

Graduate Student Association UW
Council Meeting Summary

June 13th , 2024

Primary Meeting

Date: June 13th , 2024

Time: 5:30 P.M. to 8:30 P.M.

Place: GSA Boardroom (Hybrid)

Council Speaker: Abhishesh Homagain
Minutes Taker: Natalie Lok Yee Tong



**GRADUATE STUDENT
ASSOCIATION**

UNIVERSITY OF WATERLOO

June Council Meeting Summary

The meeting started with a presentation by the GSA Advising Coordinator Thabie Lechesa, who presented what their role is to the council and how graduate students may use this service in the future. The responsibility of the coordinator includes managing, operating, and delivering advising sessions to graduate students. The advisor is also aware of different policies and how they impact graduate students such as Policy 33 – Ethical Behavior, 70 – Student Petitions and Grievances, 72 – Student Appeals and 42 – Prevention of and Response to Sexual Violence. Concerns were raised by councilors stating that supervisor-student relationship is not explicitly covered nor is it in the scope of the GSA which was echoed by Thabie's comments and raised the need of advocating on this issue. Other concerns on UHIP and health coverage were also raised.

Following the advising coordinator, a professor in the Water Institute gave a presentation to council about the change in funding pathways for centers and institutes across UW. Examples of these would be the Water Institute, Games Institute etc. which serve as research 'hubs' targeting interdisciplinary research across campus. Current UW Senate is slated to cut 21% of funding for Centers and Institutes with another 21% decrease the next year and move to a campus-wide competitive funding platform to fund these centers. This opens other departments and individuals to possibly take funding from these Centers and Institutes, now that it is a campus wide initiative and competition, which was not possible in previous years – thus raising concerns that possible successful and important centers and institutes may lose funding.

This is an ongoing discussion that the GSA is continuing with UW Admin and required more info from UW Senate and admin on the reasons for changing funding sources and pathways for C&I in UWaterloo.

VP admin Esteban presented the dGSA standardization and communication strategy to council. Currently, dGSAs function on their own outside any regulation from the GSA, we would like there to be a communication guideline / strategy to facilitate ease of communication between dGSAs and GSA. The guidelines were presented to council and required each dGSA councillor to provide info on their dGSA constitution, as well as info on operations and performance (not from a regulatory perspective but from an information one). This is to ensure all dGSAs know that they can request services and support from GSA and we are willing to help where we can.

Elections coordinator – Sai provided an update on external committees and council member participation on these committees and asked councillors to provide info if they sit in one of these committees to Sai.

Council then voted on the matter of Remuneration, brought up last month in May. The motion passed unanimously and councillor remuneration will begin starting September 2024.

Action items continued, with the appointment/election of two council members onto the VPNC (Vice President Nominating Committee) and JPRC (Joint Policy Review Committee).

After the break, GM Julian presented to council with the overall budget, looking to be approved by the Board by end of July.

Then the President, Neela presented on the GSA strategic plan focusing on the main mission and values of the GSA for the coming years. The president highlighted the three main values of transparency, inclusivity, and belongingness & community connection as well as the guiding principles of enhancing advocacy, fostering community building, affirming commitment to indigenous heritage, and building partnerships with community and campus. Specifics can be found in the GSA strategic plan.

VP Admin Esteban again re-iterated and encouraged councilors and their constituents to attend GSA events (that means YOU, grad student who may be reading this summary).

Board Chair Kaylee, then gave an update to council about an interim director joining the Board until spring 2025, and the appointment/reappointment of various board committees.

The final meeting item was given by the speaker who called for any participants interested in contributing to a focus group which aims to better mental health resources on campus.

Adjournment.