January 9th Council Meeting Summary

The meeting started with an update on the previously discussed PhD minimum funding increase from the Council Speaker. The University did not accept the proposed 10% increase nor change their position from the 4.5% increase. Discussion around methodology was once again discussed in the Graduate Student Relations Committee (GSRC) and again in the council meeting. Negotiations are still on-going, and final decision will be made by the end of January. In the event that there is no consensus from the committee, the Provost would make a final decision on whatever number they deemed to be appropriate. This number may be either the two proposed increases from students (10%) and UW (4.5%), or a new number that neither side had recommended.

*Speaker’s remarks: during the voting of this particular issue of PhD minimum funding at GSRC, it is important to note that the University Side has 6 votes while the Student side has 5. In the event of a deadlock between decisions, there is no equal distribution of voting powers between the two negotiating sides.*

The meeting then pivoted to council members being asked to fill out the feedback survey. Remuneration was discussed and the Speaker informed Council that the cheques would be ordered and sent out to them via mail or available for pickup at GSA office. It is up to the council members to decide which option worked best for them and inform the speaker.

Updates from exec team included the continuation of council member elections for various departments, and a housing survey launching in Jan 17th , a safety survey launching in late January that focuses on mental well being and campus safety. The co-op free increase of 10%, proposed in December was reduced to 4%. Various events were also brought up to Council including the Hot Meal event on January and Town Hall with GSA and WUSA collaboration.

New Writing Initiative: Launched in February, inviting graduate students to submit articles about their experiences. Articles will be published on the GSA website, and contributors will receive a gift card as appreciation. Call for participation should be shared with departments, and submissions can cover any topic relevant to grad students.

Board updates included the formation of President’s nominating committee (PNC) in which a director was appointed to chair. Board also approved first readings of the proposed changes to policy introduced in December meeting.

Finally, a council member voiced a concern from a student about accessibility and support from moving from full time to part time status. Other council members stated that in some departments, it is common for students nearing the end of their funding to switch to part-time status to reduce tuition costs while maintaining the same access to resources and support. This is particularly feasible in programs like Philosophy, where funding structures allow for flexibility.

Accessibility Services & Advocacy: Some students have successfully negotiated accommodations through Accessibility Services to maintain full-time status while functioning at a reduced workload. Accessibility Services can advocate for students, often more effectively than students advocating for themselves.

Key Support for Negotiation: When seeking accommodations, it is crucial to have departmental and faculty chair support to facilitate approval. Supervisors should be involved in discussions, as they often determine funding levels based on workload and working hours.