

GSA Meeting Minutes May 3, 2010 Trail College Junior Common Room

Attendance

Present:

Andy Farnsworth	President
Allison Hayward	VP Executive Affairs
Jessica Ellison	Human Rights Commissioner
Agnes Pelletier	Science Liason
Beth Evans	VP Student Affairs
Kyle Borrowman	VP Student Affairs
Kim Wilson	CUPE Representative
John Franey	VP Communications
Agata Durkalec	VP Finance
Judith Mintz	Senator
Carling Beninger	Arts Liason

Absent with regards:

Megan Buckham Environmental Commissioner

1) New GSA Business:

- a) The new GSA has been officially voted in. Access to the bank account has been changed over so that the new executive can operate.
- b) Roberts Rules were discussed as the convention to be followed in GSA meetings. The rules are outlined in the constitution and the responsibilities of each executive member are also outlined in the constitution. It was noted that any graduate student is aloud to come to a GSA meeting and all graduate students have access to the meeting minutes. For the protection of graduate students, some information may be excluded from the minutes as, "off the record," but, in general, the minutes should contain record of all that was discussed in the meetings.

c)

2) Health Plan:

- 3) The GSA President met with the TCSA President (Sheldon Willerton) and Operations (Tracey) to discuss getting a new health plan for September 2010. The Graduate Student population does not currently pay for the administration of the health plan. Members of the TCSA (undergraduates) pay \$27.00 membership fee to the TCSA and \$3-\$5 dollars worth of this fee goes towards covering the administration of the health plan, which costs each student \$262 (taken from their tuition fees). The TCSA would like the Graduate student population to share the same proportion of the costs of administration as the undergraduate population. The TSCA would like to know what Graduate Students want and need in their health plan. The proportion of coverage in each of the separate areas of the current health plan (i.e. extended health, dental, drugs) is being looked at as the TCSA searches for a new plan. The current plan pays for 80% of most drug costs up to \$3000. The TCSA is looking for a "flex plan" option for graduate students that would enable Graduate students to pay the same fee, but they could choose to

have more coverage in areas of the plan that they require most. The GSA is to come up with a prioritized list of needs for the health plan. Andy will contact Lindsay (former president) to confirm if a health plan survey was completed and if the data collected could be used to make recommendations. If not, the GSA agreed that a survey should be completed before the end of the month to assess student needs, which the executive did not feel they could speak representatively about.

Central concerns in the GSA meeting discussion included:

- a) Coverage for eyewear
 - b) Looking into UHIP coverage to make sure that international graduate students have the coverage that they need.
 - c) Coverage for dependents was also discussed. The plan currently covers additional dependents at half the price of the student/client with the same coverage. The question was asked whether students with dependents could choose a different “flex plan” for their dependents to cover their specific needs.
 - d) Cost: The issue was also raised the Graduate Students may be willing to pay more than undergraduate students for a health plan that covers more.
 - e) Students should be made aware of the extended benefits that they have so that they use them.
 - f) Agata also pointed out that, since we will be paying for the administration of the health plan, we should negotiate more voice in future health plans
- 4) Bottled water ban: Over the past year, a student group has been lobbying to ban the sale of single-serving water bottles on campus. Earlier in the year, they approached the College and Student Services Committee (CASC) with their proposed bottled water ban. However, they had no plan and they had not discussed the issues with the stakeholders involved. The group has since has meetings with Aramark and student groups to discuss a plan. The issue is currently sitting with the President’s group (presidents of all college councils and students associations) who must decide whether to pass the group’s proposal on to the next level of governance in the University. The GSA discussed the following relevant concerns to graduate students, which should inform the vote:
- a) There are not enough water bottle filling stations.
 - b) Reusable water bottles should be on sale or free to students once at the outset of the ban
 - c) The taste of water is an issue for some students
 - d) There is not enough relevant data in the discussion of how a bottled-water ban will affect the health of students and the revenue that the school brings in from bottled water in vending machines
 - e) Cafeterias are closed in the summer and washroom tap water is to be run for one minute before drinking.
 - f) Who is paying for the implementation of new filling stations? Trent physical resources is paying and installing new stations, but more input may be necessary to ensure that these stations are in places that graduate students benefit from.

- g) The issue of private vs. public water and perceived risk vs. actual risk of certain water sources also came up in the discussion.
- h) Should the plan proceed, student education should be central to the campaign. The committee should develop a page in the student calendar about the bottled water ban and it should provide a map of where all the filling stations are as well as what other options students have in getting water.

5) Teaching Assistantships:

Trent has a \$4.7 million operational deficit and they have cut long-term appointments (9 month contracts) as one means of reducing costs. This should not affect TA's. They are trying to create more TA positions for Graduate students instead of creating positions for those who are long-term assistants and members of CUPE Unit 1. Everyone should be guaranteed a TAship this year. However, in subsequent years there are plans to increase the graduate student population without promise of TAship. To reduce costs this year, the Graduate student population will not increase and no international students were accepted into graduate programs at Trent.

6) Undergraduate Residences- First year students at Trent are guaranteed residence upon acceptance, whether they choose to come to Trent or not. The University is expecting a 60% increase in the number of first year students and does not have enough residence space to accommodate this increase, so they have been searching for external housing, which must offer at least fifteen beds and meet a number of standard criteria. Trent is taking bids and looking into leasing Argyle again. This affects Graduate students in two ways: it may open up potential housing options for graduate students and it may present donning opportunities of Graduate students. The GSA agreed that most Graduate students would not be interested in living with first-year undergraduate students as either a don or as a living arrangement without responsibility for the students. Graduate students are also technically only allowed to work ten hours a week, so they would not have enough time to don.

7) Co-curricular record: Over the last four years Trent has been trying to develop a co-curricular record (already in existence at other Universities i.e. Acadia) that would enable students to submit a list of their extra-curricular activities, which the University would then fact-check to create a co-curricular transcript of academic and extra-curricular activities. The co-curricular transcript has been marketed as a valuable document to present to future employers. The record is currently in development for undergraduate students only but they are talking about making the record mandatory for graduate students as well. Key concerns addressed at the meeting included:

- a) Who will administer the records?
- b) Is this record important to graduate students?
- c) Graduate studies are very demanding and graduate students may not participate in formal extra-curricular activities

- d) Many Graduate students have family responsibilities that would not be accounted for in this record.

8) Graduate Students in Oshawa:

Mary Kim has suggested that there are graduate students in Oshawa that feel they are a different school and they may not be represented by the GSA. Allison is contacting the head of the material sciences department to confirm if these students are covered under the Trent GSA.

9) President's Agreement

The president of the GSA is required to sign an agreement that states that he is personally liable for the space, keys and finances of the GSA. The GSA will look into the costs and benefits of being "incorporated," so that no one individual is personally liable for the space, keys and finances.

10) Service First Training: The GSA and all other teachers and teaching assistants providing a service at Trent University are required to complete service first training by 2012 as a part of new province-wide accessibility legislation. The GSA is looking into scheduling a course for the executive, but the training can also be completed online at www.trentu.ca/servicefirst. Since this is technically a part of TA training, it should be considered under our TA hours.

11) BBQ: The next BBQ will be Wednesday 26th of May. The location is not yet set because of construction at the site on River Road. Beth will look into using the Zoo as well as finding food alternatives for the BBQ. She will be asking Sticklings if they can make buns and what the costs will be. The student affairs representatives are also looking into the potential of getting students to sign a blanket waiver for all events.

12) Print shop Account: The GSA has a print shop account for posters and other printing needs of the GSA. Funds from the account can be accessed by submitting receipts.

13) Vision process:

David Newhouse has informed executive members that the Acting VP finance, Christine McKinnon, would like to remove statements regarding indigenous knowledge from the vision statements at the next senate meeting. The Senator of the GSA should be informed.

14) We have an invitation to meet with the President, Steven Franklin, once a month and should take advantage of this opportunity.

15) Conference Fund: There is still additional money in the budget for conference fees to be paid to students who were not reimbursed the promised amount because

of an overload of applicants. There are also nineteen cheques that need to be accounted for.

16) Alterations to WebCT administration: The WebCt account for the GSA is being changed so that only the VP executive affairs is the administrator and the rest of the GSA has no problems voting in WebCT elections/votes.

17) Next Meeting: Wednesday June 2nd, potluck

Kyle motioned to close the meeting, Judith seconded the motion to close and all were in favour.