

**Graduate Student Association UW**

# **Council**

**Meeting Minutes**

**July 6, 2022**

**Primary Meeting**

Date: July 6, 2022

Time: 4:00 P.M. to 6:00 P.M.

Place: Virtual

**Council Speaker:** Sidra Khan

**Minutes Taker:** Mavjot Kaur



**MEETING ATTENDENCE**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Position/Faculty</b>	<b>Attendance*</b>
Sidra Khan	Speaker	Po
Kalsha Diaguarachchige De Silva	Health - Kinesiology	A
MK Stinson	Health - Recreation & Leisure Studies	Po
Karolina Kaminska	Health - Public Health Sciences (School of )	P
Pam Hopwood	Health - Public Health Sciences (School of )	A
Jillian Adams	Arts - Accounting & Finance	R
Rabia Ahmed	Arts - Master of Digital Experience Innovation (MDEI)	Graduated
Chris Martin	Arts - English Language & Literature	P
Stephanie Wilson	Arts - Fine Arts	Po
Nathalie Gadbois	Arts - French Studies	A
Erica Swyers	Arts - Germanic & Slavic Studies	A
Michelle Brown	Arts - History	P
Zerihun Kinate	Arts - Master of Peace & Conflict Studies	P
Cael Dobson	Arts - Philosophy	P
Kennedy Westlake	Arts - Psychology	P
Matthew Gerrits	Arts - Master of Public Service (MPS)	A
Ben Szoller	Arts - Religious Studies	P
Madeleine Pinard	Arts - Global Governance	A
Alex D'Alton	Eng - Master of Business, Entrepreneurship, & Technology (MBET)	Resigned
Manh Kien Tran	Eng - Chemical Engineering	P
Nastaran Mosavari	Eng - Civil & Environmental Engineering	A
Cindy Yang	Eng - Electrical & Computer Engineering	R
Devansh Nagpal	Eng - Management Sciences	A
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)	Po
Cloe St-Hilaire	Enviro - School of Planning	P
Joseph Meleshko	Math - Computer Science	P
Alexandra Mossman	Math - Statistics & Actuarial Sciences	R

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Caleb Ryan	Science - Biology	A
Stephen Harrigan	Science - Physics and Astronomy	P
Antoine Hakim	Science - Pharmacy (School of)	P
Asiya Jabeen	Science - Optometry and Vision Science (School of)	Po
Kevin White	Cross - Collaborative Water Program	P
Natalie Isobel DeBloeme Barcellos	Director (Board)	P
Ala Mokhtar	Director (Board)	A
Jessica Lee	Director (Board)	A
Elham Mohammadi	Director (Board)	A
Samira Mehrabi	Director (Board)	Resigned
Yi Abby Wang	Director (Board)	P
Ruby Aigbotsua	Director (Board)	A
Glaucia Melo	Interim President, Director ex-officio	Resigned
Aiman Fatima	Senator	P
Jack DeGooyer	Senator	A
Naima Samuel	Senator	A
Onurcan Gokkaya	Senator	A
Rita Cherkewski	General Manager	A
Advait Shah	Management Sciences	A
Bing Hu	Artificial Intelligence (Waterloo.ai)	P
Dipak Bishwokarma	Geography & Environmental Management	P
Neela Hassan	Sociology	P
Sourabhashis Das	Pure Mathematics	P

\*Attendance

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

• AGENDA

Time		Item	Length (min)
4:00 PM	1	Opening Remarks - Speaker's Welcome - Land Acknowledgement	2
4:02 PM	2	Attendance	1
4:03 PM	3	Declaration of Interests	1
4:04 PM	4	Adoption of the Agenda	1
4:05 PM	5	Approval of Meeting Minutes - May - June	5
4:15 PM	6	Introduction of new councillors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bing Hu</li> <li>• Dipak Bishwokarma</li> <li>• Sourabhashis Das</li> <li>• Neela Hassan</li> <li>• Advait Shah</li> <li>• Donna Jones</li> <li>• David Jose</li> </ul>	10
4:30 PM	7	Update from the President: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New position VP Advocacy</li> <li>• Nominating Committees for VP Admin &amp; Communication</li> </ul>	10
4:35 PM	8	Updates from the Board	15
4:40 PM	9	Update from OUW	5
4:45 PM	10	Introducing Deputy Speaker role	10
4:55 PM	11	Councillor Feedback Discussion: (20 mins	
		breakout room discussion/20 min debriefing) <a href="#">NOTES HERE</a> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How to maintain multiple/competing accessibilities as we move forward to in-person meetings/classrooms?</li> <li>• Commitment to social/environmental sustainability-mental health coverage in UW grad insurance</li> <li>• Student rights as tenants- step by step guide or more available information &amp; events?</li> <li>• GSA Council in-person meetings</li> </ul>	4.0
5:35 PM	12	Use of Slack	1
5:36 PM		ADJOURNMENT	



**MINUTES**

- |   |                |
|---|----------------|
| <b>1. Opening Remarks</b>   | <b>04:03pm</b> |
| •<br><b>Speaker’s Welcome</b>   | -              |
| •<br><b>Land Acknowledgement</b>  | -              |
| <i>Surdi takes the chair and calls the meeting to order at 04:01pm.</i>                                   |                |
| <b>2. Attendance</b>  | <b>04:05pm</b> |
| •<br><i>aur takes the attendance.</i>   | K              |
| <b>3. Declaration of Interests</b>  | <b>04:05pm</b> |
| <i>No conflicts of interests were declared.</i>   |                |
| <b>4. Adoption of Agenda</b>  | <b>04:05pm</b> |
| <i>Motion to approve the agenda. Approved unanimously</i>   |                |
| <b>5. Approval of Meeting Minutes</b>   | <b>04:06pm</b> |
| -May<br>-June   |                |
| <i>The minutes of the May 4th, 2022, and June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022, meeting was approved unanimously.</i> |                |
| <b>6. Introduction of new councillors</b>   | <b>04:07pm</b> |
| •<br><b>Bing Hu</b>   | -              |
| •<br><b>Dipak Bishwokarma</b>   | -              |
| •<br><b>Sourabhashis Das</b>  | -              |
| •<br><b>Neela Hassan</b>  | -              |
| •<br><b>Advait Shah</b>   | -              |
| •<br><b>Donna Jones</b>   | -              |
| •<br><b>David Jose</b>  | -              |
| <i>The New Councillors introduced themselves and the GSA-UW President welcomed them all.</i>              |                |
| <b>7. Update from President:</b>  | <b>04:10pm</b> |
| •<br><b>New position VP Advocacy</b>  | -              |
| •   | -              |

### **Nominating Committees for VP Admin & Communication**

*The GSA-UW President informed about the approval of new position, Vice President Advocacy. This role was introduced after constructive feedback from the Council.*

*For the appointment of the VPs, a nominating committee is formed which handles the process. This committee has equal representation from both Board and Council. Three Committees will be formed, one for each role. There is a possibility that one person can be part of all the committees, or three different persons can be part of each committee. The time commitment is 4-5 hours, which will include shortlisting candidates for interviews, followed by conducting interviews.*

*The VP Comms further added that along with VP positions, there are Coordinator roles that needs to be filled and will be advertised in the upcoming newsletter. He also mentioned that in the Fall term, the graduate orientation will be held in person and volunteers will be needed. He asked the Councillors to sign up if they want to be part of the orientation.*

### **8. Update from the Board**

**04:20pm**

*Teghan (Board Chair) introduced herself as the Board Chair. She said that one of the goals of the Board's goal this year is to increase transparency and collaboration between Board and Council. She also added that are currently working on clarifying the hiring policy of the VPs. She also mentioned that the Board is also recruiting for new Director seats.*

### **9. Update from OUW**

**06:00 pm**

*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.*

*OrganizeUW (OUW) representative informed about that there is an upcoming event on June 8 at ML Green. The OUW also offers weekly socials at the Grad House on Mondays from 5-7 pm called 'Stammtisch'.*

*The OUW representative discussed about the feedback from GSA. The feedback was about suggestion to put the percentage of graduate student workers who have signed the card on the website. He said that this will alert the University authorities to up their propaganda on why there is no need for a union. However, the OUW agreed to provide monthly updates if GSA agrees not to share the information.*

*Aiman (Senator) asked about hesitation to support the Union. The OUW representative said that the percentage is extremely small but most of them change their mind after talking to us. The remaining have the concern that Union does not do anything and collect dues. However, these dues are merely 0.85% of the wages. The Second concern is the affect due to Union strikes, to which he clarified that it depends on the administration. He further referred to York University's strike in 2018. The York University administration decided to not fulfill any of the demands just because fulfilling all the demands would lead to over-budget.*

*The Councillor of Master of Peace & Conflict Studies mentioned about TAs asked to work over the allotted hours and what the OUW can do before the Union is formed. The OUW representative said that no one can do anything about this issue until a union is formed. The strike will not be that effective compared to the strike held by Union. He added that GSA is not powerful enough to fight with administration, however, it has a lot of influence on the students which can help in formation of the Union by advertising about it.*

*The Councillor of School of Environment, Enterprise, & Development asked if different approach is used for BIPOC community as they are vulnerable due to their residency status. The OUW representative said that the OUW team is diverse and has a lot of international students. He also mentioned that the team also has people who can navigate such issues.*

*The VP Comm mentioned that the OUW will be featured in the upcoming term's orientation.*

**10. Introducing Deputy Speaker role 04:21pm**

*Surdi (GSA-UW President) highlighted about the role of Deputy Speaker. This is a volunteer position, and it involves working along with the Council Speaker. The time commitment is 7 hours per week. He mentioned that further details are mentioned in the job description. The deadline for the application of the role is July 12.*

**11. Councillor Feedback Discussion 04:25pm**

- **How to maintain multiple/competing accessibilities as we move forward to in-person meetings/classrooms?** -
- **Commitment to social/environmental sustainability- mental health coverage in UW grad insurance** -
- **Student rights as tenants- step by step guide or more available information & events?** -
- **GSA Council in-person meetings** -

**Group 1**

- *For GSA meeting, strictly in-person meetings should be conducted with no flexibility for online mode.*
- *Getting in-person would help with connectivity issues. Casual chats before the meeting starts and right after would allow conversation. Zoom fatigue is real. A hybrid function could be best of both worlds.*
- *A lot of time is spent in the Council concerning the GSA as an organization and the Council feels less focussed on students.*

**Group 2**

- *For accessibility,*
  - *Broadcasting software (OWL) for in-person lectures/presentations for the students who are unable to attend due to immigration complications or other exigent circumstances.*
  - *Webinars should be accessible online and in-person at the same time or within a reasonable timeframe*
- *For mental health,*
  - *Student's awareness of crisis counseling appointments at the student wellness office.*
  - *Possibly advocating for a greater number of sessions for long therapy (more than 6).*
  - *More advertisements/marketing for EmpowerMe*
- *For housing, More structured and organized list of housing resources is needed, especially for students who live outside of province/Canada.*



**Group 3**

- *For accessibility, students having health concerns should also be considered and hybrid structure should be preferred.*
- *For social/environmental sustainability,*
  - *Mental Health - support for including this into the health plan. Concerns about support as we come out of the pandemic. The access to mental health supports for international students is important. There needs to be more information or communication about the services currently available.*
  - *Sustainability- The GSA should continue to extent their commitments and include sustainability reporting. The pandemic hasn't helped the social wellbeing of students and the GSA should do everything they can do to improve the environmental and social dimensions. The GSA could look into supporting campus wide sustainability commitments*
- *There hasn't been any information shared about our rights. Emails containing this information would be helpful. This should be talked about more and students should be informed about possible issues or challenges they might face and how to overcome these challenges. During the pandemic this wasn't a popular topic, but this might have been very important before the pandemic and post-pandemic.*
- *For GSA meetings, in-person meetings are preferred along with hybrid option for those who cannot attend.*

**Group 4**

- *For accessibility, option for in-person classes being recorded should be considered. TAs with accessibility needs should be provided with more information on accessing these services due to transition from online to in-person.*
- *For mental health,*
  - *Currently Health Services covers some basic counselling, but how far does that extend.*
  - *Mental Health check-in being pioneered by EnvironmentGSA -> Makes resources accessible to all.*
- *Hybrid meeting setup is preferred with occasional in-person events*

**Group 5**

- *Hybrid classes setting would be the most accommodating.*
- *For environmental/social sustainability, more information needs to be provided and more options for student feedback. More work with EDI groups for social part.*
- *More information needs to be provided to the students in case of mental health insurance and waiting lists need to be worked on.*
- *For the Student rights as tenants,*
  - *More information would be beneficial (information officially from UW is lacking)*
  - *Potentially incorporate FB/slack/etc groups to help students discuss this issue*
  - *Emphasis on international students - share resources / connect to housing services or other supports that exist*
  - *Potentially create a workshop with housing services / international student office / financial aid/support offices*
  - *Create more information for landlord/tenant interactions about student funding or financial security (i.e., scholarships, private financial means) - help get students approved by landlord for rent process*
  - *Information page for international students to make this available to students (especially international)*
  - *Advocacy group for students - i.e., issue with students being able to pay first/last month rents while located internationally or before funding has arrived*

- *More information on renting rules- such as extending rent on a month-by-month basis and not yearly*
- *For GSA meetings, hybrid option needs to be considered.*

**Group 6**

- *Professors needs to be held accountable for accessibility services as there is a transition from online to in-person and should not be lost in translation.*
- *University should realize their responsibility towards students' mental health and reduce waiting time, increase number of sessions which is currently six.*
- *In case of student rights as tenants, especially international students, they should be provided with the housing information along with their offer letter.*
- *For Fall term, the GSA meetings should be held online, and few social events can be held in-person for interaction.*

*Teghan (Board Chair) said that assuming the meeting will be more efficient if they transition to in person is not appropriate as the meeting were also sometimes in-efficient in pre-COVID times. She also added that as far as agenda is concerned, the Council can connect the Council Speaker with their suggestions as Council Speaker is not the one who runs the Councillors, but the Speaker is here to facilitate the Council meetings. The VP Comm mentioned the Councillors can send their suggestions and feedback to the Council Speaker or even the GSA-UW President.*

*Surdi informed that voting for continuation of allocating of funds for the in-person meeting should be done either in this meeting or latest by August meeting. The Councillor of Collaborative Water Program asked for clarification on whether the vote is for in-person meetings or for funds associated with in-person meetings irrespective of meetings' mode. Surdi clarified that currently it is for keeping aside funds for in-person meeting which does not mean the meetings are going to take place in-person. The Councillor of Collaborative Water Program further asked where the budget for the in-person meeting would be relocated to. Surdi clarified that there has been increase in GSA staff and other GSA provided services without increase in GSA fee. Therefore, there is a need to cut some expenses. The last year's budget was not utilised. So, instead of reallocating the budget, the budget for in-person meetings can be removed for next financial year. The Councillor of Computer Science dissented the idea to remove the budget for in-person meetings as it is a bad direction for future years and things would and should definitely go back to in-person. Another reason is that re-introducing the funds in the budget would be difficult, so it is better to keep in the budget even if it is unused now. The Councillor of Artificial Intelligence suggested that instead of removing the budget, it can be reduced by choosing hybrid option for the meetings. The Councillor of Psychology asked about the consequences of removing the budget for meetings. The GSA-UW President clarified that he and General Manager are trying to present an optimum budget for the Council in front of the Board. This way the Board would not have to remove anything which might be more important for the GSA.*

*The GSA-UW President decided to continue the discussion in the upcoming Council meeting. He asked about what information the Councillors needs to decide the structure of the Council meetings for the next year. The Councillor of Computer Science suggested to survey the preference of Councillors on the meeting structure. This would give a general idea about number of Councillors who can attend in-person meetings.*

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*The GSA-UW President said that use of Slack is a better form of communication than Emails. He further asked the Councillors to reach out to him or the Council Speaker if there is any issue with Slack usage.*

- **Adjournment**

**6:29pm**