



**GSA COUNCIL**  
Notice of Meeting  
 June 3, 2020  
 4:00PM – 7:00PM

Zoom Meeting (Details in Outlook Invitation)

**AGENDA**

<b>Time</b>	<b>Item</b>	<b>Action</b>
4:00PM	<b>1. SPEAKER'S WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS</b>	-
4:05PM	<b>2. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA</b>	For Approval
4:07PM	<b>3. ATTENDANCE</b>	For Information
4:08PM	<b>4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES</b> a. May 6, 2020	For Approval
4:10PM	<b>5. REPORTS</b> a. Update from the Board – Stirling (10 mins) b. President's Update – Samuel (20 mins) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ GSA Services</li> <li>◦ Fall 2020 Incidental Fees</li> <li>◦ COVID-19 Updates</li> <li>◦ Faculty-level advocacy</li> </ul>	For Information
4:30PM	<b>6. PRESENTATION</b> a. Update on the Fall semester – Casello (20 mins) b. Open letter to GSPA and GSA – Robinson-Enebeli (10 mins)	For Discussion
5:00PM	<b>7. REPORTS</b> a. GSA statement regarding solidarity – Samuel/Billedeau (15 mins) b. Update from the Speaker – Robbins (15 mins) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Cost of Governance</li> <li>▪ Council Spring 2020 agenda</li> <li>▪ Schedule of Council meetings</li> </ul> c. Update from the Recruitment Task Force – Hampton (15 mins) d. Update from the JPRC – Reid (10 mins)	
5:55PM	<b>8. PRESENTATION</b> a. Departmental and Faculty GSAs – Billedeau (20 mins)	
6:15PM	<b>9. SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION</b> a. Departmental and Faculty GSAs (25 mins) b. Feedback on Council's 2020-2021 focus (25 mins)	For Discussion
7:05PM	<b>10. OTHER BUSINESS</b>	For Discussion
7:15PM	<b>11. ADJOURNMENT</b>	-

## MINUTES

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

*Robbins 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 unanimously.**

### 3. Attendance 4:03

*Ouellette takes the attendance.*

### 4. Approval of Minutes 4:04

a) May 6, 2020

**Approved.**

### 5. Reports 4:04

a) Update from The Board – Stirling 4:04

*In addition to regular meetings, the Board engaged in Governance Review and Strategic Plan retreats. The Speaker of Council was present at the retreat sessions. These sessions have highlighted new governance best-practice approaches and strategies to suit the needs of membership and move the organization forward.*

*It is noted that Council has the opportunity to initiate statements of a timely political nature to pass on to Management. For example, drafting a statement on anti-racist strategies. Management and Board determine resource commitments.*

b) President's Update – Samuel 4:09

*The referendum regarding legal aid services was held. Membership was asked whether they approved of the proposed changes to legal aid services. The majority of votes (85%) were in favour of the ballot in question. The number of votes cast fulfilled the minimum requirement of including 10% of eligible voters (the actual percentage of participants being 13%). The next step will be to move forward with StudentCare.*

*The GRT has been set as an opt-in service for the Spring term due to COVID-19. This option will cost only \$98.60, a price that would not be possible beyond the restrictions of the pandemic. To opt-in to this service, the membership must visit the Student Life Centre, as a virtual opt-in platform was not feasible.*

*Graduate students have voiced concern regarding the accessibility of health and dental services during this time. Details are forthcoming on this matter. Developments are dependent on direction regarding the state of emergency.*

*The Graduate House has been undergoing construction and renovation while closed. Management is considering modifying the approach to human resources at the Grad House.*

*No GSI applications will be accepted during the Spring term, nor will GSI fees be collected. Since these funds are allocated to support in-person events, it has become clear that the impact of COVID-19 warrants this decision. Instead, additional funds will be offered to DGSA's to compensate for such impacts. The terms for this accommodation are forthcoming.*

*Virtual workshops will be offered in partnership with McMaster, regarding a variety of professional topics. Details will be offered in the next few weeks.*

*Advising services will continue be offered virtually, including advocacy, legal aid, and tax aid. There may be an increased offering of tax services in the future due to current success. Incidental fees will be amalgamated for the Fall term. The two groups of fees will be listed as the GSA Association Fee and the GSA Administered Fees. Membership can opt-out of the latter fee. Fee costs may be modified within the next few weeks.*

*GSEF, the GSPA, and the GSA have jointly funded the Graduate Student Thesis Completion Award. The GSA has also contributed to the Contingency Bursary This will support students in Spring and Fall terms. The conversations about studio and lab spaces are ongoing. Students will be able to come back to campus gradually. That being said, the University has committed to offering residents to students in the Fall. Waterloo Ready will work at providing community engagement and resources during this time.*

*The demand and accessibility of counselling services have become a concern. Management has been working with Campus Wellness to develop resource solutions for service delivery. Wellness Collaborative will be launching a campus-wide event and providing additional resources to address some of these issues as well.*

*The provision of advocacy services was discussed in the context of decision-making processes at the University during the pandemic. Meetings were held with Arts, Environment, Science, and Engineering Associate Deans in order to provide advocacy for the membership. The expectation of supervisors, as well as TA positions, training, and wellness were discussed. The advocacy efforts have also addressed funding, spaces, and services. In addition to discussing these concerns with representatives, the University has indicated that Fall 2020 Orientation will likely be virtual due to COVID-19. The rest of the President's Report was discussed after addressing the GSA statement.*

## **6. Presentation**

**4:29**

### **a) Update on the Fall semester – Casello**

**4:29**

*There were a number of conversations regarding how student relations would transpire during the pandemic. There was an announcement indicating that the Fall term classes will predominantly be offered online. Faculties have differed in their approach to this transition. On the COVID-19 website details are offered regarding each faculty's approach.*

*The website offers information on which academic activities will be held in person, and which will be offered remotely. Some academic activities facilitated remotely will facilitate synchronous engagement, while others will require asynchronous engagement. Synchronous engagement strategies will primarily be executed due to*

*their necessity for specific instructors or courses. Synchronous engagement will not be graded in order to accommodate diverse student needs. Asynchronous engagement will be the most predominant method for educating students. Asynchronous engagement is aimed at accommodating international students and making course milestones more accessible overall.*

*The library plans to introduce curb-side pickup for research assets that are not available online. It is also exploring the option of joining a consortium of libraries in order to make a larger pool of research assets accessible virtually. The Council Chair will coordinate further updates on this service.*

*Due to the state of emergency, the provincial government is only allowing essential research on campus. This includes research on COVID-19, as well as studies that work with live, non-human specimens. Research that would risk losing essential equipment or samples due to the halting activities may be permitted. In an effort to provide more transparency, guidelines on campus activity and the definition of essential research will be provided to graduate students in the near future.*

*After the provincial government lifts relevant restrictions, researchers will be invited to return in a phased process. Pls will submit a request for campus access to faculty deans, who will prioritize research and seek approval from the Office of Research. It is recommended that researchers have a copy of their permission to utilize facilities on campus.*

*The safety of POC utilizing research facilities on campus during COVID-19 is also discussed. A statement of the University's political position on policing and the ongoing anti-Black racism in Canada is requested, alongside policy aimed at protecting BIPOC. It is suggested that Diana Perry could help develop the statement and policy in the near future. It is also suggested that more training be offered to assure the safety of BIPOC going forward.*

*University leadership has three working groups addressing COVID-19. The finance and contingency working group is collaborating with the Safety Office in allocating funds to implement health and safety plans. The academic and learning working group is concerned with the academic elements of the Fall term. The third group concerns research accommodations amidst the pandemic. The Health and Safety Committee is providing input, alongside GSA representatives.*

*Supervisors will provide plans to ensure the safety of working spaces. Researchers will not be forced to attend campus if they feel unsafe. However, if a student feels unsafe, they are encouraged to speak to their supervisor, escalate issues to their dean, or further escalate issues to Casello when necessary. There will not be explicit policing or monitoring of strategies, which is why the communication of issues is imperative to maintain the safety of researchers on campus.*

b) Open letter to GSPA and GSA – Robinson-Enebeli

5:00

*The Mechanical and Mechatronics Department drafted an open letter addressing the impact of COVID-19 on program progression. While students appreciated the safety measures that have been taken, some believed that additional strategies may be employed to better accommodate the needs of students. Management clarified that the restrictions were mandated by the provincial government. That being said, the letter outlined how some students cannot move forward without access to labs. It also indicates that students require more updates during this time.*

*The university has indicated that further direction will be offered in 6-8 weeks. Councilors express that the concerns of this letter should be brought to the attention of Management prior, to ensure that future communications consider the concerns of graduate students. This will address concerns about transparency amidst COVID-related developments and restrictions. Councilors are encouraged to offer feedback to the Chair. The Chair will collect the concerns and communicate them with Management.*

## **7. Reports**

**5:18**

### **a) GSA statement regarding solidarity – Samuel/Billedeau**

**5:18**

*The GSA's statement on diversity, inclusion, and anti-racism was discussed. The letter addresses policing and racially motivated violence in Canada and across the world. The GSA will be donating \$1,000 to the Black Lives Matter movement. The GSA will also donate an \$1,000 to community-based organizations focused on promoting racial equity within the Region of Waterloo.*

*Councilors offered feedback on areas to improve messaging. Some Councilors stated that the existence of white supremacy should be articulated in order to adequately address the root of anti-Black racism and violence. Attendees engaged in a discussion of identities, experiences, and privileges, expressing a variety of perspectives on the sufficiency of language. It was noted that the start of such conversations are important to developing anti-racist strategies going forward.*

*The development of a Director of Equity role is discussed. Some Councilors expressed that this could be broken into two roles, one for Race and one for Gender. Management will consider numerous aspects of equity in the further development of personnel (e.g. LGBTQ2S+, ableism, etc.).*

*Two petitions were brought to the attention of Council. The first demands that the University of Waterloo and St. Jerome's University hold a professor accountable for the continued use of racial slurs in class. The second demands the addition of a mandatory anti-racism course for all students and personnel in each faculty. Some Councilors suggested that these petitions be endorsed by the GSA, circulated by GSA communication platforms, and be brought to leaders of the University. The GSA will have additional discussions to determine the next steps.*

*Councilors also discussed the opportunity to facilitate meetings twice a month. The impact on human resources was considered. The option of hosting an informal meeting to address the limitation of resources is discussed. The option of having shorter formal meetings twice a month is considered. The coordination of schedules were also discussed as a potential limitation. Future communications will determine the possibility of meeting more frequently.*

*Council returned to a discussion of the President's Report. The President is in discussion with StudentCare regarding legal services. The brief verbalized concerns that Councilors provided have been considered in these discussions. Councilors who wish to offer more detailed feedback should do so as soon as possible. Communication announcing the provision of this service will be made soon.*

*The extension of eligibility for health services was discussed with StudentCare as well. This negotiation concerned graduate students who may not be able to enter the workforce at the moment due to COVID-19 restrictions.*

*Students cannot opt-in to Spring GRT services over the phone because credentials are needed. Typically GRT services are limited to full-time students; however, they include part-time students this term. Communication on this service were delayed due to the resource constraints of multiple stakeholders during COVID-19.*

b) Update from the Speaker – Robbins 6:10

*The Speaker discussed the necessary costs of governance with respect to honorariums, meeting resources, and training events. Other costs include that of colloquiums and retreats.*

*The Speaker also provided a meeting schedule indicating dates until May 2021. If a second meeting per month is needed, it will be chosen so as not to conflict with Board meetings and the schedules of Management personnel.*

*Council revisited the idea of hosting multiple meetings, one being informal. This will ensure that resources are not constrained.*

c) Update from the Recruitment Task Force – Hampton 6:21

*The Board is accepting applications for a Board Director positions that have opened. The opportunity to engage more deeply in the GSA decision making process is highlighted. The difference between Councilor and Director positions is outlined. These differences lie in the legal and governance responsibilities. Directors set the strategic path of the GSA, approve budgets, fulfill legal duties, learn about decision-making relationships, and receive updates from Management and committees. Councilors interested in these responsibilities, including those who have passionately participated in Council discussions or are seeking the opportunity to vocalize their perspectives more thoroughly, are encouraged to apply. The Board appreciates that a variety of skillsets and perspectives are beneficial to its operations.*

*Although the previous campaigning period has ended, there will be a call for applicants before the next AGM. The Directors will be elected at the AGM, which will be scheduled according to updates on COVID-19 restrictions.*

*It was noted that Directors of the Board require 10-15 hours of work per month. Further questions were directed to [gsacosec@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:gsacosec@uwaterloo.ca).*

*The voting capacities of Councilors and Directors were discussed. More information on voting authorities will be made clear.*

d) Update from the JPRC – Reid 6:34

*JPRC proposed policy changes to GP-5, 10, 11, and 16. These policy changes have been approved by the Board in first reading. GP-10, 16, and 8 require approval from Council. GP-10 discusses President appointment, GP-16 discussed Vice President appointment, and GP-8 is the Council policy. The Board requested feedback on GP-5, 10, 11, and 16 in preparation for the second reading, especially with regard to GP-10 and 16.*

*The role fulfillment standards for the President and Vice President were clarified. The President reviews the performance of the Vice President. The re-nomination*

*process is dependent upon whether the President is satisfied with the Vice President's performance.*

*The interim succession process was also discussed. The fulfillment of the President position is the priority in interim succession circumstances. Councilors asked for a more formal process for Vice President appointment.*

*The involvement of Council in appointing executives was questioned in relation to the inability to renew executive roles. It was clarified that reappointed executives are employees of the corporation and must be managed according to human resource practices and legislation on fair treatment. It was clarified that the Board ultimately has say on the approval. The Board is democratically elected at the AGM and the opportunity to become a Board Director was reiterated.*

*Councilors requested clarification on Council being removed from areas of GP-10 and 16. This change was made according to the recommendations of the Board and JPRC to account for legal and financial liability. It was clarified that Councilors are accountable to their constituents, but the Board is accountable to the entire membership. The role of communicating with constituents is the prime responsibility Councilors, and feedback from membership has indicated that the visibility of Councilors should be improved. The proposed policies clarify roles so that Councilors may refocus on this accountability. Members were invited to voice concerns on Director accountability in a Special Meeting if issues arise in the future.*

*JPRC will follow up on feedback. Motions are postponed until a later meeting.*

**6. Presentation 6:58**

a) Departmental and Faculty GSAs – Billedeau 6:58

*The documents that outline the repositioning of DGSA's with Faculty GSAs (FGSAs) were briefly described. This change could optimize academic, social, and funding capacities. Authority structures within the GSA were discussed with relation to the proposed changes.*

*Councilors voiced concern about the diverse interests and needs across different departments within the same faculty. It was proposed that FGSAs could be responsible for overseeing DGSA's.*

*Further discussion will occur at a later meeting.*

***Motion to extend the meeting by 15 minutes (Robbins/Reid). Denied (y/n/a) (8-11-9).***

**8. Adjournment 7:20**

**Meeting adjourned at 7:20PM.**