



GSA COUNCIL
 Notice of Meeting
 January 13, 2021
 4:00PM – 6:30PM

Zoom Meeting (Details in Outlook Invitation)

AGENDA

Time	Item	Action
4:00PM	1. SPEAKER'S WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS	-
4:02PM	2. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA	For Approval
4:03PM	3. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS	
4:03PM	4. ATTENDANCE	For Information
4:04PM	5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES a. December 2, 2020	For Approval
4:05PM	6. UPDATE FROM THE BOARD – Reid (5 mins)	For Information
4:10PM	7. GSPA @ Council – Casello (25 mins)	For Information
4:35PM	8. CAMPUS PARTNERSHIP – Hunt (15 mins)	For Information
4:50PM	9. GRAD HOUSE FEES – Billedeau (40 mins)	For Discussion
5:30PM	10. BREAK (5 mins)	For Information
5:35PM	11. REPORT ON COUNCIL SURVEY – Reid (15 mins)	For Information
5:50PM	12. ORGANIZE UW UPDATE (5 mins)	For Information
5:55PM	13. BOARD ELECTIONS – Hampton/Fiori (15 mins)	For Information
6:10PM	14. SPEAKER ELECTIONS – Robbins (10 mins)	For Information
6:20PM	15. QUESTIONS ON GSA REPORT (10 mins)	For Information
6:30PM	16. ADJOURNMENT	-
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MINUTES:

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

Robbins takes the chair and calls the meeting to order

2. Adoption of the agenda **04:04pm**

Motion to approve the agenda. Approved unanimously.

3. Declaration of interests **04:04pm**

The Councillor from English noted that she is employed with the CTE.

4. Attendance **04:05pm**

Chugh takes the attendance.

5. Approval of Minutes **04:05pm**

The minutes of the December 02, 2020 meeting were approved unanimously.

6. Update from the Board- Reid **04:05pm**

Board chair gave an update from the Board. She mentioned that the routine motions were adopted by the Board. The President discussed a proposal to change the Graduate House fee structure and updated the Board on the status of the Health and Dental Credit issued by Studentcare.

The Board changed the meeting format in order to focus on the future-focussed governance items, in anticipation of the upcoming April AGM. She mentioned that the Directors would like to encourage the involved Councillors to consider running for Board seats when the nominations open. The Directors also expressed a desire to start the President recruitment process in Winter 2021 which would help in familiarizing the new directors with the nomination process.

According to the GP-10, the President Nomination Committee has equal representation from the Board and the Council. This committee will determine whether the President should be offered a second term and present recommendations to the Board and the Council.

"BIRT Council appoints the Speaker of Council (or designate) to the President Nominating Committee."

The motion was approved with unanimous consent.

Casello gave an update on Covid19 restrictions imposed by the province. The University had some courses that were intended to take place on campus and those courses were being revisited once the limitations on gathering size on the campus is known. He mentioned that the provincial announcement does not affect the research activities. The research activities which allow fewer than 5 people will not be affected.

In anticipation, of the Spring term, it is Casello's expectation that it may look similar to the Winter term, though the University will need to consider this.

The Councillor from Accounting and Finance raised a concern that some of her constituents have approval for research (not COVID-19 related), but the recent email from the University of Waterloo President makes them concerned that they may be subject to penalties if they come to campus to work in their office. Casello said the uncertainty amongst the students should be cleared up and students would not be fined for being on campus. The approach of the University has been to reach solutions collaboratively. He mentioned that he would be checking with deans to be sure as the research work on campus is handled on faculty-by-faculty basis. He said that he will make sure that students are provided with clarification.

Casello mentioned that the students who have been engaged on campus in research and labs have had a disproportionate impact on students who require in-person and human participation during research.

Casello said that the Graduate Student Relations Committee is beginning to consider on the support levels for the graduate students for the upcoming fiscal year, including the rates of RAs and TAs. He stated that this will be done by looking at the change in the student costs from last year to this year which includes the cost of living, housing costs and tuition costs.

The Councillor from Germanic and Slavic studies asked how funding recommendations are made, given that funding is treated differently in different faculties. Casello replied that except for Science Faculty, the TA positions are a part of the base funding. He said Engineering department is the only department where TA positions are on top of minimum funding. The decisions for funding for TA's and RA's are made at the faculty level. He mentioned that there have been no conversations about standardizing the base funding across departments.

The Councillor from the School of Planning raised concerns about the accommodation between the parental leave and the tuition fees. She asked how the University will address these kinds of situations. Casello suggested that the students should talk to the staff in the awards team of GSPA to find the best pathway. He mentioned that was flexibility in these kinds of situations.

The Councillor from Biology asked if the funding has the potential to decrease as leasing prices have dropped in Waterloo considerably. Casello replied that this was very unlikely to happen as it was difficult to get data on student housing expenditures. Data that they would be working on the coming year would not account for the effects of Covid19 on the housing expenditures.

8.Campus Partnership- Hunt

04:31pm

Hunt gave an update on the Campus Partnership activities that the GSA was working on. She mentioned that this role is important for the GSA to establish deeper relationship with campus stakeholders so that the needs of the graduate students are given greater priority. She mentioned that the GSA University resources that are created for the graduate students are not easily accessible and did not exist in one place. Such a list will be compiled on the GSA website in the near-future. This is crucial during Covid19 as graduate students will be able to access the resources on campus.

She described the importance of the Waterloo Indigenous Student Centre. She mentioned that the GSA did not have contact with Waterloo Indigenous Student Centre before Fall 2020. This partnership will help to develop a deep and ongoing relationship as a multi-pronged approach to equity.

The GSA has also formed relations with the Office of Indigenous Initiatives. GSA should develop relationship with this Office to address equity on campus at the University's administration level. She mentioned that the GSA was working with the Office to bring attention to the resources that are needed at the Writing Centre and the Library for the graduate students.

The GSA has also approached the Library This was to create a research guide on Indigenous research methods as no such guide currently exists.

Another campus partner is the Alumni Office. Initially, the Alumni Office connected with the GSA to advertise their events. In Winter 2021, GSA is working collaboratively on a humans and work series which would discuss how people work in collaboratively in teams This relationship would create more resources for graduate students which would lead to mentoring opportunities, networking and possible job opportunities.

The GSA and Writing Centre has worked together over the past few years in terms of financial contributions of graduate students' workshops. A positionality and social location workshop would help research students to create their own positionality statements. GSA plans on working with Writing Centre on the equity strategy to make sure that BIPOC students have the support that they need through Writing Centre workshops.

The Councillor from School of Pharmacy asked for some clarification on Indigenous research methodologies. Hunt clarified that there was not a great support on the

research methods for Indigenous resources on campus and concluded that a library guide was needed. The Vice-President (Communications) mentioned that she had received messages in the past from people who complained about not having resources for indigenous research. This creates difficulty in reaching milestones of their research and hence students go to other Universities for the support.

The Councillor from Germanic and Slavic studies asked if any department focusses on indigenous research or indigenous methods. Hunt replied that now, no department focusses on the indigenous research methods. She said it would transform with the help of indigenous office. The Councillor raised a concern that most of the research guides were tied to the department and to the departmental support. So, he pointed out that on top of GSA, if there is no departmental support and no other unit support, what kind of resources will the students get from the library beyond simply saying that we should have a research guide. The Vice-President (Communications) replied that that there was no home base to that and University was aware of it. She said that the fortunate part of not having dedicated expanded version of indigenous resources was that the Centre had taken the burden of it. The University is in the process of hiring more staff at the Centre and expanding Indigenous resources. Library has started a process to have a reading group and the idea was that the students could read about Indigenous ways of knowing.

The Councillor from Peace and Conflict Studies asked that beyond compiling the resources in the library, has GSA looked for alternatives to expand it beyond that sphere to increase public awareness. The Vice-President (Communications) replied that the focus was not towards public awareness, but the main approach was on getting the University to do the things that they are already aware of.

9. Grad House Fees- Billedeau

04:49pm

The President mentioned that the Graduate House was facing the operational and financial challenges due to Covid19. Before the pandemic, the operations of the Graduate House were significantly supported and impacted by the optional fees. The President listed issues being faced with respect to the Graduate House which included the operational costs and fixed costs being dependent on the optional fees that were charged per term. He proposed some solutions to the issues being faced by the Graduate House, such as elimination of the optional Graduate House fee, adoption of a mandatory fee to cover for the fixed costs and adoption of optional fee to cover for the variable costs.

The Councillor from English asked if the coupons and the discounts that the graduate students receive at the Graduate House will not be accessible to the students anymore once the Graduate House re-opens and is operational again. The President mentioned that there will be grad pricing which will slightly less than what the faculty is charged at the Graduate House.

The Councillor from Accounting and Finance asked for some clarification if the faculty pays any sort of access fees for the Graduate House. The President clarified that the significant portion of the revenue is not obtained from the graduate students. He mentioned that the graduate students who pay the optional fees do receive a certain percentage of that fees as discounts whereas faculty and the administration are not entitled to that opportunity for discount.

The Councillor from History asked if it would be better to reach out to the Faculty Association to request a yearly contribution that recognizes the role of the Graduate House on campus, institutional memory, a place for them to enjoy lunch and interact with graduate students. The President said that he had conversations with several Faculty Association representatives prior to the pandemic. He said that any type of financial assistance from the Faculty Association to make the Graduate House sustainable during a prolonged shutdown would be immaterial.

The Board Chair added that it is in the Articles of the Incorporation to have a social club since GSA was originally formed with the purpose of having a bar which was the Graduate House. She said reviewing letters patent in the Articles of Incorporation, we should revisit and reconsider some of the existing vulnerabilities.

The Speaker asked about the earliest date for the fee changes to be active. The President replied that the fees will be changed most likely by Fall 2021 term.

The Councillor from Germanic and Slavic studies asked for how long can GSA cover the costs of the Graduate House during its closure. The President said that this discussion has not yet been had at the Board level and the focus was on the Winter term and moderating the restrictions for the coming Spring term. He mentioned that the plan is to open the Graduate House in the Spring term. If, due to the restrictions, the Graduate House could not reopen, then the GSA will have to work on a long-term strategy for the Graduate House.

Within small group discussions, the Councillors expressed their support/opposition for the proposed change in the Graduate House fees.

Reasons for supporting the change in the Graduate House change in fees:

- The services of the Graduate House should be advertised so as to reach to a greater set of people*
- The Graduate House has been an essential feature for the graduate student experience at University of Waterloo*
- The risk of losing the Graduate House is greater than the cost of maintaining it*
- For the people who cannot be on campus due to pandemic and will graduate and would not get a chance to visit the Graduate House, they should take it as supporting the legacy of the graduate student experience*

- *Faculty Association can help in maintaining the Graduate House as a one-time contribution*
- *The Graduate House can provide students with some online credit which would encourage students to come to Graduate House*

Reasons for opposing the change in Graduate House change in fees:

- *The Graduate House is facing additional issues that have been exacerbated by the pandemic.*
- *Students using the Graduate House are getting the benefits and Graduate House is getting subsidized by the majority of the students*
- *International students who are not in Canada due to the pandemic but have begun their studies and paid their fees won't be able to access the Graduate House*
- *Can the Graduate House receive heritage status? Or would that negative affect operations?*
- *There should be equality between the fees being charged from students and the faculty to the ones who are going*
- *Concern about whether the fee is implemented whether the Graduate House is open/not*
- *Many students are facing financial hardships due to the ongoing pandemic situation*
- *Councillors need to talk to their constituents and take their opinion into account more accurately on this issue*

The President mentioned that the Graduate House is open to generating more incentives for the students. He observed that four groups were in favour and three groups opposed. He said he will draft a referendum question which he will return to the Council for approval. He will try to get some sort of commitment from the faculty and cash from some other areas.

The Executive Manager clarified that the GSA as a not for profit corporation cannot sell retail.

10.Break

05:38pm

11.Report on Council Survey- Reid

05:43pm

The Board Chair presented the preliminary Council Survey Findings, in which 19 Councillors participated in a survey

The motivation behind becoming a Councillor was to help improve the grad experience, represents interests and voice concerns, connect with constituents, get involved with student government, and create awareness about the services of GSA and its efforts.

The conception of the role had changed significantly for most of the people after joining GSA, though 70% of the respondents agreed that the role of the Councillor was clearly stated and the majority of the Councillors believed that the Councillor's role was self-defined.

Most of the Councillors were satisfied with the training and orientation provided by the GSA and with the level of support and supervision. Councillors were also satisfied with the current time commitment.

83% of the Councillors felt that being a Councillor was the effective use of time and resources towards improving the graduate student life. Councillors' inputs were valued and recognized. 72% of the Councillors were satisfied with the quality and quantity of the follow-ups.

In terms of consultation with constituents, majority of the Councillors need two weeks or more. The majority of the Councillors interact with their constituents weekly or monthly.

12. Organize UW update

05:53pm

An update on OrganizeUW was provided. Some of the social and educational upcoming events were Winter Orientation Trivia Night with GSA-UW, English department discussions, and international student discussions. She mentioned that OrganizeUW was endorsed by the GSA, Fossil Free UW and SAGE (Student Association for Graduate Students in English). OrganizeUW has new media as a part of #whynotwaterloo campaign.

The presenter mentioned that the University Administration was not communicating crucial health and safety information regarding COVID safety to graduate student workers. Therefore, OUW created a survey with its members and followers to explore this concern further.

13. Board Elections- Hampton/Fiori

06:00pm

A Director mentioned that the directors for the next Board-year would be elected at the Annual General Meeting (AGM) in April. The GSA was seeking candidates for the Board from diverse backgrounds and experiences. There are several reasons to serve on a non-profit board, including building your network and contacts, meeting management, the art of persuasion, diplomacy and diving deep on an issue.

A Director(former Councillor) provided a discussion on his role as a Councillor. He mentioned he switched from Councillor to Director because he wanted more of a leadership-oriented position in GSA. He explained that working with Board of Directors is an advocacy position and the Director advocates on behalf of all the graduate students on campus. A director gets to know about the functioning of everything and the resources required, the decision-making process, as well as bringing the Council's

perspective to the Board. The Director's role is more rewarding as it prepares the person for the future leadership roles.

The Vice-President (Communication) asked how the Board gets involved in initiatives like equity plans and strategies and how can GSA encourage people from diverse backgrounds to get involved in it. A Director replied that council advocacy or community advocacy type of experience is needed to serve the student body. So, whatever the Board becomes, it automatically affects the student body. The composition of Board reflects the student body directly.

14. Speaker Elections- Robbins

06:17pm

The Speaker gave a brief description of the role of a Speaker. The Speaker is responsible for managing the day-to-day affairs of the Council, helps in facilitating the elections, represents Council to the Board, presides over the Council meetings, and delegates tasks to the Deputy Speaker.

He explained the process for the selection of the Speaker. A committee that consists of one representative from each faculty, Speaker, Deputy Speaker and President of GSA interviews Speaker candidates and provides a final report to Council on the suitability of the candidates . In April, Council will then vote to select the next Speaker and Deputy Speaker.

15. Questions on GSA Report

06:26pm

None.

16. Adjournment

06:28pm

Motion to adjourn the meeting was passed at 06:28pm.