



GSA COUNCIL
 Notice of Meeting
 October 7, 2020
 4:00PM – 7:00PM

Zoom Meeting (Details in Outlook Invitation)

AGENDA

Time	Item	Action
4:00PM	1. SPEAKER'S WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS	-
4:02PM	2. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA	For Approval
4:03PM	3. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS	For Information
4:04PM	4. ATTENDANCE	For Information
4:05PM	5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES a. September 2, 2020 (deferred until November)	For Approval
4:05PM	6. UPDATE FROM THE BOARD – Reid (5 mins)	For Information
4:10PM	7. GSPA @ COUNCIL– Casello (20 mins)	For Discussion
4:30PM	8. SEXUAL VIOLENCE PREVENTION AND RESPONSE OFFICE @ COUNCIL – Ross (15 mins)	For Information
4:45PM	9. BOARD DISCUSSIONS a. Role of Boards – Hanmer (30 mins) b. Conflict of Interest – Stadig (45 mins)	For Information
6:00PM	10. COUNCILLOR FEEDBACK – Robbins (25 mins)	For Discussion
6:25PM	11. UNIONIZATION a. Update on OrganizeUW (10 mins)	For Information
6:30PM	12. RESEARCH CONTRACTS a. University Expenditures – Baizhiyenov (15 mins) b. Animal Welfare – Keymanesh (15 mins)	For Discussion
7:00PM	13. ADJOURNMENT	-
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Minutes:

1. Speaker's Welcome and opening remarks:

Robbins takes the chair and calls the meeting to order at 4:00pm

2. Adoption of the Agenda:

04:03 pm

Motion to approve the agenda. Approved unanimously.

3. Declaration of Interests:

04:04pm

4. Attendance:

04:04pm

Chugh takes the attendance.

5. Approval of Minutes

September 2, 2020 minutes were deferred until November.

6. Update from the Board

04:05 pm

The new Board Chair (Jennifer Reid) introduced herself and mentioned that she has always been passionate about improving the student experience. She was selected as the Chair in September 2020 and she ensured that the Board follows the good governance principles and keeps the communication channels open between the Board and the Council. She also mentioned that as a leader, her goals were to foster an environment of inclusion in making the decisions as a whole Board and to oversee the management activities in the existing reporting structure. She also prioritised the bigger picture decisions that only the Board can address such as governance, strategic and fiduciary matters. She mentioned that with respect to Board Council relations, her hope was to build the trust and empower the Council. Council is a bilateral part of the GSA because the main communication is between the GSA and its members.

She mentioned that in the past many Directors have expressed the desire to clarify the role of the Council in the governance model of the GSA as this would help the Councillors to know how their contributions can help shape the organisation. This would also help the Council and the Board to find a common solution, and with the help of group discussions, both the Council and the Board can agree on any governance level changes. This involvement would help people feel that they are contributing meaningfully towards GSA. She also mentioned that feedback would be taken in the month of November from the Council about Council governance.

The Council Speaker asked what the motivation behind the Director on her switch from the Council to the Board was. She said that the Council's role in the GSA motivated her to apply for the Board and she wanted to empower the Council and to bring in the clarity on Council's involvement in the decision-making process.

7. GSPA @ Council

04:15pm

Jeff Casello from the GSPA mentioned that they received many applications from students who wanted to return to campus to resume their research work and wanted to have access to their office spaces and labs. Students were using different pathways for the requests. The GSPA has been working with the Associate Teams in the Graduate Faculty to have a single point of contact in each faculty for making the requests for returning to the offices and labs. The second factor was the criteria which would be needed to make these requests transparent and available to all the students. The criteria to get back to the University would be valid if the students were facing any of the issues like student care issue, child-care issue or any wi-fi related issue. However, there exists both an upper bound to the number of students who would be physically present in the University and a temporal building occupancy limit.

The Councillor from Physics and Astronomy raised a question on whether there existed any graduate student representative for COVID19 safety planning on campus. Casello replied that he would discuss on this issue with the President and would work on having a graduate student representative. He also mentioned that there was a Medical Advisory Group which does the real-time monitoring and was formed by the Vice President Research and International and was shared by the Director of Medical Services. He also mentioned that there were public health professionals and University Administrators on campus. He also mentioned that there was another group who sat around the campus and the Public Health Group reported to this association who sat around the table. This group is supposed to be an Advisory Board which was once called the Central Planning group.. Casello proposed that he himself can advocate for students and would like to meet with them.

The Councillor from Management Sciences asked for clarity on quarantining and onboarding related restrictions that the University was imposing on the incoming international students as the IRCC had relaxed the travel restrictions. Casello mentioned that some work was being done on travel plans as they had just received the travel updates from IRCC. Casello also said that there exists a quarantine plan which was being developed by the Associate Provost students and this would lead to many more International students coming in. They would provide update on it when they have an estimate of the volume of the students coming in.

The Councillor from Management Sciences asked for clarity on late fees being charged to students even if the students paid their tuition fees a day before the deadline and it gets acknowledged by the Student Financial Services. He said that due to the lack of co-ordination between the Management and the Financial Services, the students were being charged a late fees even if they paid their fees before the deadline. As a result, students were barred from the courses and did not have access to the subjects on LEARN and due to which they were unable to access their coursework material. Casello said that the discussions were being done on it as this challenge was faced every term

and there were liabilities associated with students not paying their fees on time when they were present on campus. He mentioned that there were number of reminders sent out to students before the deadline for the fees. A solution to that would have been to inform the financial services about the circumstances and they would intervene and help them.

Casello gave an update on the recent information on COVID-19 on the campus. He mentioned that there was a dashboard that would be available to the community that would keep a count on the number of cases on campus and the cases that were identified in the past 14 days. If the University exceeds a certain threshold, there can be a temporary shutdown. Labs and workspaces can also be shut down temporarily. The in-person course delivery will also move to the remote delivery if the outbreak happens. If there is an outbreak in the residence, the students would be instructed by the housing staff on the next steps. Most likely, the students would be asked to return to the residence and stay isolated. Some discussions were going on based on these protocols. As per the data, Casello mentioned that the University was experiencing no casualties.

Casello gave an update on the Academic Readiness Bursary and the student's accessibility to those funds which reflected that the bursary should cover the COVID19 related expenses. These expenses could be the connectivity (i.e. Wifi) related expenses. During the Fall term, the University was funding students to help them out. If an undergraduate student were seeking financial help, they could do it through Quest and for the domestic students, it was through Student Financial Services. If the student was an International student, he/she had to go through GSPA for getting the access to the bursary. They have been separated because the GSPA had history of dealing with Bursaries for International students whereas Student Financial Services had the history of dealing with domestic Graduate students. Guest Speaker mentioned that students faced issues with the Bursary forms which were later simplified for the students to get the bursary and the money.

The Councillor from English Language and Literature raised a concern whether this bursary would be separated from the Contingency Bursary in future. She also mentioned it was not ideal to do it and many students had not applied for the bursary out of the confusion on the eligibility.

The Councillor from Germanic and Slavic Studies requested for clarity on the eligibility criteria for the Bursary for the domestic students as the requirements for the OSAP applications were not clear.

Meaghan Ross (Sexual Violence Response Coordinator) wanted to make people aware on how to respond in the case of a sexual violence. She mentioned that there was a 24-hour Sexual Assault Support line which was available to the supporters as well the survivors and to the people over the age of 16, irrespective of their gender. She emphasized her role as a Coordinator was to provide support to the people who were impacted by the sexual violence. She mentioned that there were people involved in spreading awareness and some of them were from the GSA who were involved in the campaigns, events, workshops, trainings, and collaborations. Students were also involved in Policy 42 which would help in enhancing the University's response to sexual violence as they have a proper sexual violence task force and services like counselling sessions for providing help to the survivors and the supporters.

Teaching assistants encounter various students and there might be instances where TAs might face assault or harassment. In the online delivery system, cyber harassment, domestic and intimate partner violence is on the rise. Communities with different identities and different populations are the most targeted. Indigenous people as well as people of colour or with disabilities tend to be targeted the most.

She also mentioned that the survivors who are graduate students note the power that their supervisors have in terms of academics and opportunities in terms of employment and conferences. She also mentioned that the campus activities largely relies on the communication aspect. In the cases of sexual violence, the Graduate students face the inability to speak to their supervisors even though Graduate students themselves support other students on campus.

She mentioned that the policy that pertains to the conduct of the students was Policy 42 if the student commits sexual violence. Staff members who commit sexual violence commit relates to Policy 33. Many people occupy both the roles and this can be seen from the procedural document which policy applies to them. She also mentioned in the cases where there were immediate risks of suicide or harm, one can contact Emergency Medical Services, Crisis Counselling or UW police.

The Coordinator also mentioned that there was no higher rate for false complaints or women taking revenge and there was no provision to handle false complaints/ anonymous complaints on the campus.

9. Board Discussions

a) Role of Boards

04:50 pm

The Speaker invited Sandra Hanmer (Capacity Canada) to speak on the Role of Boards. She mentioned that the Boards work as a legal construct for the GSA which is a registered not for profit corporation. She mentioned that the GSA's history revolved around the time when the Graduate Society wanted to have a club incorporated as a

Graduate Club. In the initial times, during the certification and with the help of subsequent letters, it emerged as a Graduate Society. Once the organisation becomes incorporated, it must follow number of laws and policies which were common for all the organisations. GSA is incorporated provincially and hence it follows all the provincial legislations and requirements. As the GSA is in City and Region of Waterloo, it must follow the municipal laws for business. GSA was developed as a Graduate Club in the past to promote mutual interest of the members and to provide mutual interest of members and to provide social engagement amongst members and friends. By-laws are the guiding principles of the functioning of an organization. The GSA has adopted a parliamentary approach with the way the bylaws have been structured. A statement in the bylaw states that the Council should govern the social and political activities at GSA in University of Waterloo. It also outlines the policies and procedures on how the Councillors are appointed at the GSA. The rules that govern an organisation are outlined by the bylaws.

Hanmer also mentioned the difference between policies and procedures. She mentioned that GSA has opted for the Carver model for the Board to structure things and focus on the outcomes. There were three modes of governance: fiduciary, strategic and generative. Hanmer also highlighted some key roles of Boards like hiring and managing the staff members, setting the strategic priorities, monitoring of the organizational performance and the Board performance, risk oversight by mitigating risks, and governance systems and process which includes nomination process and succession planning.

The Board Committees will have clearly defined terms of reference. There are no binding authorities other than the Boards. The GSA Council (recognized in the bylaws) has also established different advisory groups to help do some of the work of the Council. Within the Corporation Act of Ontario, there should be a nominating and finance function from an oversight standpoint. Hanmer also mentioned that there were certain requirements for an ideal Board member. She also emphasized on 4C's of Succession planning which included Courage, Collaboration, Character and Covenant.

The Council Speaker asked if there were any other GSAs set up as not for profit corporation across Canada. Hanmer replied that she was not able to find any GSA which was not for profit corporation. She also mentioned that in the case of GSA-UW, there was a property that the Graduate Society wanted to occupy which may be why the GSA became a not for profit corporation.

The Council Speaker asked how GSA would be compared to the other students' corporations. Hanmer replied saying that in some Universities, either the Council was called as a complete structure or there would be Executives functioning in the capacity of the Board.

The Board Chair asked how a committee would interact with the Management and asked about the nature of the relationship. Hanmer replied that there could be leaders within the senior leadership Board that could be assigned the work. There could be committees of the Council making recommendations and Council making further recommendations to the Board.

b) Conflict of Interest

05:23 pm

To assist Councillors in understanding GP-20 (Conflicts of Interest), the Council Speaker invited Gwenyth Stadig, a member of the GSA's legal team, to speak at the Council meeting. Stadig mentioned that the laws through the policy apply generally to any organisation. She also mentioned that there was a significant turnover in being a member of the Council or the Director, so this policy was a way to fill out the knowledge gaps that people get lost in within an organisation. Conflict of Interest is a duality of interest.

This policy works as a barrier that exists to prevent a member/Director from being impartially loyal to the interest of the corporation and which further affects the decision-making process which GSA is always engaged in when it comes to roles and duties. Conflicts can arise in both personal and professional life. The policy defines conflicts very broadly in the Section 4 and also deals with perceived conflict of interest. The whole idea of this policy was meant to promote disclosure even if there were disagreements amongst the members and the Council. She also mentioned that if the conflicts on the disagreements are not seen properly under the policy, it can have the negative impact on the decisions made by the corporation. It applies to members, directors, officers, employees, and the volunteers. Councillors can speak to the Chair of the Board and convey in a detailed and confidential manner any conflicts that arise. There is an appropriate procedure that the person goes through to know whether the conflict had arisen, and this maintains the confidentiality and protects the organisation. Conflict of interest can happen with volunteering roles as well and they can be demanding as well. Compensation is defined very broadly in the policy which includes gifts, scholarships or favour of significant value could be seen as a compensation and this needs to be disclosed so that appropriate steps can be followed by the Board of the GSA. The purpose of this policy was to protect the people in the organisation and the decisions made in an organisation. The provisions are standard and reflects the law that people need to follow in an organisation.

The Councillor from Physics and Astronomy asked how the policy would work for the Council Members. Stadig replied by saying that the way the Council has been structured in relation to the GSA and is a committee of the GSA. Council makes decisions which relates to its mandate and the decisions of the GSA Board are passed onto the Council. Therefore, the policy applies equally to all the people involved in the decision-making process within GSA.

The Councillor of Germanic and Slavic Studies said that the volunteers do not have big roles to play in GSA like signing contracts within GSA whereas it was mentioned by Stadig that if the conflicts of interests arise, they can be solved by providing a raise or providing any kind of family benefit to the volunteers for resolving the issue. Stadig mentioned that there were no default duties on Fiduciary roles. There are duties that the volunteers have a role to play in a perceived conflict of interest might arise in a situation where recommendations might be asked during a decision making process because there might be duality within that type of contract. Whenever there is an additional relationship to the contract itself, there might be objections on the nature of the contract and what parties would be involved in making that decision with respect to the contract.

The Council Speaker raised a concern on how to manage time with this policy being effective. Stadig mentioned that the Board makes decisions regarding conflicts of interest. This could be tackled after the meeting hours and should be brought to the Board of Directors by the Council Chair. The Councillor from Germanic and Slavic Studies asked for clarity on aligning Declaration of Interest section with the conflicts of interest as Declaration of Interests was done in the start of the meeting and since conflicts of interest was an individual process and was on case by case basis, how would this be aligned together. Stadig mentioned that disclosure should be in confidential way. This policy was an alternate means to the Declaration of Interest.

The Councillor from Management Sciences asked if one can accept gifts from an external stakeholder, would that count under resolving of the conflict of interest. Stadig replied that in such scenarios, it is good to let the Board Chair know that you have received the gift.

The Council Speaker asked why different policies exist in different universities. Stadig replied that each university was different, and they were different legal entities. They have freedom to employ policies at their own level, but the laws apply uniformly to different organisations. She mentioned GP-20 was best for the GSA since it was shorter (6 pages) and fosters disclosure in a confidential way. It also applies to everyone. The Council Speaker asked about disagreements between members and the direction of the GSA. There might be different of opinions that can be voiced out. With respect to healthy disagreements, the members can call out meeting or elect members if right procedures are followed. Conflicts of interest is more about personal relationships.

The Councillor from SERS wanted to know how far the range of personal relationships might go. Stadig clarified that the relationship need not be disclosed if the roles were immaterial to the decisions being made. In these cases, the Board Chair will be the one to decide whether the conflict of interest exists or not.

The Council Speaker highlighted the areas that required feedback this month. The first area of interest was student's handling teaching and TAing in the present term and the second area of interest was issues faced by making the term online.

The Councillor from Philosophy suggested to revise the TA handbook (that was sent to their department recently) with respect to the online mode of teaching that would highlight issues related to online teaching such as grading and teaching which would help graduate students to manage their time effectively.

The Councillor from MDEI mentioned that they had received comments about LEARN and got suggestions to shift the classes on Microsoft Teams as that was easier to use in the online mode of delivery for studies.

The Councillor from History added that in History department, two new TA positions (TA mentor and Community Organiser) were formulated. Their department were expecting some synchronous learning for the following term.

The President mentioned that the GSA will be issuing surveys in the coming weeks and they were engaged with administrator for the governance.

The Vice President (Administration) suggested that Councillors talk to the Executive about the issues that their departments were facing. She also highlighted that the GSA was onboarding new members from Stratford and Cambridge Campus.

The Councillor from Master of Peace and Conflict Studies mentioned that the budget for TAs was cut and there are less TA's appointed per course and TA responsibilities were exceeding 10 hours a week, yet are only being paid for up to 10 hours of work.

The Councillor from Germanic and Slavic Studies gave some suggestions to the concerns mentioned above. She mentioned that there were some series of workshops about online TA. There were also some webinars held in her department and she mentioned that she could arrange one webinar on the online teaching if anyone was interested. She also highlighted issues from her department which was students facing motivation related issues, students suffering delays in the research, students not being able to travel to archives and University was still operating on the model of one term extension. She suggested to focus on the issues of getting funding extensions as milestone extensions are of value of funding extensions are provided. She also mentioned that some graduate seminars were being held in her department on Teams.

The Councillor from Computer Science raised a concern that the TAing process was not well-structured as each professor structures their course to have different demands and responsibilities. He also mentioned that there were no contracts for the requirements for TAing the courses.

The President mentioned that he would follow up on the issues faced by the TA's with other stakeholders .He also mentioned that the lack of standardized roles and responsibilities of TA's have been a long run issue. This was an ongoing issue.

The Councillor from MME mentioned that with everything going online, there was significant pressure and leaning on the TA's as the professors were busy recording the lectures. He suggested to have more TA's or some accountability on how many hours TA's were spending each week.

The Councillor from ECE mentioned that the instructors were sending out the TA hours after the contract deadline had passed. She suggested to have the TA hours to be sent before the contract's deadline.

The President mentioned that the issues faced by TA's were mainly faced because of everything going online but not being compensated for it.

The Councillor of Global Governance, who also works with the Centre of Teaching Excellence, mentioned that she posted some resources in the Slack group to help individuals to work with their instructors.

The Councillor of History raised a concern that some students who have opted out of Student Care plans have not received their payments from the previous terms.

The President suggested the students to contact him directly.

11. Unionization

a) Organize UW update

06:24pm

One of the union organizers gave an update on the Current and the Upcoming events on the behalf of the Committee to Organize uWaterloo. She mentioned that the first Webinar on Unionization+ Health and Safety was held on September 17 and the video was available online. Some ads were also out on local news sites. Also, the first Faculty Webinar was scheduled for Oct 15 at 3pm.

There were some ongoing events like open drop-in Q&A discussion sessions, "Name the Goose" campaign to win prizes and Social Media ads, newsletters, Peer to Peer card-signing.

She also discussed some of the events that were coming up like Faculty-specific and issue-focussed webinars, in person card signing event, a feature in the UW Bulletin podcast and a Blurb that was coming up in the GSA Newsletter.

She discussed about the current focus areas that included Health and Safety concerns which involved communication and protocols on safe return to the campus. It also

involved concerns about the International Students with respect to the TA work that was done by the students who were staying abroad. Some other concerns that she mentioned were Immigration status, equity and access on campus which involved reaching out to the anti-racism campaigns. This includes involvement in connecting students to other campus groups and informing students about key issues.

The ongoing needs included Card Signers who could sign up by going to the OrganizeUW website. She also mentioned that the volunteers could help with the events and share posts on social media or in a private chat group. They could share stories about their experience being a TA, with diversity or as a worker as it helps to know about the student experience.

She mentioned that they were looking for people who would like to get involved, hold webinars, discussions, and Q&A's. There are general info-sharing webinars that are held, and she mentioned that they were looking for people who would like to get engaged and connect with their peers. For the webinars that were faculty-specific, they were looking for people from Engineering, Science and Math. For the issues-focussed webinars, focus groups were International students, students from diverse groups and passionate/informed allies.

12. Research Contracts

a) University Expenditures

06:34pm

The researcher provided a report on the University Expenditures in Canada and presented an overview of his research methodology. The main recommendation that came out from the report was reducing spending on the administration and faculty and on general operating expenses as well as lower tuition fees. The University needs to provide additional funding to improve the experience for the students in the time of Covid-19. He noted that the University has operated with income greater than the expenses in the last five years.

The Councillor from Statistics and Actuarial Science asked about the aggregate numbers that were used for schools which have very different distributions for both domestic and international students, graduate and undergraduate students, and for specialised schools such as medical schools.. The researcher replied that he looked on the total numbers and didn't focus on specialised schools and didn't differentiate as graduate or undergraduate but he has a form which has the percentage of graduate and undergraduate students that each school has. He also investigated the revenue obtained by each of the group by the University and financial statements of the Universities. He mentioned that representing the spending as a percentage of the total income could mitigate the size differences or other differences.

The Vice President (Administration) recommended to add some explanation before releasing the final report to differentiate the report for the graduate and the

undergraduate students as the University of Waterloo focusses largely on the undergraduate students.

A Director raised a concern on how these recommendations and the report would help to carve a path towards achieving the objectives of the GSA. The President answered to this by mentioning that by reviewing and recommendations, this would help in advocacy efforts and all of these reports after being vetted through Council are tabled with GSRC (Graduate Students Relation Committee) and then the conversations are then forwarded to the stakeholders.

The Council Speaker asked what the most important recommendation for the GSA would be based on the research. The researcher replied that University could increase the funding for the students, be it operational or administrative, as the report was based on the data that was outside of COVID19 and the University has operated on the surplus over the number of years. He said advocating on spending more money on the areas which need more attention would be the best thing now in the time of COVID-19.

The incoming Councillor of German and Slavic Studies asked if there was any data on how much spending goes into the financial support for the Graduate students. The researcher mentioned that he came across data that was breaking up faculty wise and was not divided based on graduate and undergraduate students. The incoming Councillors also asked whether the data was divided into different areas like administrative/faculty/operations, to which the researcher answered that he took help from financial statements and used the numbers separately which broke out because it had data from various Canadian Universities which was partitioned as administrative spending, operational spending etc..

b) Animal Welfare

06:49pm

The researcher provided key recommendations on Animal Welfare at the University of Waterloo. She mentioned reducing the number of animals that were used in the experiments and to design the experiments in such a way to minimise the pain of the animals. She mentioned to be flexible with the methodologies by making use of the simulations.

The first key recommendation was to provide a detailed policy for each specific action in animal research like transporting animals, animal housing etc. The University of Waterloo can add more policies which are comprehensive enough for Animal Welfare. The second recommendation was to have online courses for the people who work with animals at the University of Waterloo. The next recommendation was to assure that choosing an animal species which would not harm the biological diversity. She also suggested that the GSA dedicate a section to animal welfare. She also recommended on introducing a club for animal welfare which increases the knowledge set of people

about animal rights. The last recommendation was to provide an organization for animal emergency.

The Councillor from Biology noted that all the recommendations mentioned above already existed in the University. The researcher clarified that she compared the policies with other Universities and felt that the policies at UW were less detailed and there were some gaps. The Councillor from Biology asked if there was any reason behind the recommendation on having animal welfare clubs in the University. Keymanesh added that she suggested to have club so as to increase student's and staff knowledge on animal welfare.

The Councillor of Biology mentioned that the department receives a lot of harassment with respect to animal research.

The researcher suggested that the most important recommendation for the GSA would be to revise policies and make them more comprehensive. The other recommendation would be to offer courses for the students.

13. Adjournment

07:03pm

Meeting was adjourned at 07:03pm