

Graduate Student Association UW

Council

Meeting Minutes

September 1, 2021

Primary Meeting

Date: September 1, 2021

Time: 4:00 P.M. to 7:00 P.M.

Place: Virtual

Council Speaker: Tyler B. Hampton

Minutes Taker: Niveta Chugh



MEETING ATTENDENCE

Name	Department/Position	Attendance*
Tyler Hampton	Council Speaker	P
MK Stinson	AHS - Rec & Leisure Studies	P
Kalsha Diaguarachchige De Silva	AHS - Kinesiology	P
Sue Sherifali	AHS - Public Health & Health Systems	P
Danielle LaBrash	Arts - Political Science	P
Elizabeth Scarlette	Arts - MPS	A
Ethel Zlotnik	Arts - MDEI	A
Iman Sultana	Arts - Peace & Conflict Studies	P
Jessica Gill	Arts - Sociology	P
Kennedy Westlake	Arts - Psychology	P
Jillian Adams	Arts - Accounting & Finance	P
Khusro Mir	Arts - Economics	A
Lara El Makkawi	Arts - English Language & Literature	P
Chris Martin (next councillor)	Arts - English Language & Literature	P
Lisa Duggan	Arts - Religious Studies	A
Madeleine Pinard	Arts - Global Governance	P
Sam Schrim	Arts - Germanic & Slavic Studies	P
Sarah Galarneau	Arts - Fine Arts	P
Tasneem Alsayyed Ahmad	Arts - Philosophy	P
Teghan Barton	Arts - History	P
Akshat Atray	Eng - Management Sciences	A
Nastaran Mosavari	Eng - CEE	P
Jared Uramowski	Eng - MME	R
Cindy Yang (next councillor)	Eng - ECE	P
Mozhgan Sadeghianlemraski	Eng - ECE	P
Nargess Heydari Beni	Eng - SDE	P
Wali ur Rehman Zia	Eng - MBET	P
Anju George	Enviro - Planning	A
Yusof Ghiasi	Enviro - GEM	P
Tia Driver	Enviro - SEED	P
Misty Matthews-Roper	Enviro - SERS	P
Jyler Menard	Math - Computational Math	P
Mojtaba Valipour	Math - Computer Science	P
William Bell	Math - Applied Mathematics	A
Caleb Ryan	Science - Biology	P
Jesse St Jean	Science - Pharmacy	P
Antoine Hakim (next councillor)	Science - Pharmacy	P
Juliette Teodoro	Science - Optometry and Vision	Po
Asiya Jabeen (next councillor)	Science - Optometry and Vision	P

UW GSA Council Meeting Minutes – September 1, 2021

Michael Chapman	Science - Physics and Astronomy	P
Joshua Woodcock	Theo - Theological Studies	A
Naima Samuel	UW Senate	R
Onurcan Gokkaya	UW Senate	
Max Salman	UW Senate	
Ala Mokhtar	GSA Board	P
Jessica Lee	GSA Board	A
Natalie Isobel DeBloeme Barcellos	GSA Board	P
Yashesh Dasari	GSA Board	P
Nicholas Palaschuk	GSA Board	R
Elham Mohammadi	GSA Board	P
Samira Mehrabi	GSA Board Chair	R
Yi Abby Wang	GSA Board	P
Ruby Aigbotsua	GSA Board Deputy Chair	P
Amir Hosein Sadeghi Isfahani	GSA Board	P
David Benjamin Billedeau	GSA President	P
Glaucia Melo	GSA VP Administration	P
Zabeen Khamisa	GSA VP Communication	P

*Attendance

P – Present , R – Regrets , A – Absent (no regrets)

AGENDA

Time	Item		Length (min)	Action
4:00 PM	1	SPEAKER'S WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS	5	
4:05 PM	2	ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA	1	For Approval
4:06 PM	3	DECLARATION OF INTERESTS	1	
4:07 PM	4	ATTENDANCE	1	
4:08 PM	5	APPROVAL OF MINUTES - July 7, 2021 - June 30, 2021 - August 4, 2021	2	For Approval
4:10 PM	6	Updates from the Speaker	5	
4:15 PM	7	Thank Yous for Attendance and Commitment	5	For Information
4:20 PM	8	UPDATE FROM THE BOARD	5	For Information
4:25 PM	1	Welcome to new Directors and Councillors, new VP, and new GM	10	For Information
4:35 PM	10	August KPI Report	5	For Information
4:40 PM	11	Organize UW Update	5	For Information
4:45 PM	12	Update on FAUW vote, Further Advocacy for COVID Safety Measures on Campus	15	For Information
5:00 PM		Break	5	
5:05 PM	13	Review of Spring Council Agenda and Progress	10	
5:15 PM	14a	Discussion: Council Annual Agenda and Advocacy Positions	15	For Discussion
5:30 PM	14b	Breakout Rooms	45	
6:15 PM		Break	5	
6:20 PM	14c	Aggregate from Breakout Rooms	30	For Discussion
6:50 PM	15	Update from the President	10	
7:00 PM		ADJOURNMENT		

MINUTES

1. Speaker's Welcome and Opening Remarks 04:02pm

Hampton takes the chair and calls the meeting to order at 04:04pm.

2. Adoption of the Agenda 04:05pm

Motion to approve the agenda. Approved unanimously.

3. Declaration of Interests 04:06pm

No conflicts of interest were declared.

4. Attendance 04:06pm

Chugh takes the attendance.

5. Approval of Minutes 04:07pm

- July 7,2021**
- June 30,2021**
- August 4,2021**

The minutes of July 7th, June 30th and August 4th Council meetings were approved unanimously.

6. Updates from the speaker 04:08pm

The Council Speaker mentioned that he has created a poll asking about the Council's status from the time it has run under the new Speaker and about the training the Councillors have received. The Council Speaker will be sending out an email to the councillors to fill the survey.

The Council Speaker mentioned that there are no plans for an in-person Council meeting. The options available for the in-person locations are UW Senate Chamber in Needles Hall and the new space in SLC. He said that about 50 people can be accommodated in those spaces. The council community can be built up by having social events at the Grad House by keeping safety in mind.

The Council Speaker said that the council elections were happening. There were elections happening in Canada too. He had included information about the voting in the meeting package. Other updates were that a climate rally is to be held on September 8th at 12:00pm at Waterloo Public Square.

The Council is working on securing the UW President for the October Council Meeting.

Committee openings were listed and there were openings for Environment and Math faculties. JPRC has openings too and it is responsible for delegating and reviewing GSA's policies and proposals or revisions.

The Council passed amendments to CP-4 in August. There were some updates to the policy. The

Council Speaker will submit a report to the Board in the September meeting to summarize the changes discussed in August.

7. Thank You's for Attendance and Commitment 04:18pm

The Council Speaker thanked people for their engagement and full attendance in the Council meetings.

8. Update from the Board 04:19pm

Ruby Aigbotsua gave an update from the Board. She mentioned that the Board successfully held elections and found new directors. The Board has approved the GSA's budget for the 2021-22 academic year. The Board has approved re-appointment of VP (Comms), Zabeen Khamisa. The Board has appointed a new VP(Admin), Glaucia Melo. The GSA's logo re-design process is still going on and contest is not closed. The submitted designs will be reviewed by the Board in the fall term.

9. Welcomes to new Directors and Councillors, new VP, and new GM 04:21pm

The Council Speaker welcomed the new Vice-President (Admin), Glaucia Melo. Glaucia Melo mentioned that she wants to work with GSA's informed initiatives and wants to move them forward.

Rita Cherkewski, the new General Manager said she has a lot of graduate experience and is looking forward on assisting GSA pushing forward any policies, bylaws etc.

Nathali, Yashesh, Ala, Jessica joined as new Directors.

The new councillors from English, Pure Math, Optometry, ECE and Pharmacy were welcomed, and they introduced themselves.

10. August KPI Report 04:26pm

Glaucia Melo presented the KPI Report feedback. Glaucia said that the GSA has had various events like Community Stroll, BIPOC Collective Solidarity Chat in the month of August. She mentioned that the GSA-UW Management and Support Staff participates in multiple stakeholder meetings across campus and external to the university. There were some council updates like summary of the management's accomplishments and MJ Singh presenting a research contract results to the GSA-UW Council on higher education and governance.

She mentioned that 2021-22 budget has been approved. Also, the GSA provided a space for the students to talk about the stressors as TAs at the University of Waterloo through the GSA's 4th Candid Talks with Grads event. She gave service updates too with respect to processing refunds.

The President said the summer was invested in getting the budget approved for GSA.

11. Organize UW Update 04:30pm

MK Stinson gave an update on Organize UW. There are several events hosted by GSA like GSA Orientation on September 7th as well as GSA Barbeque Lunch on September 10th.

Organize UW is also hosting OUW Info Booth and Union Trivia Night.

MK Stinson listed some of the Equity Principles and Goals which were highlighted on the website. Equity Committee have been putting in a lot of work in drafting principles and action plan.

Organize UW asked for feedback on experiencing hardships due to Covid19, discrimination as a TA or sessional and people who have experienced precarity.

12. Update on FAUW, Further Advocacy for COVID Safety Measures on Campus 04:35pm

The Council Speaker gave an update on Mandatory Vaccination Campaign. He mentioned that the detailed feedback that was received from the poll said that UW had a very oddly worded policy announced on August 9th which said that “self-declaration” was required. On the same day, the Faculty of Association of University of Waterloo (FAUW) having an open letter asked for a clear vaccine mandate. On August 11th, WUSA joined FAUW letter with an asterisk that the motion went to Executive Council who is empowered to make these kinds of decisions and didn’t go to WUSA council. Then, UW added more confusing language that said the UW had a “mandatory attestation” policy and did not sound different from policy on August 9th. On August 18th, the GSA Council joined the FAUW Letter. There were announcements from Ontario Universities between August 18th and August 24th that laid path for what Universities could do but ultimately on August 24th, UW announced that the proof of vaccination is required.

The Council Speaker provided the Council E-vote update. The motion to hold the e-vote passed and the motion to join the letter also passed. The Council was notified of the upcoming e-vote.

A motion was raised.

“Be it resolved that the individual votes cast on the electronic vote from August 17-18 be destroyed by the Speaker.” (Hampton/Stinson) (28-0-0)

The motion passed unanimously.

The Council speaker presented the results of the reports. There were five advocacy positions for the GSA and there was strong majority support for all the five positions. The Council Speaker mentioned that the results said that the UW should maintain the supply of vaccines. He mentioned that SLC is rolling out free rapid antigen tests that can be picked up and UW maintains the supply of vaccines. Other priorities were UW informing students of how their specific vaccine doses may affect important research activities such as travel within and outside of Canada. UW should prioritize the privacy of medical information including the specific vaccine doses received. UW should make testing readily available for vaccinated individuals as well. UW should readily inform TAs and sessional instructors of any requirements in their assisting enforcement and contributing to campus Covid19 safety measures and pay them for such trainings.

The Council Speaker mentioned that he received a lot of feedback on poll and there was a need for clarity on what UW considers as “fully vaccinated”. International students do not know what doses UW considers as UW differs in opinion on it from Health Canada.

The Councillor from Pharmacy felt that there won’t be a full representation in a council meeting

if e-vote is considered and moved forward with. The Council Speaker said that there was a little participation in the first 12 hours of the poll. The Councillor from Pharmacy pointed that it is obvious that people who were against the motion would not vote in an e-vote. The Council Speaker clarified that there is an option to convey “No” on the motion as the council needs 2/3rd of the votes to pass.

The Councillor from Germanic and Slavic Studies asked for clarification that if the person has received one dose of Sinopharm or other WHO approved vaccines but has not done a full course of those vaccines, does that mean they have to do a full course of other full series of health Canada approved vaccines. The Council Speaker replied in affirmation.

The Council Speaker mentioned that the international students should reach out to ISE team for any doubts.

The Councillor from Germanic and Slavic Studies asked if the GSA could provide a flow chart for the international students to move back into the campus so that the students can clearly know what they must do.

The Councillor from Peace and Conflict Studies mentioned that she tried contacting the school for the confusion around vaccines and suggested on having something like this which could be easily accessible would help. The school should make the mandate around the vaccines as straightforward as possible. The Council Speaker asked if the constituents of their department connected to ISE. The Councillor from Peace and Conflict Studies said that she will have to check if the constituents connected to ISE.

The Council Speaker pointed that ISE has the potential to tackle situations revolving around international students.

The VP(Comms) said that for communication around the vaccine mandates, she can reach out to people who made it and can get the confusion be cleared. The Council Speaker asked if GSA has an International Student Coordinator and if there is any slack or discord channel where students can ask these questions.

The President said to reach out to ABP of communication as he is handling all of it. The VP(Comms) mentioned that the international student handout space can be made more informative.

Break **04:58pm**

13. Review of Spring Council Agenda and Progress **05:05pm**

The Council Speaker presented the Council’s Annual Agenda. In the Spring, the Council Speaker introduced discussions on funding principles, questions on students and vaccinations, ensuring safe return to campus and being part of Equity Justice at UW. He gave an update on all these issues.

Discussion on funding principles: *In Winter 2020 and Winter 2021, the council had rejected the proposed funding levels due to lower levels of funding by GSPA. It does not stop the funding from happening and does not stop the University from doing what it wants. The GSPA extended an all*

the branches and tried to collaborate with GSA on funding principles which were value-oriented sentences that were meant to convey why the University should pay graduate students, the amount it does. This was discussed on June 2, 2021. There is a lot of uncertainty attached with GSA going into winter 2022 to increase funding and agreeing with GSPA on fair and equitable funding principles. This update was about the long game for winter 2022.

Update on students and vaccinations: *Many students have been vaccinated, and all the grads are eligible for the vaccination. UW has been committed on having an on-campus vaccination center. The communication can be made better on what vaccines have been approved for international students.*

Safe Return to Campus: *For safe return to campus, UW has a mandatory policy. Further advocacy is needed for the access to those vaccines and continued working from home if students need that and access to campus if students need that. The unaddressed issue is that what would enforcement look like in Fall term and will campus safety involve special constables.*

The Councillor from Accounting and Finance added that she is a sessional instructor for the fall term and in her instructor package, she got some instructions on safety measures. As an instructor, they are supposed to enforce the mask mandate and call the students out in the middle of the class if they are not wearing their mask. If the students do not correct their behaviour, the instructors can call the police and can interrupt the class. The Council Speaker asked if that package specifically said, “campus police”. The Councillor from Accounting and Finance corrected that the package said, “special constables”.

The Council Speaker mentioned that he is concerned if the special constables would get involved with the students. He said that there will be more campus updates on it. He updated that the Ontario government said that the Universities need to have a mandatory vaccination policy, but some distancing measures can be relaxed. UW says that they will continue their hybrid online classes. UW has not said that they will be relaxing the distancing requirements as the vaccine mandate is not the be all end of safety.

Being Part of Equity and Justice at UW: *Discussions on equity have been going on. GSA has not engaged with WUSA, RAISE, Equity4Who and other equity groups on campus. GSA Board will be considering equity policies in September meeting and will be asking for Council feedback in October. A concern that was raised was that does GSA need to lend a hand on certain issues since PART has been slow during the spring term.*

The VP(Comms) mentioned that a new equity coordinator has been hired.

14. 14a Discussion: Council Annual Agenda and Advocacy Positions 05:15pm

The Council Speaker provided an update on the Council Annual Agenda and Advocacy Positions. He provided a review of GSA's priorities.

- Corporate objects
- Mission, Vision and Values
- Strategic Plan (2020-2023)
- The Ends
- Political Positions

Corporate objects are part of Letters Patents (1972) and Supplementary Letters Patent (1982).

Mission, Vision and Values involves serving the graduate student society and simplifies the work done by the GSA.

Strategic Plan outlines the four 4 major strategic priorities:

- *Enhancing GSA's advocacy and representation efforts to better support graduate students*
- *Promoting equity, inclusion, and diversity at all levels*
- *Building community to foster a sense of belongings for graduate students*
- *Pursuing excellence in governance and service delivery*

The Political Positions were consolidated under major Themes:

- *Ensuring ethical academic, employment and social policies for University of Waterloo Graduate Students*
- *Encouraging the UW and wider region of Waterloo community to be leaders in sustainability*
- *Mitigating barriers to pursuing graduate education in Ontario*
- *Supporting student mental wellness*

Ends are the most numerous of the GSA's priorities. Ends are very similar to Strategic priorities providing positive social and academic experience. They also present the representation to UW Administration and to the government.

The revision processes for GSA priorities: -

1. Corporate objects:

- *The Governance Oversight Committee of the Board recommended for the GSA to revise its Corporate Objects in Spring 2021*

2. Mission, Vision, Values, Strategic Plan/Priorities:

- *Set by the Strategic Planning Committee will begin planning in 2022*

3. The Ends:

- *The Council recommends Ends and changes to Ends (Policy GP-1)*
- *The Board consults with Council and ultimately approves changes to Ends*
- *The President's and Management's work is driven by the Ends (Policies EL-5 and EL-8) and communicates to Council the progress made and consults on strategies (Policy EL-11)*

4. Political Positions

- *The Council declares political positions (Policy GP-8)*

UW GSA Council Meeting Minutes – September 1, 2021

- *The Speaker + Council Executive Committee annually reviews and recommends changes (Policy CP-4)*

The Council Speaker mentioned that the council has a role in two important sets of GSA priorities (Ends and Political Positions) which guides the work of the organization throughout the year. He wants the councillors to discuss current issues and map them alongside the priorities according to the department, faculty, university, and community for different durations (months, years or for multiple years) in the breakout rooms. The Council Speaker provided a Google form for breakout groups to fill their respective responses.

The Council Speaker shared the GSA Council Priorities Survey.

The Councillor from Pharmacy raised a concern that the upcoming councillor was in the council meeting, and he wants him/her to be in the same room as the existing councillor. The Council Speaker said he did not include the possibility of the new councillors being in the same room while making the breakout rooms.

14b Breakout rooms 05:31pm

Break 06:15pm

14c Aggregate from Breakout Rooms 06:20pm

The Council Speaker used the Survey distributed during the meeting to collect responses.

Breakout Group 1:

- *Discussions regarding having few positions that were important to move forward and most of them were positions for advocacy like representation of opportunities representations and funding.*
- *Discussions about labour equity issues, administration issues and fighting against these issues. There was a need to represent labour as an equity issue.*
- *Councillors felt that they should fight for funding equity. This includes adequately representing housing, funding and how those things blend into health and mental health.*
- *Discussions on how the grad students should be treated with dignity.*

Breakout Group 2:

- *Mental health is a big issue and the services for helping the students with mental health should be available to grad students amongst faculties.*
- *Housing prices should be brought under the local government's consideration.*
- *Concerns on how to get different information to the constituents.*
- *Discussion on how agendas for each council meetings should be given to the councillors before the meeting so that some feedback and discussions can take place. Before the council meetings, the councillors can submit a discussion topic. This improvement can be used as a guide to improve the engagement in the GSA.*

Breakout Group 3:

UW GSA Council Meeting Minutes – September 1, 2021

- *Evaluation process of the priorities was big and was not substantial. Ends was the hardest to follow through.*
- *The priorities should be sorted based on importance.*
- *One of the main priorities should be equity in terms of monetary compensation in terms of being a graduate student as this could solve 90% of problems for grad students.*
- *Equity in terms of representation of Arts and Humanity versus Science and Math departments should be brought to focus.*
- *Grad students should be respected for being in Arts and Humanities.*

The Council Speaker asked if Ends was hard to follow on the website or the way it was put down on the survey. The Councillor from Pharmacy replied that it applied to both if the survey was an appropriate representation of the website. He also said that a lot of the GSA's priorities were in such a way that no one could ignore any one of it as it explains the reason why GSA exists. Another councillor pointed that they felt that pursuing excellence and governance service delivery, always went together. They felt that SP1 and SP2 were not of the same priority.

The Council Speaker said the income levels and equity impacts daily life of grad students than for the University to have solar panels as it does not impact your daily life. So, they can be separated.

The Councillor from History mentioned that most of the issues that are linked with environmental issues do not impact our daily lives, but we have made a commitment to indigeneous representation on campus. These issues are linked with environmentalism and diversity issues that we agreed upon. They are all interlinked.

The Councillor from SEED said that being from sustainability management, she felt that the concept of sustainability needs to be properly worded and should have a holistic approach.

The Councillor from Pharmacy suggested that a future survey should have a rating value to see which priorities are more important and this would have great results on how which ones important relative to each other.

The Councillor from Political Science agreed with the Councillor from Pharmacy. She suggested that ranking avoids the interlinkage between the different priorities. Now, the equity issues cannot be separated from the financial issues.

Breakout Group 4:

- *Councillors struggled to do the binary ranking and they had trouble distinguishing between what was the top priority in general and what was the top priority in times of the pandemic. This was the case with most of the Ends and SP's.*
- *A lot of the councillors were new, and it was difficult to access what was previously held and meant.*
- *Council should address housing and quality housing issues for the graduate students in KW region and in Cambridge too.*
- *Funding packages are not adequate and do not fulfill the demand for daily living*
- *Housing crises are skyrocketing.*
- *Researchers should only be stressed about research and not about funding a housing issue.*

- *There is not enough advocacy in communication to help students to return to campus safely.*

Breakout Group 5:

- *Councillors felt that the graduate students should be considered more than tuition aid students as they fulfill other roles too within the university to recognise as RAs, TAs, and instructors.*
- *There should be transparency in terms of meetings and actions towards certain issues in the council. The steps and progress should be made transparent in the council meetings. If this is implemented, this can help the new councillors to step forward and can motivate them to help with certain issues.*

Breakout Group 6:

- *Pursuance of excellence and governance service delivery would always go together.*
- *Graduate students should build community across departments.*
- *There should be some recommendation from ministerial government and provincial government.*
- *SP1 does not convey what is the scope of the GSA.*
- *A lot of councillors have been advocating hard for international students as the international students do not have equal access to funding.*
- *GSA has not done enough for physical health although a lot of work has been done for the mental health of the grad students.*

15. Update from the President

06:50pm

The President announced his exit from the GSA for another opportunity. He has been involved with the GSA for the past 2 years. He said that he will be stepping down from the position on September 17th. He has had a fulfilling experience and got a chance to work many different people.

The President would be tabling his transitioning strategy as per the GP policies to the Board for approval at the September meeting. The VP (Comms) will be moving up to fill the position and to ensure continuity, he will be working with his team and the Board for the time, he is with GSA. He mentioned that the GSA has evolved a lot over the past one year due to its engagement with people. He has a lot of confidence with the newfound Board of the GSA.

The Council Speaker said that GSA is in safe hands and the enhancements made by the President and the previous Council Speaker were still running like the Union Drive.

The VP (Comms) mentioned that she has learnt a lot from David's leadership and his role as a President.

The Councillor from CEE asked what the plan after September 17th (last day of David's presidency) would be. The President said that he will be tabling the transition soon and the Board will be engaged in it. There will be a lot of legal implications and council will be informed of everything at the next meeting.

Adjournment