an overview of the process that occurred the prior year. The CEC may also need to define a co-chair role and hire for that position. Time commitments were detailed; one 2-3 hour meeting per month at the grad house. Call for representatives from Engineering, Science and Math. Robinson-Enebli (engineering), Yeung (pharmacy), and Salahub (Math) volunteered.

c) Update on union vote – Billedeau

5:09

Results of the e-vote were presented; the majority were in favour of formally beginning the consideration of unionization. Considerations surrounding unionization were described, as well as engaging with staff and faculty. Confidentiality efforts were detailed; non-disclosure agreements will be drawn up for members working on the task force for unionization. Risk assessment will also be conducted and will be communicated to councilors and board members. Councilors will be provided with opportunities to give the Board feedback on what points need to be addressed.

Vital Signs Survey results will be available after the Board draws up terms of reference; a question on unionization is included in the survey. An alteration to the question was proposed: 'are you familiar with union policies, yes or no?' Councilors who are approached by faculty and staff members with questions or concerns about unionization can direct them to the council chair for the time being. Under the Labour Relations Act, there are laws that prevent faculty and administration from pressuring potential union members; any infractions will need to be noted. A one-page information sheet summarizing the act will be delivered to Council. UW does not have a history of unionizing grad students. Laurier is being consulted following formation of their grad student union. The Council Chair is also seeking input from other unions and will present findings to council.

Training on how to seek input from constituents was proposed. Blast email to all grad students will not be possible due to lack of a contract on information sharing; the Board will review how we can communicate to constituents. Administrative staff can access UWaterloo emails, so personal emails for correspondence are preferred. While information on which departments voted yes, no, abstain was collected, this data will not be retained when e-vote is destroyed. GSA lawyer was consulted on confidentiality agreements and JPRC will review confidentiality agreement policies and procedures going forward.

Motion for the data for Council's e-vote on unionization will be destroyed (Billedeau/Samuel). Vote (y/n/a) 23/0/5. Motion passes.

d) Short-term research contracts – Billedeau

5:30

Opportunities for current research contracts and associated requirements were outlined. If a councilor is interested in any of the contracts, they are encouraged to contact Billedeau by Friday, February 7; councilors will be given first preference before advertisement to grad student community at large. GSA-Council package meeting includes the list of potential contracts. No one has applied for a contract yet. The rationale for establishing research contracts was provided; to educate council members on a specific topic that pertains to the needs of grad students. Findings will be posted on the GSA website and will be property of the GSA. Quality assessment for contract deliverables will be evaluated by the executive team, which council members can volunteer for.

e) Political positions – Robbins

5:40

Robbins presented on efforts to revamp political positions. 16 political positions were posited as too many; combining them into 4 overarching groups was proposed as an alternative. Each new proposed political position was described in-depth, e.g. rationale, amalgamated policies, and proposed subtext. Benefits of condensing political positions were described. Plan is to designate a champion (and co-champion) for each political position; responsibilities were detailed. Feedback can be directed to Robbins and Billedeau by February 25, 2020. The resulting positions will be voted on in the March meeting and be updated on the GSA website.

Concern was expressed about losing the work that went into developing several of the positions, as well as the relevancy of the issues (e.g. grad student supervision). Additionally, many of them are actionable and can be used to develop key performance indicators. The old system may be retained through historical links on the website; possibilities on how else to preserve these materials was discussed. Old positions are written into the subtext of the new ones; they will not be lost completely. Equity for grad students was prioritized as number one because it is the foremost concern of the GSA; feedback on priorities can be given. The four political positions will be reflected in the strategic planning process during council workshops and the board retreat.

8. Small Group Discussions

6:03

a. Vital Signs

Length of the survey was discussed; if answers can be saved as students progress through the survey, it may help with the burden of its length. Not all grad student demographics were represented; for example, drop-downs were suggested for whether or not coursework was completed. Proximity to campus; driving distance is not applicable to all students. Change to km distance from campus or ask for typical commute time with preferred transport method. Sliders were suggested for familiarity with policies. Clarity on housing question; shared vs. family. single apartment; what is the purpose of this question? Some questions may be combined, e.g. perceived equity of funding, hourly rates, etc.. Scaling can be made nominal for clarity (e.g. terrible, excellent). Potentially integrate data from departmental surveys. Possibility of separating interests relevant to Masters vs. PhD programs. Add questions on leisure and recreation

and SLC expansion. 'Other' option allowing for open-ended text suggested for some questions, such as student experience. 'Extremely reasonable' vs. 'just right' – should extremely reasonable not be what is considered as just right? Smaller incentives for everyone (\$5 to all who complete) vs. one big prize entered into through a draw.

b. Board review of unionization

Discrepancies around pay/compensation; making it clear in grad offer letters what portion of funding is received after tuition deductions, as well as clarity surrounding taxing. Also including expectations surrounding scholarships, TA/RA positions, etc. Efforts to raise awareness of unionization among grad students and engaging them in the process was highlighted. For instance, new councillors joined because they heard about potential unionization. Efforts need to be taken to clarify misinformation surrounding unions and develop education initiatives. For instance, address if departments will have to accept fewer grad students as a result of unionization. Examine how students will be differentially affected by department, student status, sessional instructors, etc. Labour relations vary by department; have to carefully consider how to standardize these. Power dynamics across members of UWaterloo need to be understood. Appropriateness of including undergraduate TAs was noted. Option to let students provide personal emails for information sharing. A question was raised of who would organize use of GSA resources to support unionization.

c. Graduate House

Advertising social events well ahead of time; suggestion to have an option that allows students to directly add events to google calendar. GSA website and social media can also be leveraged. Grad student catering services are not possible at this time. For students who do not drink, only offering juice/soda is not enticing; mocktails were suggested as an alternative. Halal beef in addition to halal chicken was requested. Incentives need to be devised for students attending associated colleges to come in to the grad house (e.g. St Jeromes, Renison, Conrad Grebel), as well as students from other buildings that are located further away. Satellite campuses especially isolated; how to draw them in? Pop-up potlucks was one potential idea. Once patio is completed, can host celebrations there. Concern expressed over long lines; new point-of-sale system should help mitigate this. However, kitchen is a small size and there are limitations to the output that is possible. Posters and calendars of events can be posted around campus. Portable payment system for ordering drinks can possibly reduce wait times. New food was noted as an appealing highlight. Opening up grad-only events to include plus-ones.

d. Future agenda items

Deferred to next meeting.

9. Adjournment

7:01

Meeting adjourned at 7:01