



GSA COUNCIL

Notice of Meeting

July 8, 2020

4:00PM – 7:00PM

Zoom Meeting (Details in Outlook Invitation)

AGENDA

Time	Item	Action
4:00PM	1. SPEAKER'S WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS	-
4:05PM	2. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA	For Approval
4:06PM	3. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS	For Information
4:07PM	4. ATTENDANCE	For Information
4:08PM	5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES a. June 3, 2020	For Approval
4:10PM	6. REPORTS a. Update from the Board – Stirling (10 mins) b. Advising the President – Samuel (40 mins)	For Information
5:00PM	7. PRESENTATION a. Graduate studies as a parent – Wiciak (10 mins) b. Fossil Free UW – Johnston/Dordi (25 mins) c. VPNC (Confidential Session) – Billedeau (15 minutes)	For Discussion
5:50PM	8. CONFIDENTIAL SESSION	For Discussion
7:00PM	9. ADJOURNMENT	-
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MINUTES

1. Speaker's Welcome and Opening Remarks 4:01

Robbins took the chair and called the meeting to order at 4:01. Max Salman asked to speak for a few moments to bring up the idea of beginning Council meetings with a territorial land acknowledgement. Robins agreed and allowed Salman to state the land acknowledgement. He discussed the need to not only state the land acknowledgement, but to take further steps to recognize the needs of our Indigenous constituents.

2. Adoption of the Agenda 4:07

Motion to approve the agenda. Approved unanimously.

3. Conflict of Interest 4:08

Members of the Board and Council stated that they have a conflict of interest regarding the Fossil Free UW presentation.

4. Attendance 4:09

Sgandurra and Ouellette took the attendance.

5. Approval of Minutes 4:11

a) July 8, 2020

Approved.

It has been decided that anyone who phones in states their name as they are unable to participate in the chat and adjust their name

6. Reports 4:04

a) Update from The Board – Stirling 4:04

There were 4 items up for discussion. The first is the Board's decision regarding unionization, which was discussed later in the meeting. The Board also discussed the nature of role of councilors and Council. They Recognized the need to discuss Council feedback and councilors must be in communication with constituents. This communication should revolve around feedback rather than decision-making authority. Feedback should be shared with executive team, and the executive team can then report on how this feedback helps with the decision-making process.

AGM date will need to be approved at the next meeting. The date yet-to-be formally approved is Thursday August 20th and it will be a virtual AGM. Councilors can state that nominations will begin next week.

b) President's Update – Samuel 4:19

The President explained that the format of the advising the President session has been adjusted based on feedback from Council from last meeting.

The Director of Communications spoke to equity development in the GSA, voicing concern regarding the timeline during which the post regarding the #EquityForWho regarding Diana Perry requested endorsement. RAISE, BASE, WUSA, etc.

provided an online campaign addressing Diana Perry who runs the HREI office, addressing indigenization. WUSA asked the GSA to sign the agreement and post on communication platforms, but were only given 24 hours to do so.

As a director who has been heavily invested in anti-oppression and anti-racism for the last little while on campus, and in the KW community for 14 years, she expressed that to sign something without consulting our BIPOC constituents as to how they wish to approach this matter would have been committing the same act of violence that our administration has committed against BIPOC students. The GSA refused to sign without this consultation.

Equity has been an issue discussed by students for the past 3-5 years and is only being addressed now. The GSA has had the land acknowledgement on the website for the past few years and recently shared an anti-racism statement. The GSA understands there is a concern as to whether the GSA is doing enough in this regard. Therefore, to sign upon WUSA's request would have been a false statement of the GSA doing the work. This is an opportunity to do the work and to be held accountable. Consultation is imperative for Council to set the direction of the GSA. To sign and not have received feedback from Council and BIPOC membership would be inappropriate and irresponsible. This also gives the opportunity to consult BIPOC students on this matter. The GSA has been able to reach out and establish partners for feedback on this role to minimize tokenization.

Incidental fees for fall term are currently being discussed. Fees for any service that will not be accessible or will be significantly reduced will not be charged. Most services are expected to be up and running either virtually or in person next term.

The Council for Responsible Innovation and Technology from the Office of Research is seeking applicants for a committee. This will be a great opportunity for graduate students to develop their research.

There has been a student led initiative from grad students from mechanical engineering for an interdisciplinary research platform. Executives are working with Administration to set this up.

AHS has had brown bag lunches, anti-racism task force. Students from this faculty are worried about what will happen in the fall term such as fees and classes (such as cost versus quality of these classes), or international student issues. A lot of the support needed are also surrounding anti-racism issues, mainly race-based collection of data. A campus wellness survey deliberately removed race and ethnicity demographics from the survey. What the AHS would like the GSA to focus on is: what can the GSA do to help support departmental GSAs in their advocacy for anti-racism action? One idea is during orientation: an anti-oppression and anti-racism GSA messaging, i.e. a presentation from a GSA councilor. Another concern is students who go over time due to COVID. An example of this would be the inability to collect data and be part of programs due to the nature of the research being face-to-face. There seems to be no support to extend coverage/funding. Students seem to be deferred to their supervisors for support, of which their supervisors are unable to do so (financially).

Engineering has been seeing some engagement with constituents. A large issue is relating to experimental research where not all labs are open yet. The faculty has been lenient with moving milestones, but students who have experienced significant delays in their ability to complete their work are wondering if the GSA would be able to support advocating for the completion of their work. Another issue in this faculty is the anxiety over getting back into labs and offices. Constituents

would like information on a timeline. Additionally, inquiries regarding whether courses online would cost the same without having the quality of in-person courses. Engineers have also suggested having a communication platform for collaboration and communication amongst grad students and Departmental GSAs.

Science faculty is finding it difficult as access to labs has been extremely limited which is reducing their ability to do any work, particularly for students who ~~are doing pilot projects require experiments to run for 12-14 hours~~. Students are also not allowed to wait in their offices while their experiments run, but rather are ~~told asked~~ to wait in a shared space, which makes it difficult to do work. ~~Part of the issue is lack of space already, such as 4 students per office, so being forced out of their offices makes it even more difficult. This has also posed issues with accessing data in confidential areas and/or finishing on time.~~

Pharmacy department has set up ~~teams Teams~~ accounts and town halls, ~~though there seems to be low attendance.~~ Constituents have been wondering about extensions of milestones and funding.

Physics representatives discussed tuition fee reduction as an issue. The University needs to communicate clearly organized graduate student information, as there is a lot of confusion right now. When the university is making decisions for what to do next, they want to see a grad student actively involved in this process rather than asked afterward.

Earth and Environmental Sciences are unable to stay in their offices while they wait for their experiment results. Students need equipment from several labs to complete their work, but accessibility is extremely limited.

Biology students are allowed to stay in offices while experiments are running in the labs, so things seem to be a bit better. Issue is that some labs are allowed to re-open on a limited basis with scheduling, but others are not. It is unclear why some are and some are not. Other concerns include the lack of involvement in the decisions from the university as to how students would stay safe, and things are rather strict and complicated, such as signing out equipment 24 hours in advance, but not all students know which equipment they will need in advance. In an effort to keep students safe, there has been a lot of confusion.

Questions regarding the statement of racism and the #EquityForWho – would have liked for a discussion with Council before making the decision that the timeline was too short. Response from Communications was that the GSA councilors need to do more work to engage with constituents and do the proper anti-oppression work.

7. Presentation

5:09

a) Graduate studies as a parent – Wiciak

5:10

The presentation focused on reviewing the research regarding issues and resources applicable to graduate student parents in order to look into avenues for more support. After a thorough literature review was conducted and a small survey was sent out, the conclusion of the report focused on different ways to advocate for addressing the issues and offering better support for graduate student parents. Further, it was noted that the survey sample was rather small, and therefore some more research may be required to give other recommendations that address more specific issues.

For dental, the costs are \$700 per year, whereas health care is approximately \$150 per year. Graduate students are not considered employees, which means they are not entitled to the same benefits as UW employees.

Another point was raised by a councilor that the University of Waterloo seems to be tied with McMaster and Queens in terms of how much is offered per policy year, whereas others are significantly lower.

Another point was also raised regarding the health and dental plan being under the board's approval, so it is important for the Board to know feedback from parents in order to better make decisions. Therefore, A bigger sample size, possibly university-wide, is needed to provide more information for a recommendation.

Questions regarding part-time students and how their concerns would be addressed, as they seem to be falling through the cracks. The response was that it seems that more support is needed for part-time students as they are often part-time for a reason. One way is to either offer more support to part-time students, or to have some options for students to remain full-time.

b) Fossil Free UW – Johnston/Dordi

5:20

The document outlined the work of Fossil Free UW regarding the need to act on carbon intensity and the University's potential divestment in fossil fuels and associated industries. Carbon neutrality is a different approach than FFUW has looked at to date, and a timeline is needed for this issue to be resolved. FFUW is looking at GSA Council to endorse the carbon-neutrality position and commitment to speak to it before the UW Board of Governors.

There have been some concerns raised regarding graduate students whose research focuses on fossil fuels. This was addressed by explaining that this is something that will not be solved over night because of the heavy reliance on oil, even in the context of being in a state of climate emergency.

The meaning of carbon neutrality was questioned in relation to downstream users and the end goal. Response was that the fossil fuel divestment historically started with withdrawing everything, but now there is research investigating relationships such that the goal is to minimize carbon intensity in the investments. This is an iterative process, hence the lack of concrete timelines.

Communication with students who have careers laid out in working in the fossil fuel industry was addressed. A "just" transition is needed. At the moment, there will still be opportunities in this sector, but as the movement towards the Paris Agreement continues for 2050, the number of opportunities will decrease. In fact, in some instances with pipeline construction, economic infeasibility is beginning to appear.

***Motion to endorse the carbon-neutrality position. (Robbins/Sanniti).
Approved (y/n/a) (23-2-13) (Van Dyk from Biology voted against).***

Motion for the GSA to speak to the FFUW merit before the UW Board of Governors. Motion tabled.

c) VPNC (Confidential Session) – Billedeau

5:53

Motion to enter into a confidential session (Robbins/Samuel). Approved (y/n/a) (25-1-15).

8. Confidential Session

6:58

The structure of the GSA, roles of executives, and other topics were discussed.

9. Adjournment

8:19

Meeting adjourned at 8:19PM.