

Graduate Student Association UW
Council

Meeting Minutes

April 6 , 2022

Primary Meeting

Date: April 6 , **2022**

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

Place: Virtual

Council Speaker: Tyler B. Hampton
Minutes Taker: Mavjot Kaur



MEETING ATTENDENCE

Name	Position/Faculty	Attendance*
Tyler Hampton	Speaker	P
Kalsha Diaguarachchige De Silva	Health - Kinesiology	P
MK Stinson	Health - Recreation & Leisure Studies	P
Karolina Kaminska	Health - Public Health Sciences (School of)	P
Pam Hopwood	Health - Public Health Sciences (School of)	P
Jillian Adams	Arts - Accounting & Finance	P
Rabia Ahmed	Arts - Master of Digital Experience Innovation (MDEI)	P
Chris Martin	Arts - English Language & Literature	P
Stephanie Wilson	Arts - Fine Arts	P
Nathalie Gadbois	Arts - French Studies	P
Erica Swyers	Arts - Germanic & Slavic Studies	P
Michelle Brown	Arts - History	A
Zerihun Kinate	Arts - Master of Peace & Conflict Studies	A
Cael Dobson	Arts - Philosophy	P
Kennedy Westlake	Arts - Psychology	P
Matthew Gerrits	Arts - Master of Public Service (MPS)	P
Ben Szoller	Arts - Religious Studies	P
Madeleine Pinard	Arts - Global Governance	P
Alex D'Alton	Eng - Master of Business, Entrepreneurship, & Technology (MBET)	P
Manh Kien Tran	Eng - Chemical Engineering	P
Nastaran Mosavari	Eng - Civil & Environmental Engineering	P
Cindy Yang	Eng - Electrical & Computer Engineering	P
Devansh Nagpal	Eng - Management Sciences	P
Jinesh Shah	Eng - Mechanical & Mechatronics Engineering	P
Elizabeth Diederichs	Eng - Systems Design Engineering	P
Yusof Ghiasi	Enviro - Geography & Environmental Management (GEM)	A
Tia Driver	Enviro - School of Environment, Enterprise, & Development (SEED)	P
Katie Pita	Enviro - School of Environment, Resources, & Sustainability (SERS)	P
Cloe St-Hilaire	Enviro - School of Planning	A
Joseph Meleshko	Math - Computer Science	P
Alexandra Mossman	Math - Statistics & Actuarial Sciences	P
Caleb Ryan	Science - Biology	P

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Everett Patterson	Science - Physics and Astronomy	P
Antoine Hakim	Science - Pharmacy (School of)	P
Asiya Jabeen	Science - Optometry and Vision Science (School of)	P
Kevin White	Cross - Collaborative Water Program	A
Natalie Isobel DeBloeme Barcellos	Director (Board)	P
Ala Mokhtar	Director (Board)	A
Jessica Lee	Director (Board)	R
Elham Mohammadi	Director (Board)	R
Samira Mehrabi	Director (Board)	R
Yi Abby Wang	Director (Board)	P
Ruby Aigbotsua	Director (Board)	A
Glaucia Melo	Interim President, Director ex-officio	P
Aiman Fatima	Senator	A
Jack DeGooyer	Senator	A
Naima Samuel	Senator	A
Onurcan Gokkaya	Senator	A
Rita Cherkewski	General Manager	P

*Attendance

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

AGENDA

Time	Item		Length (min)
4:00 PM	1	Speaker's Welcome and Opening Remarks	1
4:01 PM	2	Attendance	1
4:02 PM	3	Declaration of Interests	1
4:03 PM	4	Adoption of the Agenda	1
4:04 PM	5	Approval of Meeting Minutes (Jan and Feb)	1
4:05 PM	6	Update from the Speaker	5
4:10 PM	7	Update from the President	5
4:15 PM	8	Update from the Board - Reminder: AGM Scheduled April 13, 4pm	5
4:20 PM	9	Organize UW Update	5
4:25 PM	10	Presentation by GSA Policy Coordinator: Discussion on Ombuds Funding Structure	35
5:00 PM		Break	5
5:05 PM	11	Election of next Speaker of the Council	
5:05 PM	11a	- Introduction and Statements by 4 Candidates	60
6:05 PM		Break	5
6:10 PM	11b	- Confidential Session and Speaker Election	30
6:40 PM	12	Continued Discussion on Council-Board Relationship	20
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 04:02pm.
- 2. ATTENDANCE** **04:04pm**
Kaur takes the attendance.
- 3. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS** **04:04pm**
No conflicts of interests were declared.
- 4. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA** **04:07pm**
Motion to approve the agenda. Approved unanimously
- 5. Approval of Meeting Minutes (Jan and Feb)**
The minutes of the October 6th, 2021, meeting was approved unanimously.
- 6. Update from the Speaker** **04:14pm**
The Council Speaker mentioned that it is his last meeting as Council Speaker. However, he will continue to be part of the GSA as VP Comm. The new Speaker will be elected later in the meeting. He appreciated the involvement and efforts of the Councillors.

He mentioned about the updated manual which will act as a guide for the new Council Speaker. The manual includes the projects which are ongoing and the project which were planned to start in May 2022 but could not be due to pandemic. The Council Speaker included his own ideas in the manual and asked the Council to share their ideas with the new Council Speaker.

The Council Speaker mentioned about GRADstory, launched by Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs (GSPA) in collaboration with GSA. He asked the Councillors to share their story and experience as a graduate student.
- 7. Update from the President** **04:23pm**
The President congratulated the Council Speaker. She updated about the new president hiring. She mentioned that there is a possibility of extension in the term of interim President until the new President is hired. She also mentioned about three job postings for hiring coordinators for residence/housing, communications, and labour. She further updated about the Grad House timings which have been extended till 7pm. The Equity Scholarship plan has been initiated and there have been talks about its implementation and the Scholarship would be managed by the GSA. The last update is about wellness week which held last month. The Wellness week was a success. Resource page was also launched on the GSA website which focuses on all the dimensions of wellness.
- 8. Update from the Board**
-Reminder: AGM Scheduled April 13, 4pm **04:18pm**
Yi Wang (Director) shared information about the Annual General Meeting (AGM) 2022. The meeting would be held on April 13, 2022, at 4pm virtually. The financial updates will be given and elections for the Director positions will be held. The Councillors can file their nomination for the position of the Director on day of AGM.
- 9. Organize UW Update** **04:22pm**

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OrganizeUW (OUW) representative gave an update on the state of OUW Campaign. The drive is for the formation of Union of graduate student workers (TAs and RAs), as well as sessional instructors. The Union provides unique legal protection for workers which cannot be covered by GSA.

The OUW have been attending the GSA events at the Graduate House and will be hosting their own events. More information about the OUW is available on the OUW website and social media platforms.

10. Presentation by GSA Policy Coordinator: Discussion on Ombuds Funding Structure 04:25pm

Katherine introduced herself as the GSA Policy Coordinator. The role of GSA Policy Coordinator focuses on three aspects of Policy,

- **Collaboration** with relevant parties on campus on drafting new policies for the graduate students.
- In terms of **Education**, hold policy sessions and advice on policies for individuals
- **Review** the policy through feedback from the Council.

The GSA Policy Coordinator presented about the Funding of the Ombudsperson Role. She informed the University of Waterloo is the only Ontario U6 research intensive university that does not have an ombuds office. The factors that motivated the initiating of an Office of the Ombudspersons are:

- Students, Faculty and Staff are often unclear on where to direct concerns or get neutral guidance on University policy related issues, as well as instances of unfairness (perceived or real).
- Nobody on campus is currently responsible for holding the processes that exist accountable, nor maintaining records on the issues that frequently arise without being resolved.
- Administrative academic processes are often unclear and frustrating for both staff and students.

An Office of Ombudsperson require following key aspects: Impartiality and Independence, Advising, Data and Pattern Reporting, Investigation and Intervention, Recommendations.

The GSA Policy Coordinator highlighted the timeline of the Ombudsperson Office. It started in 2017 with Waterloo Undergraduate Student Association (WUSA) Council Policy. It was included in the report by President advisory committee on student mental health (CoSMH) recommendations. The implementation of this recommendation was left unfinished with the resolution that WUSA, GSA and University would negotiate together to resolve recommendation 12. In 2022, the work is still being done on the recommendation. By the end of Winter 2022, the University Administration agreed on the Title, Scope, and Functions of the Ombudsperson. By the Spring 2022 end, funding, reporting and organisational structure will be formalised. By the Fall 2022 end, the job posting will be available for hiring the Ombudsperson.

The GSA Policy Coordinator highlighted about the funding structures for the Ombudsperson in other Canadian Universities. There are two funding structures, the university solely funds the Office of Ombudsperson, and the University & Student Unions jointly fund the Office of Ombudsperson.

There are three possible structures: Jointly funding by the University and the Student Unions, Funding by the University and Funding by the Student Unions. Ombudsperson office with sole student-union funding will have less access as the Ombudsperson will support only students and not the staff or faculty. Therefore, it is important that the University lends their support by paying into it. The advantage of Joint Funding structure is the students will have a say in hiring, oversight, and performance review. The 'Ombuds Levy' in other universities is under two dollars.

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She highlighted the functions of Ombudsperson which are Hiring Process, Oversight & Reporting, Complaints & Removal and Authority. She mentioned that in joint funding structure, the university and students collaborate in making decisions about all the functions whereas in funding by university, the university authority makes these decisions.

The Councillor of Physics asked about the split in funding in case of Joint funding structure. The GSA Policy Coordinator replied that she does not have an idea about it as other universities are not transparent about it. She asked for the Councillors preference which will be helpful in negotiations. The Councillor of Physics supported the joint funding model, but the students should not pay more than 50 percent.

The Councillor of Computer Science supported the joint funding model and asked about the involvement of WUSA in the process. The GSA Policy Coordinator replied that there is no confirmation, but they also want to have even share of authority in oversight of the office. The President added that this advocacy initiative is in partnership with WUSA. They already have their feedback from their Council. There is a representative from WUSA in every meeting held about the Ombudsperson.

The Councillor of Accounting & Finance and the Councillor of Civil & Environmental Engineering also supported the Joint funding structure.

The Councillor of School of Environment, Resources, & Sustainability (SERS) supported the joint funding model. She mentioned that the university's share of funding will also be indirectly paid by students through tuition fee.

The Councillor of Master of Public Service (MPS) supported the joint funding structure and asked about the university's hesitance toward the Ombudsperson Office. The GSA Policy Coordinator clarified that University was not including staff & faculty as the staff & faculty association indicated not to be included in the conversation. She added that in case of sole student union funding structure, the university will not buy-in, and the Ombudsperson would not have access and will not be able to do anything.

The Councillor of Civil & Environmental Engineering suggested to create their own model in which the University funds the Office of Ombudsperson, and the students share the authority in terms of appointing and reporting. The GSA Policy Coordinator replied that the funding is indirectly coming from student's tuition fee, but the joint funding model will make the student feel more comfortable in approaching the Ombudsperson. The Council Speaker added that joint funding will let the students know that they have the power in the functioning of the Office of Ombudsperson, and this will create a perception of GSA being an advocate for students.

11. Election of next Speaker of the Council

05:05pm

The Councillor of Civil & Environmental Engineering declared conflict of interest. She is currently a councillor and running for the position of Council Speaker.

The Council Speaker highlighted the process to be followed. Candidate will do their pitch and then questions will be directed to them. This will be followed by the next candidate's pitch and questions. After the pitches and individual questions, all the candidates will have a collective question and answer session.

-Introduction and Statements by 4 Candidates

05:10pm

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Muhammad Hassan introduced himself as a master's student in Computer Science program. He is an international student. He highlighted the concerns of international students and through this position, he wanted to support them along with other graduate students.

The Councillor of Physics asked if he considered other positions in the GSA. If yes, why he considered the Speaker position. Muhammad replied that he opted for this position so that he will be able to act as a liaison between different groups and voice & represent their concerns.

The Councillor of MPS asked about the experience in mediating conflicts and managing meetings. Muhammad clarified that he has not been in advisory positions since school but his experience as software engineer and teaching assistant built these skills.

The Councillor of SERS asked about managing own bias when it comes to any managerial role he had. Muhammad replied that he has a good diplomatic skill and find a middle ground between different viewpoints. It is a collaborative process, and one should be open to discussion.

The Councillor of Master of Digital Experience Innovation (MDEI) asked if one year of experience as an international student is enough to divert people to relevant resources. Muhammad replied that he wants to be more of a listener than speaker. He also thinks that his time here at the University is shorter than the other students, but it is enough to make some changes.

Sidra Khan started her pitch by mentioning about her experiences in the past which have provided her a skillset that is going to be helpful in the Council Speaker role. The communication and outreach experience will assist in liaising with various stakeholders. She has been an advocate of peace and justice. In her last role, she designed programs to build capacity of young people in entrepreneurship and other areas. This position also talks about her career goals of making a peaceful place for young people. Her current program also focuses on the negotiations and conflict resolving.

The Councillor of Recreation & Leisure Studies (RLS) referred to Sidra's statement and asked how she will employ her skill of story telling in her work to allow councillors to perform their advocacy on GSA. Sidra replied that she uses story telling to resolve conflicts and to make communication better.

The Councillor of School of Planning asked how she will encourage constructive dialogue considering that Council has people from different environments and backgrounds. She replied that in online meeting set up, feedback forms could be used. In case of in-person meetings she would prefer to go up to people and ask them about their feedback. She added that people are more open in informal setting than formal setting.

The Councillor of Statistics & Actuarial Sciences referred to Sidra's involvement in speaker sessions in the past and asked about the challenge faced in such sessions and how to overcome this challenge. Sidra replied that biggest challenge is to involve people to talk and give their feedback. This can overcome by using Breakout Rooms.

Nastaran Mosavari expressed her interest in the Council Speaker position. She has been director and currently involved in the GSA as a Councillor. As Council Speaker, she will create a comfortable and more inviting environment for the Councillors. She will encourage the new councillors to get involved by in-person or virtual meeting sessions. She has been involved in Department GSA as president as well.

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The Councillor of Physics asked how her prior experience in the University and GSA will leverage her role as Council Speaker. She replied that these prior experiences made her familiar with the goals of GSA and different bodies in the GSA & their responsibilities.

The Councillor of SERS asked how she will involve the staff in GSA. Nastaran replied that it is a challenge in itself but she personally thinks that there should be more meetings with the staff, mainly Jeff Casello. It also depends on the schedule of the staff whether they can allocate more time for such meetings.

The President asked all the candidates how they will foster the relationship between GSA Council, GSA management and executive team. Sidra replied that she is new to this system and she would preferred to interact with them in the meetings as well as outside the meetings to understand them and their role. Muhammad replied that he would open different channels of communication which ever is comfortable for that concerned person. He added that rather than controlling the mode of communication, it should be up to the person to choose the mode as per their comfort. Nastaran replied that Council Speaker is involved with them in different capacities individually as well as a member of a certain committee. The Speaker can communicate and build relationships during their interactions. She added that in case of specific issue direct communication with the concerned person or team would be the best approach.

The Councillor of School of Environment, Enterprise, & Development (SEED) said that Council Speaker position requires deep knowledge of the polices and procedures in the GSA and there is a possibility of making mistakes. She asked how they will address their own mistakes as well as mistakes of others. Muhammad replied that he will first familiarise himself with the policies and procedures. In terms of decision making, it should not be limited to a person or a small group of people and should be more democratic. Sidra replied that she will request Tyler (Council Speaker) to familiarise her with all the policies and procedures to avoid mistakes. As far as others are concerned, mistakes can be avoided through guidelines and instructions and if still mistakes occur, there is a second chance for everyone. Nastaran replied that it is best to consult others who have better understanding of the policies. In case of others, the person can be made aware of the correct interpretation and if required amend the policy for better understanding.

The Councillor of Electrical & Computer Engineering asked about their time management skills as judgement is required when to intervene just to cover everything in the agenda or when to allocate extra time for a certain discussion. Muhammad replied that he prefers to plan thoroughly and ahead of time, this will reduce the chances of changes required. Nastaran replied that pre-planning is the best option and in case there is a need to make changes during the meeting, it depends on the priority of the topic. Sidra mentioned about her past experiences of multitasking and her spontaneous decision making.

The Councillor of SERS asked what the role of Council Speaker is according to them. Muhammad replied this position represents the Council and act as a liaison between the Council, the Board and other bodies. Nastaran replied providing documents for the meetings, prepare for the meetings, capacity building, establish good relationships with GSA Board and GSA Executive are some of the main roles. Sidra replied that it is a leadership role, and it acts as a bridge between the branches of the GSA. The part of role is to design meeting agendas, content, and themes.

The Councillor of Statistics & Actuarial Sciences asked what the criteria would be to evaluate the performance of Council and to evaluate whether the objectives were met after each council meeting. Muhammad it is difficult to evaluate as it depends on different perspectives whether it is quantitative or qualitative and striking a balance between them is important. Nastaran replied that the efficiency

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can be measured by the involvement of the Councillors, agenda being discussed in a timely manner. She added that it also depends on how fruitful the discussion was in resolving the issue. Sidra replied for evaluating the Councillors, attendance and their participation can be assessed. She added the evaluation of objectives being met can be done by mentioning the goals in the agenda and reiterating those in the meeting.

Ruby (Director) asked how they will address the academic commitment and Council Chair commitment. Nastaran replied that it is about planning and time management. Sidra replied that planning is the key and to avoid the burnouts, distressing activities would be helpful. Muhammad replied that time management is necessary. It is important to maintain work-life balance of oneself and others in the Council as well.

-Confidential Session and Speaker Election

06:25pm

Sidra Khan was elected as the new Council Speaker.

12. Continued Discussion on Council-Board Relationship

06:50pm

The Council Speaker asked about extended the meeting. The Councillor of Recreation & Leisure Studies said that it was supposed to be a full-fledged discussion. However, this issue is not urgent and can be discussed in the following meetings. Natalie (Director) said that she can share the motions passed in the last Board meeting if it is not contentious as per the policies. The Council Speaker replied that he is unaware if sharing information is contentious or not. The Councillor of SERS suggested not to share the information and wait till the next meeting for official update from the Board. The Councillor of Accounting & Finance suggested it is important to share the information for discussion if it is pertinent to the Councillor of Recreation & Leisure Studies' letter and if it is part of the Board meeting that can be discussed in the Council. The Councillor of Physics said that this discussion is important as he noticed on the website that Board Chair did not resign as per the request instead Deputy Board Chair resigned. General Manager mentioned that the conversation held in the Board meeting cannot be discussed as it was held in in-camera session. The Councillor of Recreation & Leisure Studies said the goal for this discussion is that it is supposed to be an imaginative gesture towards the Board to discuss different options and how the Board-Council relationship should look. The motions mentioned in the letter is for Council and can be changed. The Council voted for meeting extension, however, due to disagreement the Speaker decided to end the discussion and delay the discussion. The Council Speaker concluded that a future date can be set for this discussion.

Adjournment

7:06pm