

## **Trent University Graduate Student Association, Regular Meeting, August 25, 2010**

### **Trill College Junior Common Room**

#### **Members in attendance:**

Andy Farnsworth	President
Allison Hayward	VP Executive Affairs
Rachel Herron	VP Operations
Jessica Ellison	Human Rights Commissioner
Kyle Borrowman	VP Student Affairs
Agata Durkalec	VP Finance
Judith Mintz	Senator

#### **Members not in attendance:**

Megan Buckham	Environmental Commissioner
Agnes Pelletier	Science Liason
Beth Evans	VP Student Affairs
Carling Beninger	Arts Liason
Kim Wilson	CUPE Representative
John Franey	VP Communications

President Andy Farnsworth called the meeting to order. Andy made a motion to approve the past minutes, from the last three GSA meetings, and Allison Hayward seconded the approval of the minutes. The motion carried.

#### **1. Members' reports:**

Agata suggested that the meeting begin with member's reports to ensure that everyone is aware and accountable for their roles, as stated in the constitution, but also to work out the positions on the GSA, which are currently new and not fully developed. The suggestion was noted, but in the interest of time and a full Agenda, which had every GSA member speaking about their roles, the meeting moved forward with budget matters.

#### **2. Budget update (Agata)**

Agata provided the executive with two hand-outs detailing last year's budget and this year's budget for comparison. A budget report must be made every semester and the budget must be approved in September. The budget is comprised of two separate pools of money: one pool is from College fees and one pool is from levy fees. College funds must go towards conference bursaries, conference and group support and the Symons Speaker Series. Levy fees can be distributed as seen fit. Agata asked GSA members to come up with their own project budgets for the next meeting as well as any other accounts that might not currently be written into the budget, so that any redistribution of funds within the Levy budget can be made before the October AGM to be voted on. It was agreed that a fund for charitable donations should be made, since the GSA had no such fund for the Haiti Disaster in the spring and a referendum was required to make a donation from GSA funds.

Agata also reported that the interest rate for the GSA account has fallen from 3% to 1% and she is currently looking into different types of accounts to compare interest rates.

There is currently \$24,661.99 in the account. Most of the banking for this account has been done online and no signing privileges have been developed because of the high GSA executive turnover and the difficulties of putting people on the account as signers, and taking people off the account as signers. Agata is still researching account management options.

### **3. Intro Week update/Orientation plans and budget motion (Beth/Kyle)**

Kyle reported that last year's intro week budget was \$500 and detailed what this year's social representatives plan to do for with the same budget, if approved. They have planned a Tuesday meet and greet after 4pm at the Trend. Loretta Durst has asked that we introduce ourselves as GSA members on the 8<sup>th</sup> at 11:30 am to incoming graduate students. Wednesday night they have planned a pub night/open mic, in which they hope to showcase graduate student talent. They are currently looking into what sound system equipment is available at the Trend. Thursday night, they plan to host a BBQ/corn roast and Friday they have planned a pub crawl. The pub crawl will take place with the support of local establishments. Champs is offering half price appetizers, Riley's is offering free pool and the Second Floor Lounge is offering free cover. The Night Kitchen has also offered 2 for 1 pizza for the evening. Beth is currently looking into shirts for the event. These shirts must comply by Trent's no-sweat policy, which may be more costly. Beth's current cost estimate for 200 T-shirts is \$6.50 each; however, these shirts may not comply with the no-sweat policy. It was suggested that any shirts should be made without specific dates so that they could be used for other events and sports teams if they are not all sold. Since these t-shirts could be used as promotional material, it was suggested that promotional materials should be considered as a new budget line. Kyle motioned that the GSA spend \$500 on intro week events and whatever costs over \$500, which may accrue from buying t-shirts, should be absorbed by the sale of the t-shirts. Allison seconded that motion and the motion was carried.

### **4. Graduate Studies orientation BBQ request for funds/co-sponsorship of \$750 (Agata)**

Graduate studies requested \$750 from co-administered funds with the GSA for the orientation week BBQ. Since we already pay for the costs of hosting our own events, in general, and a BBQ, in particular, Kyle motioned to deny the request for \$750 to graduate studies, Allison seconded the motion and the motion was carried.

### **5. Elections and President resignation procedure**

As discussed in last month's meeting, Andy Farnsworth must step down as President because he will be done full-time studies in December. The constitution states that if the President steps down, the VP Executive Affairs must step up as the new President. A new President cannot be elected unless the VP resigns from executive as a whole. Allison Hayward will therefore step up as president and a new VP Executive Affairs will be elected. Andy will be submitting an official letter of resignation to the GSA in early September.

The general election of first year representatives will be held during intro week. Candidates will be nominated at the start of the week and they will be elected by secret physical ballot at the end of the week.

## **6. Senate and Administrative committees**

Allison introduced the committees that each executive member has to sit on, as written in the constitution. She also read out the committees that GSA members are expected to sit on, which are not assigned to any particular executive position (ex. Transportation). These positions will be decided on once the full GSA meets with all its newly elected members.

## **7. Health plan**

The TCSA has changed health benefits providers from Greenshield to ACL Student Benefits. ACL Student Benefits offers five different levels of coverage and a flexible plan so that students can choose which items they personally need more coverage to access. The new benefits provider will be in place this September, but the costs of administration for Graduate Students is still being negotiated. Beth has called several benefits providers, including ACL, to get quotes and see if it is feasible for the GSA to administer their own health benefits plan with a provider. ACL will administer all claims for clients for a fee; however, an executive position could be made for a health benefits administrator to avoid paying ACL a surcharge. Any changes in fees paid for the health plan, whether to the TCSA or a benefits provider separately, would have to be voted on at the AGM; therefore the TCSA cannot expect to increase Graduate Student administration fees this term. Beth and the health plan subcommittee will continue to investigate options with other benefits providers.

## **8. Transit issue**

The TCSA has proposed taking over the administration of transportation for Trent University under the premise that they could administer the transportation budget to better serve the students. There has been opposition at the College level. Members of the executive expressed unanimous opposition citing the high turnover rate of the TCSA as a barrier to knowledge transfer and a lack of experience in administering such a large scale budget. Summer bussing was also raised as a concern that the TCSA may not be sensitive to. Summer bus service is already inadequate for Graduate Students and the TCSA may not understand how service in the summer affects Graduate Students in particular.

## **9. Student advocacy around Grad Studies policies, and report back on recent student advocacy issue (Judith?)**

The GSA was recently approached by a former Trent Student who had grievances with her supervisor and committee during her studies at Trent. These grievances prevented her from graduating in the time frame that she planned to complete her studies and thus required her to pay more tuition, despite the fact that she had completed the requisite components of her program. The student was not specific about what she wanted in compensation for the undue hardship, which she felt she faced. The new Dean of Graduate Studies has offered to act as a mediator in this case; however other avenues that the GSA might suggest, include the Human Rights Committee situated in Bata Library, Special Appeals or President Steven Franklin.

The Graduate Student Handbook is currently being revised to deal with these issues; however, the Graduate Studies Committee does not meet in the summer. The current policy states that grades and feedback should be provided in a “timely fashion;” but, tighter language and policy is still being developed. The Handbook should also include a process of “where to go” when these guidelines are not being met.

#### **10. Website/Facebook**

The GSA website needs to be updated to include all of the present executive positions, current events and current pictures. Introductory week details should be up on the website and Facebook group along with elections details. The GSA pamphlet should also be updated since it does not feature all of the new executive positions.

#### **11. Other business**

- The new wing of the DNA building is currently being named either “the life and health studies building” or “the life and health sciences building” to distinguish it from other areas of the building.
- The bottled water ban has been passed and this academic year will be an implementation year. Megan Buckham will be looking into the committee advising the implementation process.
- Leonard Conley has been appointed Head of Traill College and he has asked who the members of Traill College are, how the members of Traill College relate to the College and how the members of Traill College participate in the College? Further discussion about the College and the renewal of a College Cabinet will take place once the new academic term begins.

Rachel motioned to adjourn the meeting, Kyle seconded the motion and the motion carried.