

Graduate Student Association UW

Council

Meeting Minutes

December 1, 2021

Primary Meeting

Date: December 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	Position/Faculty	Attendance*
Tyler Hampton	Council Speaker	P
Matthew Gerrits	Arts - Master of Public Service (MPS)	A
Rabia Ahmed	Arts - Master of Digital Experience Innovation (MDEI)	P
Jillian Adams	Arts - Accounting & Finance	P
Erica Swyers	Arts - Germanic & Slavic Studies	Po
Cole Sotherland (Proxy)	Arts - Germanic & Slavic Studies	P
Cael Dobson	Arts - Philosophy	P
Nathalie Gadbois	Arts - French Studies	A
Chris Martin	Arts - English Language & Literature	P
Madeleine Pinard	Arts - Global Governance	P
Kennedy Westlake	Arts - Psychology	P
Danielle LaBrash	Arts - Political Science	A
Jessica Gill	Arts - Sociology	P
Sarah Galarneau	Arts - Fine Arts	P
Teghan Barton	Arts - History	A
Iman Sultana	Arts - Master of Peace & Conflict Studies	A
Kevin White	Cross - Collaborative Water Program	P
Devansh Nagpal	Eng - Management Sciences	A
Alex Dalton	Eng - Master of Business, Entrepreneurship, & Technology (MBET)	P
Manh Kien Tran	Eng - Chemical Engineering	P
Carlo Rosel	Eng - Architecture	P
Cindy Yang	Eng - Electrical & Computer Engineering	P
Jinesh Shah	Eng - Mechanical & Mechatronics Engineering	A
Nastaran Mosavari	Eng - Civil & Environmental Engineering	P
Nargess Heydari Beni	Eng - Systems Design Engineering	A
Yusof Ghiasi	Enviro - Geography & Environmental Management (GEM)	A
Tia Driver	Enviro - School of Environment, Enterprise, & Development (SEED)	P
Misty Matthews-Roper	Enviro - School of Environment, Resources, & Sustainability (SERS)	P
Anju George	Enviro - School of Planning	P
Kalsha Diaguarachchige De Silva	Health - Kinesiology	P
MK Stinson	Health - Recreation & Leisure Studies	P
Pam Hopwood	Health - Public Health Science	P
Karolina Kaminska	Health - Public Health Science	P
Benjamin Anderson-Sackaney	Math - Pure Mathematics	P

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Mojtaba Valipour	Math - Computer Science	P
Asiya Jabeen	Science - Optometry and Vision Science (School of)	R
Antoine Hakim	Science - Pharmacy (School of)	P
Caleb Ryan	Science - Biology	A
Everett Patterson	Science - Physics and Astronomy	P
Naima Samuel	Senator	
Onurcan Gokkaya	Senator	
Natalie Isobel DeBloeme Barcellos	Director (Board)	P
Yashesh Dasari	Director (Board)	P
Ala Mokhtar	Director (Board)	A
Jessica Lee	Director (Board)	R
Elham Mohammadi	Director (Board)	R
Samira Mehrabi	Director (Board)	P
Yi Abby Wang	Director (Board)	P
Ruby Aigbotsua	Director (Board)	A
Amir Hosein Sadeghi Isfahani	Director (Board)	R
Zabeen Khamisa	President, Director ex-officio	P
Glaucia Melo	Vice-President (Administration)	P
Rita Cherkewski	Executive Manager	P

*Attendance

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

AGENDA

Time		Item	Length (min)	Action
4:00 PM	1	SPEAKER’S WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS	2	
4:02 PM	2	ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA	1	For Approval
4:03 PM	3	DECLARATION OF INTERESTS	1	
4:04 PM	4	ATTENDANCE	1	
4:05 PM	5	APPROVAL OF MINUTES	0	For Approval
4:05 PM	5	Organize UW Update	5	For Information
4:10 PM	6	UPDATE FROM THE BOARD - Update on President Nominating Committee	15	For Information
4:25 PM	7	Welcome to new Councillors	0	
4:25 PM	8	Presentation on GSA Housing Research Contract - Glauca Melo (VP Admin)	15	For Information
4:40 PM	9	Presentation on Impacts of External Funding - Jacqueline Harper	15	For Information
4:55 PM	10	Council Roundtable: student issues (overflow from November)	15	For Discussion
5:10 PM		Break	5	
5:15 PM	11a	Council Discussion: effective engagement as councillors (in breakout rooms)	30	For Discussion
5:45 PM	11b	Summarize from breakout rooms	20	For Discussion
6:05 PM		Break	5	
6:10 PM	12	Council Discussion: housing and funding, GSA Political Positions and Ends	30	For Discussion
6:40 PM		ADJOURNMENT		

MINUTES

1. Speaker’s Welcome and Opening Remarks 04:05pm

Hampton takes the chair and calls the meeting to order at 04:05pm.

2. Adoption of the Agenda 04:06pm

Motion to approve the agenda. Approved unanimously.

3. Declaration of Interests 04:07pm

No conflicts of interests were declared.

4. Attendance 04:07pm

Chugh takes the attendance.

5. Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the November 3rd, 2021, Council meeting will be shared for approval in the January Council meeting.

6. Organize UW Update 04:10pm

The Councillor from RLS gave an update on OrganizeUW. There is an ongoing biweekly tabling at the Graduate House every second Thursday from 1pm to 3pm. The upcoming ones are on December 9th and December 23rd.

MK Stinson highlighted the work done by OUW in the year 2021. OUW hosted six Faculty and Departmental discussion sessions to reach out to the departments individually. OUW ran different webinars and information sessions on international students’ issues, Climate Justice and Unions, mental health, and unions. OUW distributed surveys on International doctoral student funding, “scheduled pauses” and pandemic support. OUW also received campaign endorsements. OUW has shifted its campaign from a fully online campaign to a hybrid campaign. OUW has release a comprehensive document of equity-based aims, principles, and goals for the campaign.

MK Stinson shared plans for the year 2022. She mentioned that in the early months, OUW expects to see more in-person organizing, including more co-hosted events with the GSA. There would be events like postering, tabling and campaigning all over campus.

7. Update from the Board 04:17pm

Samira (Board Chair) gave an update from the Board. The Board discussed the changes requested by the Council. The Board approved the changes to GP-8.1 and GP-8.4. The Board approved the strike to By-Law #7 section 7.2.0 through 7.2.2. The Board rescinded the motion regarding recruitment before AGM 2022. The Board will be discussing for a good strategy for AGM in January 2022. The Board discussed about Board Standing Committees like Governance Oversight Committee, Audit and Risk Committee, Recruitment Task Force and President Nomination Committee. These committees

were tasked to convene by end of December 2021 and provide a written report to the Board in January 2022 in terms of planning and yearly agenda. President Nomination Committee is the most important as the president’s term is coming to an end in April 2022. As per GP.10.2, a PNC should be formed normally 3-4 months prior to the end of the term. There should be equal representation from the Board and the Council. All the discussions at PNC are going to be confidential.

Samira mentioned that the Board is looking for the two councillors to join PNC.

Speaker clarified that the committee sits and evaluates the performance of the current president for considering re-employment.

The Councillor from RLS asked about the time commitment for PNC. GSA-UW President replied that the time commitment is dependent on how frequently the Board committee wants to meet. It is finalized in the couple of meetings as PNC needs to decide the criteria. There is an evaluation criterion that the PNC has used previously, and this information needs to come back to the Council for the term. This helps the Council to understand the Board’s decision. Speaker clarified that it is a 4–5-hour commitment.

Samira clarified that Speaker cannot join this committee. Councillors who are applying for the President’s position cannot join this committee. Speaker added whomsoever the Council decides, they are going to have limited feedback with Speaker and they will respond to Samira.

Karolina asked if this opportunity is only for councillors, or the proxies can apply for the PNC too. Speaker clarified that this position is for the councillors.

GSA-UW President added that a part of PNC would involve a very high-level form of feedback. This would help you to learn about Board, evaluation criterion and management. This is a great professional development opportunity. GSA-UW President mentioned that if there is anything that the councillors want to see getting changed, PNC is a great way to get engaged.

Samira clarified that a fair process is already in place with proper documentation.

The Councillor from CEE and the Councillor from Global Governance nominated themselves for the PNC.

The two nominated councillors were nominated by unanimous consent.

8. Welcome to new Councillors **04:37pm**

Speaker welcomed Pam Hopwood (Councillor from Public Health Sciences).

9. Presentation on GSA Housing Research Contract **04:38pm**

VP(Admin) presented the Housing Research and Action Group plan. The purpose of this is to provide Council with the updates regarding this initiative and report on continuing the efforts of Housing Advocacy.

VP(Admin) mentioned that GSA started this conversation months ago. GSA has been prioritizing housing and GSA wants to use the results and recommendations from the research in the past with

insights to continue. GSA has more capacity to manage such initiatives. The idea is to hire graduate students with experience to help with the community-based research.

VP(Admin) mentioned that the Community-based research is a research approach which involves active participation of stakeholders, those whose lives are affected by the issue being studied, in all phases of research for the purpose of producing useful results to make positive changes.

*The phase 1 of the GSA Housing Advocacy Research and Action Group involves **Recruiting**. GSA wants to form a housing research and action group that can support GSA’s advocacy strategies for affordable and proper housing in Waterloo region. This collaborative community-based research and action group will help to mitigate current barriers, create relationships with community stakeholders, provide short and long-term plans, and develop resources that can support graduate students. She emphasized on utilizing Town and Gown for actively participating in city committee, moving knowledge through systematic and rigorous approach and build strong ongoing stakeholder relationships. This is an initial plan for moving forward. The next initiative will be presented to the Council in January.*

Speaker mentioned that Instagram is a primary place where the announcements related to the GSA Housing Group can be found. He encouraged councillors to share them.

*The Councillor from Physics and Astronomy asked if the increased capacity was due to partnership with WUSA followed by the creation of this action group. VP(Admin) clarified that this increased capacity is the capacity that is presented in the Executive team, and she has a full team working with her. So, the tasks can be well coordinated and advertised and move this initiative forward to create the action group. GSA-UW President added that housing issues have existed from a long time, but GSA has not talked about those as an organization outside of the surveys and research contract. This was due to the relationship with WUSA at that time with GSA. It has changed over the years so quickly. In terms of hiring, there will be short-term contract which is different from other research contracts. GSA-UW President added that every city has “**Town and Gown**”. There are five positions on “Town and Gown”, and these are underutilized spaces of advocacy with short-term contracts.*

The Councillor from School of Planning asked how many people would be needed for the action group and if the councillors can be a part of this group. GSA-UW President replied that this is an opportunity to highlight the concerns of the graduate students directly but also to utilize the research about Waterloo region as opposed to someone who has not done the research about the region. The team will include two to three people and it depends on the expertise in the applications. They’ll make sure that the students can execute the research in short time frame. This would include actively coming up with long term plans based on the recommendations that we have gotten from the reports as well as data from the survey. GSA-UW President clarified that councillors could apply to any of the position.

The Councillor from Architecture asked if this research contract would be counted under the co-op contracts for the masters’ students. GSA-UW President clarified that any employment with the GSA does not get counted towards the funding hours for the graduate programs. It will only be considered a professional short-term contract and will be counted towards a professional experience. The co-op funding hours would be separate from the 20 hours of allocated funding.

Break **04:56pm**

10. Presentation on Impacts of External Funding **05:02pm**

Jacqueline Harper presented the External Graduate Funding Procedure Report Findings. She elaborated that the purpose of this project was for the GSA to investigate all the six faculties at UW to understand the influence of external funding on departmental funding. Additional information from other U15 universities distribute funding was gathered to contrast the UW's rules. The information was collected in two different phases. Phase 1 included solicited data from the UW's graduate student community in June 2021 and Phase 2 included collecting data from other Ontario universities via survey to understand how those universities handle external awards.

Jacqueline presented few questions that were asked from the graduate students. The first question was how the graduate students learnt about their departmental external funding procedures and according to the findings, the recipients of the external awards did not realize that their internal funding gets clawed back until they log into Quest and check their balance. Additionally, the student representatives could not find an outline of the procedure on any UW website.

The second question was how transparent the external funding procedure information was and as per the findings, only Faculty of Science pointed that their department was not transparent. Faculty of Science added that to understand the breakdown of the external funding, the graduate students should ask the department's graduate coordinators to explain the procedure. Only the Physics and Astronomy department had the breakdown for the external awards.

The third question was how does winning an external award impact the student's funding package and as per the findings, all the faculties agreed that their internal funding gets clawed back when a student wins an external funding. Most commonly, a student's internal FRS funding is reduced and a TAship is taken away.

The fourth question was if the students from respective departments received equivalent or less funding by accepting an external award as compared to their internal funding package. All the faculties replied that they received similar funding packages.

Other findings included less fundings which left the graduate students financially disadvantaged, students not feeling incentivized to apply for awards, no increase in the external scholarship monetary value over the years and many students do not realize that they are eligible for OGS or other external awards.

Jacqueline mentioned that nine Ontario Universities were contacted to fill out the survey and only five universities participated. Those five universities were:

- 1. McMaster University*
- 2. Queen's University*
- 3. University of Ottawa*
- 4. University of Western Ontario*
- 5. Wilfred Laurier University*

The questions asked from the participating universities included the impact of external awards on internal funding. The generalized response was claw back of funding and there is no consistency amongst departments/faculties' procedures. Another question was regarding the university being aware of the students who have been disadvantaged due to external funding. Different universities had different responses like international students and first year master's students do not qualify for TA at

McMaster university, an international student couldn't keep their international Admission Scholarship as they win OGS at Ottawa.

Jacqueline made six recommendations. Those were stating the scholarship conditions in student's offer letters, stating how funding can be used as many students are unaware of how the external funding can be used, outlining conditions in on each Faculty's website illustrating the different types of funding opportunities in different faculties, working with University Administration by adopting a scheme and revisiting the departmental procedures, stating the Hierarchy of TA Hiring and stating Reminder with procedures.

The Councillor from Physics and Astronomy asked how the results of the report might change the situating followed by the unionization efforts. Jacqueline replied that most of the universities wanted to get a similar report for their own GSAs. GSA Executive Manager clarified that all the external awards that UW receives are all CODA and the amount for the external awards would not change much as it has not changed since many years. GSA-UW President mentioned that UW has self-interest in getting students to apply for the external awards. The university will have to create a new strategic plan to involve this.

The Councillor from Accounting and Finance asked for clarification if the student receives an external award which is not government led, will that affect internal funding and the university will not restrict internal funding. Jacqueline replied that according to her knowledge, the graduate student can keep some part of the internal funding, but it depends on the department or the supervisor to decide on how much of the internal funding stays with the student. She added that she was not sure about how it works at UW. GSA-UW Executive Manager mentioned that if the award is external and is not government related, then the university does not know about it. These external awards are not given to the university. The Councillor from Accounting and Finance clarified that the coordinator threatened the student to restrict their internal funding after they found out about the external award on the student's CV. GSA-UW Executive Manager added that if these kinds of situations arise, the students can go to Associate Dean.

The Councillor from RLS added that the unionized universities separate the scholarships, and the employment pays for the offer letters, so a language is put into collective agreements which protects the cases where the universities cannot decrease scholarship funding or the internal funding.

GSA-UW President added that if any of the student faces issues related to internal funding reduction, GSA can help the students to tackle such issues. Jacqueline added that these reports have proved that the students have faced these issues and are facing them at present too.

11a. Council discussion: Effective Engagement as Councillors

05:33pm

Speaker listed the questions that were to be discussed in the breakout rooms amongst councillors.

The questions for the councillors were:

- 1. What is your level of engagement with your constituents?*
- 2. What strategies have worked (and not) to increase constituent engagement?*
- 3. What resources can the GSA provide to help councillors engage with constituents?*
- 4. Are there any barriers preventing you from fully engaging with the Council?*

5. *What would make your engagement with the Council more meaningful or fulfilling?*

The Councillors were separated into different breakout rooms to discuss the engagement as Councillors.

Break

06:05pm

11b. Summarize from breakout rooms

06:10pm

Breakout Room 1

- *The Councillor from Collaborative Water Program mentioned that regarding engagements with constituents, their department is scattered into small programs, and everyone knows each other better. It is easier to get people come to the events.*
- *In terms of resources, many Councillors felt that they are an issue. Councillors felt that having virtual events to engage with constituents are tiring and in-person events tend to have more engagement and better resources. The in-person events generally are more engaging.*
- *The Councillor from Collaborative Water Program mentioned that everyone has been affected by missed opportunities due to Covid19 and hence impacts full engagements with the Council as with everything going virtual, people are unable to make connections.*
- *The Councillor from Architecture added that their next semester is in-person but as per the structure of the curriculum, the students will be spread out due to different research topics. This would limit the idea of collaborating with others. This would be a barrier for the next term.*

Breakout Room 2

- *The Councillor from Accounting and Finance mentioned that they have found that there are issues getting replies from the constituents and them communicating with the Councillors. This is an issue since some people are not comfortable talking about their issues.*
- *The Councillor from Accounting and Finance pointed that sharing updates over E-mail is a very formal process and no one wants to reply over an email.*
- *In terms of resources, it would be great if an R&D is done in a councillor training session or sending an introductory email to the department.*
- *The Councillor from Accounting and Finance suggested if the GSA could assist with bridge meeting with the new councillor and their predecessor.*
- *The Councillor from Accounting and Finance added that councillors are burnt out by engaging virtually with the constituents.*
- *In terms of fulfilling, the councillors wished that they want to come back to the councillors in a quicker way. Councillors want to communicate with the constituents about the small steps that can be taken.*
- *Some of the councillors who do not have a DGSA want to start DGSA in their departments.*

Speaker asked if any of the councillors are running social media accounts for their DGSAs. He wants to know if the councillors have any engagements through social media. The Councillor from Collaborative Water Program added that their social media engagement during the Covid19 times has been poor. The Councillor from Psychology added that their department have been consistent on posting Instagram stories and post polls. This helps in presenting the data in an interesting manner and communicating with the constituents. GSA-UW President mentioned that GSA has created shared groups with the DGSAs on the backend on Instagram. DGSAs are direct messaged the posts and they

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reshare them to increase the engagement. GSA-UW President clarified that starting out a DGSA can be done by meeting with the engagement coordinator. She can help on setting up with a constitution as GSA has a template for that. The Councillor from ECE added that her department has been hosting virtual and in-person events in the year 2021. At the end of every event, their department posts the QR code of their Instagram for their constituents to follow them. Most of the posts on their Instagram account is all about GSA's stories and reminders. Speaker suggested to have a quasi-re-ramp about the GSA Instagram for the DGSA engagements. GSA-UW President mentioned that GSA has hosted DGSA sessions, but they received a low turnout. The Councillor from Pure Mathematics added that his department does not have a DGSA, but they have a GSA for the Faculty of Math. Faculty of Math uses it for the events they have had in the past.

GSA-UW President asked if the councillors find having a workshop on how to use social media to increase engagement would be helpful.

Breakout Room 3:

- The Councillor from RLS mentioned that there is a lack of engagement due to virtual burnouts. Various departments have different strategies and some of them are more connected than others.*
- Councillors suggested to have WhatsApp group chats to increase engagements with the constituents.*
- The Councillor from RLS pointed that many councillors felt that they have missed out on opportunities due to everything going virtual. Some of the councillors who have completed their degrees feel that there is no benefit for them to return to campus.*
- Councillors felt that the issue of missing out on making connections has not been discussed. This has never been escalated with other issues surrounding the graduate students.*
- The Councillor from SEED added that people in UW have not escalated the missing connections and networking as a serious issue due to digital burnout. Speaker added that GSA's Executive Team has had a privilege of spending time together at the new SLC Office. The Councillor from RLS pointed that they want social support for their colleagues and constituents, but this is important to foster online connections. GSA-UW President added that even before Covid19, it was difficult to create engagements outside of campus events. The whole idea is to create a space where people can connect and share their feelings. The Councillor from CEE asked how about the extent of the engagement on candid talks. GSA-UW President replied that it depends on the topic and the time of term. In the summer term, people were way more well attended as productivity levels were different in the summer term. The Councillor from CEE pointed that the Council does not have a place which is crucial to the graduate students' experience and there is a room for improvement.*

Breakout Room 4:

- The Councillor from CEE suggested to provide councillors with the funding to organize events as this would help in encouraging students to attend those events.*
- Councillors also discussed about how can the Council be more beneficial to get outcomes. They suggested to arrange more meetings with the Administration of the UW as there are a lot of discussions revolving around different capacities. Speaker promised that the Council will be having multiple meetings with Jeff Casello in the year 2022. He will be sharing all the documents that will be received from Jeff Casello.*

Breakout Room 5:

- The Councillor from MBET mentioned that their group discussed looking at the scope of actionable work. He felt that they do not have a definite answer to the small issues raised by the constituents as*

they are not well equipped to provide a response. The councillors do not know where to raise a concern raised by their constituents.

- *Councillors suggested to have some resources at the beginning of the councillor's term.*

Speaker added that he has been advocating for having all the councillors at the start of the Fall term which would allow them to have a strong cohort feel. He also added that he has been making sure that the councillor's handbook has updated information as it has not been updated since the past year. Speaker mentioned that Ashley Ryan is the person to go to when the councillors need an answer for the constituents. The Councillors can use the Council Slack channel can be used to escalate the issue and ask questions.

GSA-UW President added that she can help with queries related to few concerns even if there are no immediate remedies to the problems faced by the graduate students. One of the biggest concerns is that UW does not have a dedicated website for the graduate students for immediate responses/solutions. So, this will be created on the GSA website for the following term. GSA wants to help students with the issues they are facing outside academics. GSA has been growing in terms of capacity and help students with day-to-day experiences. She requested the councillors to connect with her if they do not know how to proceed when a graduate student comes up to them for the issues being faced by them.

Adjournment

06:59pm