



**GSA COUNCIL**  
Notice of Meeting  
 April 7, 2021  
 4:00PM – 7:10PM

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>	-
4:02PM	<b>2. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA</b>	For Approval
4:03PM	<b>3. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS</b>	
4:03PM	<b>4. ATTENDANCE</b>	For Information
4:04PM	<b>5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES</b> a. February 24, 2021 b. March 3, 2021	For Approval
4:05PM	<b>6. UPDATE FROM THE BOARD – Reid (5 mins)</b>	For Information
4:10PM	<b>7. FUNDING TRANSPARENCY AND REOPENING – Small group discussions (50 mins)</b>	For Discussion
5:00PM	<b>8. UW PRESIDENT@COUNCIL – Hamdullahpur (30 mins)</b>	For Information
5:30PM	<b>9. BREAK (5 mins)</b>	
5:35PM	<b>10. SPEAKER ELECTION – Robbins (30 mins)</b>	For Discussion
6:05PM	<b>11. PRESIDENTIAL NOMINATING COMMITTEE – Reid (15 mins)</b>	For Discussion
6:20PM	<b>12. GP-8 – Reid (20 mins)</b>	For Approval
6:40PM	<b>13. ORGANIZE UW UPDATE (5 mins)</b>	For Information
6:45PM	<b>14. HOUSING SURVEY - Yeung (15 mins)</b>	For Information
7:00PM	<b>15. QUESTIONS ON KPI REPORT – Billedeau (10 mins)</b>	For Information
7:10PM	<b>16. ADJOURNMENT</b>	-
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## **MINUTES:**

**1. Speaker's Welcome and Opening Remarks** **04:01pm**

*Robbins takes the chair and calls the meeting to order at 04:01pm.*

**2. Adoption of the Agenda** **04:03pm**

*Motion to approve the agenda. Approved unanimously.*

**3. Declaration of Interests** **04:03pm**

*A Director declared a conflict of as they are seeking the position of the Council Speaker.*

**4. Attendance** **04:03pm**

*Chugh takes the attendance.*

**5. Approval of Minutes** **04:04pm**

*The minutes of the February 24, 2021 meeting and March 3, 2021 meeting were approved unanimously.*

**6. Update from the Board- Reid** **04:04pm**

*The Board Chair gave an update from the Board. The Board made changes to Bylaw 7 which incorporated Council's suggestions for adding the collaborative language. With respect to the role of the Council, President gave feedback that timeline is more realistic as stated in EL-11. The Board would consider a reading for GP-8 policy and asked the Councillors to provide feedback on it.*

**7. Funding Transparency and Reopening** **04:09pm**

*Within small group discussions, the Councillors discussed funding principles, funding transparency and concerns reopening of the University in Fall 2021.*

**8. UW President@ Council- Hamdullahpur** **05:04pm**

*The UW President mentioned that the University of Waterloo is the University where undergraduate and graduate studies are given an equal importance. At the University, teaching, research, and scholarships go hand-in-hand across the whole spectrum and disciplines of programs.*

*The UW President mentioned that being a graduate student is a unique experience as you have an undergraduate degree, and you are passionate for what you are doing. The University can make you excel in an environment that is intellectually stimulating, financially helpful, and conforming. University of Waterloo has become graduate student friendly and supportive. He said that there are strong voices to back up graduate students and have been working towards graduate students' advocacy.*

*The UW President mentioned that he holds himself accountable and responsible to ensure that the excellence being offered by the University. He acknowledged that the University has experienced racism and the University has been making efforts so that people from all the religions, race and color are valued. The University has been working towards ensuring that everyone feels safe around the campus environment. He pointed out that a lot of work is to be done to raise awareness through free education and live experiences. The main aim is to bring everyone to the intersection of the race, ethnicity, and gender. The biggest contributor to it will be PART. The policies were always there and will be there, but the main aim is to establish awareness, establish respect for everyone and establish a safe environment. There will be more resources to recruit more BIPOC faculty members. Specific efforts will be devoted to the recruiting process. BIPOC faculty members will be provided with the environment where they would feel comfortable and could find their true reflection. Work is being done in this regard.*

*The UW President mentioned that the students with mental health issues are the most vulnerable population of students. He said that significant additions like more counselling services and health centres have been made. He said that the University is not completely equipped with health care providers and advanced level mental health requirements regardless of how many resources are injected into the system. The University does not have psychiatric health resources. Regardless of this, the University has been adding significant resources on the diversity side of the mental health issues as many students indicated that they needed people with whom they would feel comfortable while communicating. The council student mental health committee is implementing the recommendations of the President's advisory and is about to finish the implementation work and submit it to the UW President. The UW President mentioned that the nature of the mental health challenges has changed over the pandemic because of isolation, workload and students not being able to find a comfortable environment. The University data shows that there has been a decrease in the number of mental health cases which is contrary to what the situation looks like. This is because the students found it difficult to report to the councillors and health care professionals. The UW President requested the students not to ignore mental health related issues.*

*Casello added that the graduate students should know that there is a holistic graduate student experience review going on. The University realises that there is a need to address the root causes as much as the need to treat the symptom with respect to mental health.*

*The UW President said that the Provost is receiving direct instructions from him to ensure that the student experience is on the top of the agenda. The strategic plan of the University has been indicated to the Provost. He mentioned that other vice-presidents are very much involved and hold themselves accountable for delivering the requirements for the student experience.*

*A Director asked if there will be any data recording/collection practice that will be put into action while increasing the number of Black and Indigenous enrolment to track the progress of the change in the number of Black and Indigenous students on campus. The UW president replied that one of the difficulties the University has faced is that it is unable to collect the data. University is relying on voluntary disclosures because the root cause of non-declaration of Indigenous roots is that students do not feel comfortable doing it. So, the priority is to make the people with Indigenous roots comfortable. The goal is to provide the value that is being offered at the University of Waterloo. The numbers can be brought into this discussion by establishing*

targets. The UW President mentioned that he wants every department and program to have the presence of Indigenous peoples.

The Councillor from Germanic and Slavic Studies asked for specificities of the activities that were being done by the University to encourage the departments to make the positions available for recruiting more Black and Indigenous faculty members. The UW President clarified that he has never seen graduate students as a source of income. He mentioned that the University is not experiencing any financial challenge. University of Waterloo is a decentralised university where each faculty has significant freedom to expand their budgets that are provided by the university. In the current resource allocation budget model, there is a proper process of providing funding. The faculties are not micro-managed and can do however they want to allocate the budget. The micro-management is done on how the allocation of the positions is specifically targeted for Black and Indigenous family members. The University will ensure that is a strategic process which will have the maximum impact and will further open doors for more recruitment. Each faculty will get equal number of positions. There are significant resources available for supporting the BIPOC students on campus. Casello mentioned that the University has the most diversified pool of applicants. He mentioned that there is an increase in attention amongst the faculty colleagues to be purposeful in the composition in the incoming class. Academic quality should be the topmost driver for admission for the graduate students. GSPA has been working with the faculties to advance the diversity around the campus. He mentioned that a major attraction for the BIPOC community at UW should be a place where diversity is celebrated which can be a value proposition as well. The UW President asked what is one thing that have been making the graduate students question their decision of studying at UW and how can UW President and Jeff Casello help to address it.

The Council Speaker mentioned that the Council has concerns on increasing the transparency of offer letters and engagement in more discussions about how much funding the graduate students can receive. Casello clarified that the offer letter explicitly mentions the financial support for the graduate students. They have been working towards resolving the net expenses of tuition and living costs. They have been trying to implement a calculator for the students to use to assess the cost-of-living expenses

**9. Break** **05:37pm**

**10. Speaker Election- Robbins** **05:43pm**

*Included in the confidential session minutes.*

***Motion carried in confidential session: Tyler Hampton was elected as next Council Speaker***

**11. Presidential Nominating Committee- Reid** **06:20pm**

*Included in the confidential session minutes.*

**12. GP-8- Robbins** **06:39pm**

The Speaker Council gave an update on bylaw 7. He mentioned that the Board has considered the Bylaw 7 as per the Council's feedback.

*The Speaker Council mentioned there is another policy of the Council, GP-8, which needs alterations. So, after excessive consultations with the Council over the past few months, the governance committee is recommending that the policy preamble to GP-8 be changed as was presented such that the “near term” was removed along with other changes that were presented. GP-8 specifically talks about Council and talks about Council as individuals*

*The Board Chair mentioned that the Board considered the changes in the first reading on March 31<sup>st</sup>. It is important to have Council feedback on it before the Board gives a second reading in May.*

*The Councillor from Germanic and Slavic Studies raised a concern on GP-8 (7) which indicated a fringe on the councillor’s right to attend the meeting. He expressed a concern if the meeting venue would be able to hold all the councillors. The Board Chair expressed that they have never encountered this kind of problem in the past and if this kind of issue arises, it might take up some planning and time to solve it within short notice.*

*The Councillor from Physics and Astronomy asked for clarity on the format for notifying the Councillors about the Board meetings. The Speaker Council replied that the format at present is to forward the calendar invitation sent by the Board Chair. The calendar includes the meeting package including the agenda. He mentioned that he has not been sending the invites for the Board meetings to the Councillors for them to not feel overwhelmed. He asked if the Councillors were interested to attend the Board meetings, he can take that into consideration.*

**“BIRT Council supports the proposed amendments to GP-8.”  
(Robbins/Teodoro)(approve-reject-abstain) (26-0-1)**

### **13. Organize UW Update**

**06:52pm**

*The Councillor from Applied Mathematics gave an update on Organize UW. He mentioned that events like Faculty of Town Hall and School of Planning Town hall was held in the past. He said that the outdoor organising will be happening soon.*

*Organize UW sent out a survey to gauge the effectiveness of the scheduled pause survey and 68 respondents took the survey. He mentioned out of 68 respondents, only 13 respondents took time off and the vast majority did not change their behaviour. There was low level of awareness with respect to the scheduled pause. He mentioned that according to the survey, respondents mentioned that the extra supplemental fees has played a major role in the decline of mental health and the removal of this fees would help them to improve their mental health. This extra supplemental fee is a cause of concern due to the extension in degree milestones.*

*The card signing process has been updated and simplified.*

### **14. Housing Survey-Yeung**

**06:58pm**

*The Vice-President (Administration) presented the housing experience survey results. The Councillor from Statistics and Actuarial Sciences and the Vice-President (Administration) worked on the housing survey. She presented a timeline of the survey. Nick Revington and Amanda McCulley tabled the GSA-UW Research Contract on Local Housing Issues. The key points highlighted in the report included affordable housing for students, prejudice against the*

*student-type housing versus non-students type housing, grad specific populations like grad parents and international population. This led to a discussion with WUSA who was putting out a housing survey and GSA partnered with them to launch the survey in December 2020.*

*The survey was based on four parameters: demographics, student satisfaction including maintenance and quality issues in housing, student behaviour and stressors.*

*The Vice-President (Administration) presented the results with the help of Eikosograms. A majority (Group 4) of STEM 1<sup>st</sup> years are not living in Canada and may never get a chance to.*

*566 graduate students responded to the survey. The largest representation was of PhD students, off-campus, and domestic students. She mentioned that the domestic students are less likely to live on campus but are more likely to live with family than international students. Most of the respondents live in the Kitchener-Waterloo region. Most of the off-campus students reported to live in the non-student catered housing.*

*In terms of satisfaction, pests and vermin were the most common quality issues. Other maintenance issues included broken appliances, problems with heating and ventilation, poor water quality, mold or mildew, and plumbing issues. Students living on campus faced issues with the water. Mainly off campus students had more than one issue as compared to the on-campus students and off campus students with family. The students were asked if the housing was able to meet their needs after accounting for housing costs. A quarter of respondents were unable to meet their basic needs after paying for housing out of which 13% are domestic students and 33% are international students. The survey asked the students about the budget towards the housing. 51% to 81% of the budget towards housing and 37% of students selected the answer. More than 13% responded to the answer who considered more than 81% of their budget towards housing. She mentioned that the on-campus students were doing better in terms of affordability of the housing. Off campus housing has a large variation depending upon where the student lives. Students living with family reported that they were failing to afford basic needs. Roughly half of the students experience 1 or 2 maintenance issue every semester. Students living in the student-targeted housing face more issues per semester as compared to the students living in non-student targeted housing.*

*In terms of behaviour, majority of the students are unaware of the resources like WUSA Off Campus Housing Service, Studentcare Legal Protection Program etc. Legal actions deal with issues with landlords. People have signed illegal clauses. International students are less likely to recognize illegal clauses than domestic students.*

*In terms of stressors, some questions were asked in the survey from the students. International students have faced the circumstances like inaccessibility to housing because of the lack of support that they might need in Canada. 68% of the students felt that they were at a risk of homelessness during their time as a UW student.*

*The predictors that were used for framing the results of the survey were type of housing, type of student and student location.*

*The Councillor from Physics and Astronomy asked if there would be any more housing surveys done in the future as there were discussions doing rounds on funding based on living and*

*shelter costs. The Vice-President (Administration) said there would not be any more surveying done on housing from their team as they have been working on other issues.*

*The Councillor from Germanic and Slavic Studies asked if there was any data available on where and how the student were financing for the housing. The assumption would be to rely on the funding provided by the University or the savings that students hold. The Vice-President (Administration) replied that the survey did not include this question, but this would be considered for the future housing surveys. This question is asked in the Vital Signs survey.*

**15. Questions on KPI Report- Billedeau**

**07:14pm**

*No questions were asked on the KPI Report.*

**16. Adjournment**

**07:15pm**

*The Council Speaker expressed his gratification for his tenure as a Council Speaker. He mentioned that since the past four months, there is a lot to accomplish. Council has been made a little more efficient by introducing small group discussions. Council continued to grow with GSA providing feedback to the University. The role of Council Speaker has been taken up by Tyler Hampton and he would be briefed about the role using Councillor's handbook.*

*Motion to adjourn the meeting was passed at 07:15pm.*