September Council Meeting Summary

The meeting started with discussion of the bonfire, the term’s Council Social Event. The Speaker reminded Council of where the event would be held and at what time.

VP Admin then infromed council of the list of GSA and GH events for the fall. These were the grad student bonfire (Sept 12), pumpkin carving (Oct 22), beading workshop (Nov 13), and grad student rock climbing (Dec 3).

Health and dental were next up on the meeting agenda, with the GM providing a breakdown of the services offered by the GSA regarding Health, Dental, GRT, Legal Care, Advising Support, Funding Options, Tax Aid and graduate spaces on campus to book and use.

Councilors raised concerns about the EmpowerMe service, a part of the health package provided by the GSA and informed the rest of council that sometimes this platform may be unavailable to students during the interim period between semesters. GM informed council that the GSA exec team would touch base with EmpowerMe and get more info on their access policies.

Council also raised questions regarding whether parents would be covered, and the GM confirmed that parental accounts are not included and covered by the service. Similarily, childcare services are also not included under student coverage.

The executive team then gave their updates covering grad orientation, hiring of staff in GSA, launch of strategic plan, ombuds-person hiring, and finally the memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the University, WUSA, and GSA. Overall the exec team were happy with graduate orientation. Approx 930 students registered for the event with 700 attending and 600 participating in the grad social, all of which are increases from previous years. In terms of hiring, the exec team has been hard at work getting all our VPs and other position onboarded with the exception of Office Coordinator which they are still looking for. The university is still in the process of hiring an Ombudsperson and will let the GSA know when they have updates on this front, and finally the strategic plan is set to launch by the start of October, and it can be found in our GSA website.

A councilor asked a question about whether an influx of international students (seen in other universities and colleges) may affect the GSA’s numbers and its budget. The president responded that these changes were primarily affecting the undergraduate level (largely in colleges and not U15 universities) with minimal impact at the graduate student population. While the university has been experiencing a financial deficit since last year, it is not specifically tied to international students.

The Board Deputy chair then gave updates on the approval of the two VPs, approval of the annual budget and informed council that the WUSA goose (a bronze goose statue in front of PAC) was also approved.

Concerns regarding communication between dGSAs and GSA were raised. The GM responded that it is something that we would discuss in the next council meeting where we will go over dGSA guidelines and how the two groups can better establish communication.

Finally, the Speaker and GM reminded council that each Council member would be eligible for renumeration, provided that they sign the Councilor contract and abide by the rules of active participation and attendance to council meetings. Council members are required to fill out and send this contract as per GP-20 in order to receive renumeration.

Adjournment.