

**Graduate Student Association UW**

# **Council**

**Meeting Minutes**

**October 6, 2021**

**Primary Meeting**

Date: October 6, 2021

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

Place: Virtual

**Council Speaker:** Tyler B. Hampton

**Minutes Taker:** Niveta Chugh



**MEETING ATTENDENCE**

| <b>Name</b>                          | <b>Department/Position</b>                         | <b>Attendance*</b> |
|--------------------------------------|--|--------------------|
| Tyler Hampton                        | Council Speaker / Vice President of Communications | Y                  |
| Kalsha De Silva                      | Health - Kinesiology                               | Y                  |
| Sue Sherifali                        | Health - Public Health & Health Systems            | Y                  |
| MK Stinson                           | Health - Recreation & Leisure Studies              | Y                  |
| Matthew Gerrits                      | Arts - MPS   | Y                  |
| Rabia Ahmed                          | Arts - MDEI  | Y                  |
| Jillian Adams                        | Arts - Accounting & Finance                        | Y                  |
| Erica Swyers                         | Arts - Germanic & Slavic Studies                   | Y                  |
| Cael Dobson                          | Arts - Philosophy                                  | Y                  |
| Nathalie Gadbois                     | Arts - French Studies                              | Y                  |
| Chris Martin                         | Arts - English Language & Literature               | Y                  |
| Madeleine Pinard                     | Arts - Global Governance                           | Y                  |
| Kennedy Westlake                     | Arts - Psychology                                  | Y                  |
| Danielle LaBrash                     | Arts - Political Science                           | Y                  |
| Jessica Gill                         | Arts - Sociology                                   | Y                  |
| Sarah Galarneau                      | Arts - Fine Arts                                   | Y                  |
| Teghan Barton                        | Arts - History                                     | Y                  |
| Iman Sultana                         | Arts - Peace & Conflict Studies                    | Y                  |
| Kevin White                          | Collaborative Water Program                        | Y                  |
| Devansh Nagpal                       | Eng - Management Sciences                          | Y                  |
| Alex Dalton                          | Eng - MBET   | Y                  |
| Manh Kien Tran                       | Eng - Chemical Engineering                         | Y                  |
| Carlo Rosel                          | Eng - Architecture                                 | Y                  |
| Anshul Goyal                         | Eng - ECE  | Y                  |
| Jinesh Shah                          | Eng - MME  | Y                  |
| Nastaran Mosavari                    | Eng - CEE  | Y                  |
| Nargess Heydari Beni                 | Eng - Systems Design Engineering                   | Po                 |
| Ronnit Roy Burman (proxy)            | Eng - Systems Design Engineering                   | Y                  |
| Yusof Ghiasi                         | Enviro - GEM                                       | Y                  |
| Tia Driver                           | Enviro - SEED                                      | Y                  |
| Misty Matthews                       | Enviro - SERS                                      | Y                  |
| Anju George                          | Enviro - School of Planning                        | Y                  |
| Benjamin Anderson-Sackaney           | Math - Pure Mathematics                            | Y                  |
| Mojtaba Valipour                     | Math - Computer Science                            | A                  |
| Asiya Jabeen                         | Science - Optometry and Vision Science             | Y                  |
| Juliette Teodoro (former councillor) | Science - Optometry and Vision Science             | Y                  |
| Antoine Hakim                        | Science - Pharmacy                                 | Y                  |
| Caleb Ryan                           | Science - Biology                                  | Y                  |

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|                              |                                      |   |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---|
| Michael Chapman              | Science - Physics and Astronomy      | Y |
| Naima Samuel                 | UW Senate                            | R |
| Onurcan Gokkaya              | UW Senate                            |   |
| Natalie Barcellos            | GSA Board                            | Y |
| Yashesh Dasari               | GSA Board                            | Y |
| Ala Mokhtar                  | GSA Board                            | Y |
| Jessica Lee                  | GSA Board                            | Y |
| Elham Mohammadi              | GSA Board                            | A |
| Samira Mehrabi               | GSA Board                            | Y |
| Yi Abby Wang                 | GSA Board                            | Y |
| Ruby Aigbotsua               | GSA Board                            | R |
| Amir Hosein Sadeghi Isfahani | GSA Board                            | Y |
| Zabeen Khamisa               | GSA President                        | Y |
| Glauca Melo                  | GSA Vice-President of Administration | Y |
| Rita Cherkewski              | GSA Executive Manager                | Y |
| Kevin Bonell                 | GSA Engagement Coordinator           | Y |

\*Attendance

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

**AGENDA**

| <b>Time</b> | <b>Item</b> |   | <b>Length (min)</b> | <b>Action</b>   |
|-------------|-------------|---|---------------------|-----------------|
| 4:00 PM     | <b>1</b>    | <b>SPEAKER’S WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS</b>  | 3                   |                 |
| 4:03 PM     | <b>2</b>    | <b>ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA</b>   | 1                   | For Approval    |
| 4:04 PM     | <b>3</b>    | <b>DECLARATION OF INTERESTS</b>   | 0                   |                 |
| 4:04 PM     | <b>4</b>    | <b>ATTENDANCE</b>   | 1                   |                 |
| 4:05 PM     | <b>5</b>    | <b>Discussion and Questions with UW President Vivek Goel</b>  |                     | For Discussion  |
| 4:05 PM     | <b>5a</b>   | <b>Introduction by the GSA President</b>  | 15                  |                 |
| 4:20 PM     | <b>5b</b>   | <b>Introduction to GSA Priorities</b>   | 10                  |                 |
| 4:30 PM     | <b>5c</b>   | <b>Questions and Discussion</b>   | 30                  |                 |
| 5:00 PM     |             | <b>Break</b>  | 5                   |                 |
| 5:05 PM     | <b>6</b>    | <b>APPROVAL OF MINUTES<br/>September 1, 2021</b>  | 2                   | For Approval    |
| 5:07 PM     | <b>7</b>    | <b>Thank Yous for Attendance and Commitment</b>   | 5                   |                 |
| 5:12 PM     | <b>8</b>    | <b>Welcome to new Councillors</b>   | 5                   |                 |
| 5:17 PM     | <b>9</b>    | <b>Organize UW Update</b>   | 5                   | For Information |
| 5:22 PM     | <b>10</b>   | <b>Approval in Second Reading of Council Terms Policy CP-4</b>  | 13                  | For Approval    |
| 5:35 PM     | <b>11</b>   | <b>Presentation of Accessibility Report - Jenn Reid</b>   | 25                  | For Discussion  |
| 6:00 PM     |             | <b>Break</b>  | 5                   |                 |
| 6:05 PM     | <b>12</b>   | <b>UPDATE FROM THE BOARD</b>  | 10                  | For Information |
| 6:15 PM     | <b>12a</b>  | <b>Presentation of Board Equity Policy</b>  | 5                   |                 |
| 6:20 PM     | <b>13</b>   | <b>Discussion of Council Equity Strategy - New Council Seats</b>  | 30                  | For Approval    |
| 6:50 PM     | <b>14</b>   | <b>Confidential Session: Endorsement of Tyler Hampton to serve as Vice-President Communications until August 2022</b> | 10                  | For Approval    |
| 7:00 PM     |             | <b>ADJOURNMENT</b>  |                     |                 |

**MINUTES**

**1. Speaker’s Welcome and Opening Remarks 04:03pm**

*Hampton takes the chair and calls the meeting to order at 04:03pm.*

**2. Adoption of the Agenda 04:05pm**

*Motion to approve the agenda. Approved unanimously.*

**3. Declaration of Interests 04:06pm**

*No conflict of interests was declared.*

**4. Attendance 04:06pm**

*Chugh takes the attendance.*

**5. Discussions and Questions with UW President Vivek Goel**

**5a Introduction by the President 04:07pm**

*Vivek Goel (UW President) introduced himself to the GSA Council. Vivek mentioned that there is a lot to learn before UW starts the path to reconciliation. UW needs to equip itself to a culture which is decolonized, equitable and anti-racist. He has had a privilege of having multiple leadership roles in the past. He had also led the Public Health, Ontario after SARS outbreak in Toronto. Vivek has worked for a start-up in California which was of great relevance to the Waterloo community in terms of innovation.*

*Vivek mentioned that he is excited about UW due to its amazing history. The emphasis on impact, connections with the community, engagement with the community led to the co-op opportunities. Jeff Casello mentioned that these learnings will help in the development of the graduate education in making the UW in a way that there are more opportunities in both private and public sector and NGO’s. These learnings will enhance the value of the graduate student’s experience. Vivek Goel mentioned that he has had opportunities in moving forward and visiting different parts of campus and meeting graduate students who are working on amazing projects and developing their ideas. He has also visited different incubators like Velocity’s medical innovations, and he met the graduates who developed these ideas. He is looking forward on meeting more grad students.*

*Vivek mentioned that he has been amazed about that he is getting to know UW apart from it having a reputation of a STEM school. He has been interested to learn about the breadth of scholarship and programs at UW. He mentioned that more work needs to be done in terms of supporting students who want to work across breadth of areas. In his own experience as a faculty member, he wanted to pursue knowledge out of his field. He wanted to explore and find faculty members who wanted to work around these areas. The faculty members and graduate students learn a lot from each other. He said he wants to push the boundaries in terms of research at UW and this is an opportunity to learn and grow.*

*Zabeen introduced herself as the newly appointed GSA-UW President. She was a former VP(Comms). She was a Communication and Events Coordinator before that. She is a PhD candidate in Religious Studies. She introduced GSA's VPs.*

5b Introduction to GSA Priorities

04:18pm

*Council Speaker introduced the GSA Council. He mentioned that there is a student from every department in the Council and GSA-UW is breaking the boundaries of every department. Despite UW's reputation of Engineering and Science school, the Council brings strings of all the six faculties under one roof and Arts is strongly represented as Math, Science and Health department.*

5c Questions and Discussion

04:21pm

*Council Speaker asked justification about the Winter 2022 plan for moving back to campus in terms of housing in Waterloo, revitalization relations and international students looking for accommodations. Also, what are the key indicators University is looking at in terms of emergency situations to what we do not do in person.*

*Vivek gave an overview on moving back to campus. From public health's perspective, he mentioned that the University was in a very fortunate position in the Waterloo region and in the province of Ontario. There are relatively high level of vaccinations and disease transmission have relatively been stable even if the schools have re-opened. UW continues to monitor things and the experience on campus has been good. The number of cases on the campus have been below on what was expected. Given the size of the Waterloo community, the return to campus have turned out to be a positive experience. Return to campus was announced in March for the Winter 2022 term. Other institutions have moved back to campus in higher capacity in the fall term. He mentioned that with vaccine mandates coming into place, we can expect that in Ontario, many people will be vaccinated. The case counts do not say that there are outbreaks in schools, but there are case counts that indicate community infection spread. Vivek mentioned that we must look at the experiences that the graduate students have with their supervisors. He mentioned that there have been equity considerations in the past as many students were not able to proceed with the virtual education experience. In terms of monitoring experience statistics, UW has got wastewater monitoring and has been closely working with Public Health and checking for outbreaks. The trigger point for the future lockdowns will be based on the Public Health's guidance. Every move will be based on discussions with Public Health colleagues. Vivek said UW will require to have a contingency plan for the continuing studies. He said we must revert to the previous measures unless we have a new variant from a Public Health perspective. We have localized measures for the localized outbreaks as opposed to lockdowns. With respect to support for international students, UW has been working closely on monitoring the situation with Federal Government and IRCC in terms of students proceeding with their visas. Federal government has set a service commitment. UW is there to help. The main issues are regarding vaccinations and quarantine requirements for those students who do not have Health Canada approved vaccines. He mentioned that pre-pandemic, we had supports for international students to get their visas. He addressed the issues related to travelling to international conferences for research purposes. UW is limited to Federal Government requirements which limits the non-essential travel to all the destinations. He mentioned that UW needs to access what comes under essential travel and this can be used for making travel research process for conferences. This cannot be cleared until the government lifts travel bans for non-essential purposes. He pointed that there is a process for putting a request for travel for research conference which has been delayed for a longer time.*

*The Councillor from Accounting and Finance raised a concern that people from her department have been accepted for conferences in USA. They are essential as they cannot be done online as there is no provision to be done online. This creates a huge impact on students who have trouble getting a job after graduating. This does affect the reputation of school and research. She wants clarification between conference and conducting research. Vivek Goel said that the term “conference” can be used in different ways. He mentioned that it could be confused for a workshop. Jeff Casello clarified that they are interested in knowing how the students and their supervisors work towards reaching the students’ professional and personal objectives. If the student is clear that the conference comes under essential event, there is a threshold of the student’s participation in the event. UW also assesses the safety of the destination if it has large number of COVID-19 cases. Jeff mentioned that they want to work with the students and the supervisors to understand the remediations of attending or not attending the event. This must be collaborative, and he is intended to make the decision on behalf of the University.*

*The Councillor from SERS mentioned that her constituents have some concerns about quality of education at UW in the past year. A lot of students must do research in the labs and there was a discussion last year on it but there has been no follow up. Jeff mentioned that when the pandemic began, UW did not know about the implications. At present, UW feels that most of the students with their milestones have been successful but there has been a plan put into place where a student can file a petition if his/her milestone was delayed, and you can petition to have the deadlines pushed forward. UW will be receptive to these kinds of processes. Faculty or Associate Dean would be making these decisions. UW has worked with Tri-Agency and anyone who is sponsored through Tri-Agency funding receives a one term funding grant expansion through their supervisors. Students who were sponsored by contract research; UW has worked to also make one additional term funding for grad students. If the student was an International Doctoral student funding holder and he/she was in term 9 or beyond when Covid hit, their IDSA had been expanded by one term. This is how UW approached this situation. If there is any unique complication, the students should talk to their supervisor. Jeff mentioned that they have been monitoring the progress of the students relative to previous cohorts and have observed that for the PhD students, there have been a lag, but PhD students have been largely caught up, and master’s students remained behind as compared to their peers.*

*Council Speaker mentioned that it requires a lot of collaboration on issues like conference and funding clarifications with the supervisors. Jeff Casello clarified that it is very hard to know what’s been happening for so many PhD students and master’s students. It is important for the communication to flow through. UW needs a bi-directional communication to be effective. Vivek added that if there is no good relationship with the supervisor, the student cannot approach the grad office.*

*The Councillor from Physics and Astronomy asked for clarification on the plan for return to campus where grad students can access the campus fully. Vivek replied by saying that the nature of the grad student office is varied across disciplines. In terms of international travel, there is an environment of different government regulations and constraints. He said there are certain set of requirements around the instructional space, and it has some flexibility, but offices are based on space-by-space decision. The goal would be allowing the government to ease down some regulations. He hopes that the timeline would be as inline with the Winter 2022 term and UW can bring back many people on campus. he clarified that there will be requirements like physical distancing and concerns related to mass gatherings. Jeff Casello added that the process is in place*

*to access what is the capacity for grad students to be back on campus. He hopes that with all the positive public health information, the on-campus number restrictions will lessen by Winter 2022 term. He pointed that UW will be back to much lesser occupancy limits for the Winter 2022 term. UW is moving towards a hybrid model for research milestones.*

*Council Speaker asked whether social isolation is existent or not. He added that the counselling services have a cap of 6 sessions per year for students. Students have regularly expressed of to get this cap lifted. He asked if Vivek supports lifting this cap and what kind of services would be provided to the students. Vivek mentioned that a significant amount of work has been done at UW on maintaining the mental health of the students. Jeff added that he is sure that six sessions for counselling services is a guideline for the graduate students and if more sessions are needed, this should be at the discretion of the councillor. These 6 sessions have been updated to reflect the reality that there is no finite time to solve a problem but there is a finite resource. The decisions at UW are made on a case-by-case basis. There are some boundaries on what UW can do for the graduate students with respect to the counselling services. There exists a government regulation which says that the councillors are only authorized to provide services to the students who are present in Ontario. Council Speaker pointed that there have been times when students have taken initiatives through GSA to serve students in terms of mental health. It would be better if the university can reciprocate more on the counselling services. Students want the counselling to happen by an in-person service. The students are concerned that they are paying a fee to the SSO to provide services which are not viable. Vivek clarified that it was important to have access to full range of services which are customized to the needs to the graduate students. The grad team has been working on increasing the range of services for the grad students. Jeff clarified that the student services fees are set annually. SSO is an office on campus which organizes the orientation for the grad students. There are various shortcomings under any organization and UW has pathways to work collectively to improve the situations. Jeff mentioned that he is happy to make connections with other academic support units on campus and work with students to make the student experience better. Council Speaker asked for the next steps forward. Vivek clarified that some of the questions need a dialog to establish as it has come up several times. UW is a very big institution, and the context of question becomes important in terms of faculty and department. Jeff mentioned that super provost has been involved in cases like housing, student supports on campus and outstanding things.*

*Council Speaker asked about the vaccine mandate as there are many sources of information. Jeff mentioned that it is better to have one reliable channel of communication. Vivek mentioned that role of Councillors at the GSA is important, and he appreciates the work being done.*

*The Councillor from Civil and Environmental Engineering raised a concern regarding the meeting with the President being of shorter duration. Council Speaker mentioned that the President was only present for 30 mins in the past and the time was doubled this time. She asked if the questions were submitted to the president before the meeting. Tyler replied in affirmation.*

*GSA-UW President added that the council is waiting to ask more questions and get more answers. She said questions that were asked today should be taken as a warning for advocacy for the President and Jeff. This would be talked about all year along. The questions will be answered in next couple of weeks or next term.*

*The Councillor from Civil and Environmental Engineering suggested to have the answers to the questions in a written format and know about the plan on how to address the issues and concerns.*



**Break:** **05:06pm**

**6. Approval of Minutes** **05:12pm**

*The minutes of the September 01,2021 meeting were approved unanimously.*

**7. Thank Yous for Attendance and Commitment** **05:16pm**

*Council Speaker thanked the councillors for their perfect attendance records and commitment to the GSA Council.*

*A Director added that if someone is interested in making changing to the policies, they can consider joining JPRC (Joint Policy Review Committee). She clarified that JPRC meetings will be held once a month.*

**8. Welcome to new Councillors** **05:17pm**

*Council Speaker welcomed all the new councillors. He added that there are some vacancies in the Council.*

**9. Organize UW Update** **05:19pm**

*The Councillor from English Language and Literature gave an update on Organize UW. In terms of upcoming events, statistics webinar, psychology webinar and Anti-Racism and Equity Committee for Chinese students will be held. He mentioned that Organize UW did a Q&A with the Faculty Association of the University of Waterloo (FAUW).*

*The Councillor from Civil and Environmental Engineering asked if there exists any assigned person for each department to be in touch for Organize UW. The Councillor from RLS clarified that Organize UW does not have any assigned people in each faculty/department, but students are welcomed to join the weekly videos.*

*The Councillor from Biology asked what the support looks like for proportioning the graduate students and faculty. The Councillor from RLS replied by saying that they have been increasing their reach and they have been connecting with students more. They are seeing great momentum which can drive them further. There is excellence of support amongst students. The Councillor from Biology further asked the proportion of graduate students. The Councillor from RLS clarified that they are not allowed to share such information, but they have been building momentum and they are happy with the progress so far.*

*The Councillor from Pure Mathematics asked how close the GSA is on getting unionized. The Councillor from RLS clarified that there is a file for unionization. She mentioned that a business needs 40% of its employed people within the faction to sign online. Organize UW is about to organize with QP and QP likes to have 50% of people to be signed for the file to do that. Organize UW is moving towards those goals.*

*The Councillor from Political Science asked if resigning was still a concern as was brought up in*

*the Council meeting in the past. The Councillor from RLS replied that they have a QP representative who is providing outreach to anyone who has signed a card. Graduate students can hear from that person when their card is about to expire. You'll need to resign the card if you are still employed and if you are looking to move towards joining that.*

**10. Approval in Second Reading of Council Terms Policy CP-4**

**05:26pm**

*Council Speaker mentioned that the Council in August 2021 approved a policy which was based on Council term. The goal of the amendments to this policy are to follow our own GSA Policy. He mentioned that we want to have a policy that accurately reflects the leniency and understanding that if you miss meetings, then you can send proxies. These things were absent from the previous policy.*

*Nastaran, Mike and Tia had worked on implementing the changes to this policy.*

*Council Speaker mentioned that if the councillors cannot attend any council meeting, the responsibility lies on him to reach out to the councillors.*

*Council Speaker raised a motion.*

***“BIRT the Council approves the amendments to Policy CP-4 in the second reading”.  
(Hampton/Mike) (36-0-1)***

*The motion was passed.*

**11. Presentation of Accessibility Report- Jenn Reid**

**05:33pm**

*Jenn Reid presented the Accessibility Report for graduate students. She expressed that the motivation for the report was commissioned by the GSA management. The need for this report is for GSA advocacy and advising services. She mentioned that GSA became interested in understanding issues that graduate students with disabilities face and with the existing available resources. This report is a starting point for further data-gathering and action.*

*Jenn presented that there is a grant for students with disabilities in Ontario and Government of Canada. You can apply through the OSAP website or accessibility services. It has maximum funding limits per year. She mentioned that the student needs to be OSAP eligible for this grant. There is limited support for graduate students through this government grant. There are no internal awards at UW. External awards are specific to the disabilities.*

*The services available to the graduate students are the Accessibility Services, Campus Wellness, Campus Housing, Equity Office, and Center for Teaching Excellence. Jenn mentioned that the disabled students are disproportionately underrepresented in post-secondary degree attainment. Graduates have much higher unemployment rates, more difficulty repaying education debt than non-disabled peers. There has been history of ableism in academia. There is also accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (2005), and it has a goal of an accessible Ontario by 2025. The post-secondary institutional standards are currently under development for it.*

*Jenn mentioned that there is lack of data on ableism and access issues in post secondary education. There is lack of funding of disability resources and gaps in support. WUSA has written a report*

*and there has been a survey which raised issues in price and availability of accessible housing, accessing appropriate support through Accessibility Services.*

*Jenn's recommendations were GSA-UW issuing a survey examining experiences of graduate students with disabilities. She suggested that GSA-UW should support students through advising service related to career transitions, disclosure, accommodations, and stigma. GSA-UW should ensure the communications are accessible.*

*GSA-UW President added GSA is involved through different committees on campus when it comes to accessibility. She mentioned that GSA is issuing an equity survey and it was not sent until now because University had already sent out a survey on equity. The graduate students that are involved with anti-racism task force helped to generate the equity survey and graduate students are representing the accessibility on equity committees. So, graduate students have been involved in accessibility services. She added that this report will bring more light on these issues.*

*The Councillor from Civil and Environmental Engineering asked if GSA-UW will be sending GSA-UW equity survey after the University's equity survey and how generalized is the University's survey. She further asked how University's survey would be helpful for the GSA. GSA-UW President replied that there is no guarantee that GSA will send out an equity survey, but they will see how effective the survey sent by the University was. If GSA finds that the survey sent out by the University is short of graduate student targeted experience, then GSA will send a more targeted equity survey to create more rounded data for grad student experience. Jenn added that the councillors should have a look at the survey.*

*Council Speaker mentioned that the vital signs survey does not have equity in it. Vital signs survey does not put much focus on equity and accessibility services.*

*GSA-UW President added that she helped to create the graduate student accessibility page. She also mentioned that the vital signs survey that we have now is interesting as compared to the past. This equity survey will fulfill the things that weren't fulfilled in the vital signs survey.*

*The Councillor from Physics and Astronomy asked if there is any advice for the councillors within departments on this issue either with constituents or getting involved in event planning or within DGSA's. Jenn recommended that GSA could have a dedicated accessibility person to develop the resources. The Councillor from Physics and Astronomy said he would like to see check list for the DGSA which they can follow.*

*Jenn mentioned that library has some accommodation that graduate students would be requesting through accessibility support person.*

**Break**

**06:04pm**

**12. Update from the Board**

**06:10pm**

*Samira Mehrabi gave an update from the Board. The Board adopted the transition strategy proposed by David. She mentioned that based on EL-7, whenever there is an emergency departure, the President is delegated to ensure that the VP can take over as successor. So, as per the process, Board appointed Zabeen Khamisa, GSA-UW President for the remainder of the term ending on April 30,2022. With Zabeen Khamisa moving to the role of President, GP-16 policy indicates that*

*if the VP position suddenly becomes vacant, then the President can nominate an interim successor to serve out the remainder of the term. The nominee approval goes from the Board and as per David Billedeau's (previous President) recommendation, Board appointed Tyler Hampton as interim GSA VP (Comms). If the council approves, the nominee will serve for the remainder of the current VP's term. The Board appointed Rita Cherkewski (General Manager) as GSA-UW Board Co-Secretary and as GSA-UW Treasurer.*

## 12a Presentation of Board Equity Policy

*Samira Mehrabi explained the Equity Policy. She explained that this policy aims to improve equity in GSA. This policy would serve the purpose of making GSA accountable for implementing equitable hiring practices and ensuring that the GSA operates the services that addresses the specific needs of graduate students. She mentioned that two readings will be required for this policy. The Board approved the first reading in September meeting for EL2.12 and EL2.15 and delegated it to JPRC. The 2<sup>nd</sup> reading will take place at a future meeting.*

*Samira mentioned that if the proposed policy (2<sup>nd</sup> reading) passes in the Board, it will be instituted in GP-14. The purpose of requiring an employment equity plan would be for the president and for the management to work towards various experiences and having wide variety of representation in the team. This would ensure that experience of various groups is represented equally.*

*With regards to EL-2.15, this is aligned with GSA's missions to enhance the quality of academic and social experiences and promote their well being. This requires focus on students who are marginalized.*

*The Councillor from ECE asked for clarification if BIPOC is the right term to be used for the people of different color. GSA-UW President clarified that BIPOC is an acronym, and it does not cover the entire range itself of humanity and experience. By breaking it down into each EL, the idea is that it's supposed to be more reflective of that diversity and allows for self-identification in the process essentially.*

*The Councillor from Civil and Environmental Engineering raised a concern that the policy needs to elaborate on how the President did not fail to provide services to support academic and social experiences. Samira clarified that this would be provided to the Board in the form of a report, and this is a report that the President provides to the Board monthly. The Board then asks how the strategies are implemented into the hiring strategies. The Councillor from Civil and Environmental Engineering asked what happens to the policy based on percentage of students from each category. She suggested to reserve some seats for minority groups and if the seats are not filled up by students from reserved categories, then the seats could be opened to others. Samira replied that they had discussion at JPRC regarding reserving a seat for special people. GSA-UW President mentioned that it is important to focus on the history of GSA. GSA was historically not diverse and was just few people. GSA's involvement in recruitment has changed significantly. All the engagements are made in way such that the diversity is represented. This is a requirement for future President to continue this work. The Councillor from Civil and Environmental Engineering mentioned that she wants the representation to be generalized and minority groups to participate in the GSA.*

*The former Councillor from School of Planning asked for clarification on the definition of cultural, racial and gender. She mentioned that these definitions might differ for different people. Council*

*Speaker mentioned that in terms of policy, the President submits a report, and this policy goes through executive limitations which are with respect to person, society, and environment. The President should be explicitly saying what their interpretation of the policy is. The President would report on compliance or non-compliance on every point in the policy. EL-2 has 17 points, and these new points would add two more.*

*The Councillor from History suggested to include student body size under the different types of categories of students.*

### **13. Discussion of Council Equity Strategy- New Council Seats**

**06:28pm**

*Council Speaker mentioned that Zabeen had led the Equity phase 1 alongside the GSA Equity Coordinator in 2020. In May 2021, she presented a status update on Equity. He mentioned that he and the Council Executive Committee drafted policies, which would create two new seats in the Council. These two new seats would represent Indigenous and Black graduate students at UW. This is based on GSA Equity Strategy Phase 1 feedback. He mentioned that GSA has not been the voice which graduate students needed in the past. Council Speaker mentioned that he has laid a report based on policies. The Council has the power to create these kinds of frameworks and invite members to speak on these issues. He added that GP-8 governs the Council.*

*GSA-UW President added that historically on the GSA website, it just had a land acknowledgment and never invested in relationship within the indigenous stakeholders on campus. With Covid-19 and things going virtual, a lot of Indigenous groups on campus including Indigenous students' association got fragile. So, these policy changes were a result of having conversations with partners on regular basis to ensure a long return strategy that was cohesive. There was representations and communications. Thinking about incoming experience of racialized students, what role does the GSA play for Black and Indigenous students. So, this was a way to maintain these partnerships and conversations and representation when it comes to graduate student experience.*

*The Councillor from Civil and Environment Engineering asked for clarification on how to elect members from the Black and Indigenous community. Tyler mentioned that the GSA would not get involved in determining who is Black or Indigenous. The way this policy is shaped broadens the definition of unit association i.e., DGSA to allow for partnership and to treat the relationship the same way GSA interacts with DGSA. GSA engages with relationship on the association-by-association basis. GSA would not be holding elections for these positions.*

*GSA-UW President added that if there are any questions on president's anti-racism task force, she can answer those on a one-on-one basis.*

*The Councillor from Pure Mathematics asked if GSA has any idea of what portion BIPOC group makes up out of graduate students. GSA-UW President clarified that until university sent out the Equity survey, they historically have never tracked the data related to Equity. The first-time university was asked about equity data was in 2017 and now university is getting to it. GSA is setting direction for equity related practices. GSA is working with recruitment and admissions. GSA is working with alumni office too to gather this kind of long-term data.*

*The Councillor from SEED asked if there was another equity seeking group formed on campus, how will the policy accommodate that group. Tyler said that when they created the policy, they*

*designed it in such a way that more groups can be added. Student body would be benefitted from this. The way this policy would work is to be in partnership with a group and that would be a mechanism where group of students would approach GSA. Zabeen added that it is considered a partnership-based approach because the GSA cannot do everything on its own as we are limited capacity in terms of funds and human resources. Partnership approach means sharing the responsibility.*

*The Councillor from Political Science said that if it's the councillors who advocate for their constituency, then she supports the collective nature for the disabled graduate students. Tyler said that GSA needs to do some work and the partnership would allow to build a collective identity and share the resources.*

*Tyler raised the motions.*

***“BIRT the Council approves the first reading changes to Policy CP-2.”***

***“BIRT the Council approves in the first reading changes to Policy CP-4.”***

*These motions were approved by unanimous consent.*

***“BIRT the Council endorses the proposed changes to Policy GP-8, enclosed in the report, to be considered by the GSA Board of Directors.” (Hampton/Driver) (37-0-0)***

***“BIRT the Council requests the Board to amend By-Law #7 by striking sections 7.2.0 through 7.2.2.” (Hampton/Driver) (37-0-0)***

*The motions were passed unanimously.*

**14. Confidential session**

**06:55pm**

Motion passed in confidential session: ***“BIRT that GSA Council approves the decision for the nominee [Tyler Hampton] to serve out the full term [as Vice President of Communications], ending on August 19,2022.”***

**Adjournment**

**07:05pm**