GSS Council Meeting Minutes

Thursday July 17, 2014

GSS Ballroom

Present: Adam Luna, Alison McAfee, Ambrose Chan, Andrea Jones, Barak Caracheo, Colún Connolly, Christopher Roach, Craig Kerr, Daniel Wood, Enav Zusman, George Furey, Guillaume Beaulieu-Houle, Hamid Omid, Ingrid Olson, Inti Dewey, Jack Hickmott, Jackie Davis, Jeff Lam (Catherine Jenkins proxy), Julia Varela, Julie Zhang, Julienne Jagdeo, Katharina Rothe (Sneha Balani proxy), Kevin Mehr, Kreso Sola, Mahsa Mojahednia, Matt Sacheli, Michael Ries, Min Xia, Mitchell Meler, Natalie Marshall, Nayantara Duttachoudhury, Omid Nourbakhsh, Parker Jobin, Shona Robinson, Sima Valizadeh, Tobias Friedel, Xun Zhou (Vivian Lam proxy).


A. Call to Order and Adoption of the Agenda

The meeting was called to order at 5:55pm.

1. BIRT the agenda be adopted as presented.

   MOVER: Tobias Friedel SECONDER: Barak Caracheo

   Motion to amend the Agenda to move the paragraphs 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13 of Section I Council Motions to the top of the Agenda.

   MOVER: Julienne Jagdeo SECONDER: George Furey

   MOTION PASSES

   BIRT the Agenda adopted as amended.

   MOTION PASSES

Motion to amend the Agenda to add Capital Projects Improvement Fund [CPIF] motions under the section Council Motions.
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“BIRT the GSS approves up to $3500 for the proposed Pub Exterior Work from the CPIF budget line (12-811) pending the submission of three quotes for the concrete base work to the VP Administration.”

MOVER: Kevin Mehr SECONDER: Matt Sacheli

Motivation: Motion was not submitted within the established deadline; however, these are important building renovations that are needed for the GSS.

MOTION PASSES

B. Council Motions (Part 1)

2. Policy Manual Section 1

BIRT Council approves the proposed amendments to section 1 of the policy manual as presented.

BIFRT these amendments will not take effect until September 1st 2014.

MOVER: Jack Hickmott SECONDER: Daniel Wood

Motivation: the proposed amendment represents the easier process to follow and put forward policy changes through Code and Policy Committee at the GSS.

MOTION PASSES

3. Policy Manual Section 3

BIRT Council approves the proposed amendments to section 3 of the policy manual as presented.

BIFRT these amendments will not take effect until September 1st 2014.

MOVER: Tobias Friedel SECONDER: Matt Sacheli

Motivation: Rearranging Policy Manual, very little if any context has changed.

MOTION PASSES
4. Policy Manual Section 4

BIRT council approves the proposed amendments to section 4 of the policy manual as presented.

BIFRT these amendments will not take effect until April 1st 2015.

BIFRT any current Executive who has, as of the May 2014 Council meeting, already exceeded their allocated vacation time under this amended policy shall be granted the appropriate amount of additional vacation time as to not require any reductions from their honorarium.

MOVER: Tobias Friedel  SECONDER: Jack Hickmott

Motion to amend the second clause of the Policy Manual Section 4 to “April 1st 2015”.

MOVER: Tobias Friedel  SECONDER: Mahsa Mojahednia

Motivation: the proposed amendment provides the fair allocation of vacation time with opportunity for Executives to plan and organize the time ahead.

The main motion was noted as controversial with the two different dates. It was further asked and rejected to change the date to “May 1st 2014”.

MOTION FAILED

Motion to postpone the approval of the amendment.

MOVER: Tobias Friedel  SECONDER: Jack Hickmott

MOTION FAILED

Motion to strike the third clause of the amendment.

MOVER: Tobias Friedel  SECONDER: Jack Hickmott

MOTION PASSES
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Back to main motion as amended

BIRT council approves the proposed amendments to section 4 of the policy manual as presented.

BIFRT these amendments will not take effect until April 1st 2015.

**MOVER:** Tobias Friedel  **SECONDER:** Jack Hickmott

MOTION PASSES

5. Policy Manual Section 14

BIRT council approves the proposed amendments to section 14 of the Policy Manual as presented.

**MOVER:** Tobias Friedel  **SECONDER:** Christopher Roach

Motivation: amendments to the Emergency Fund, worked on by the Academic and External committee, make the policy less bias and more efficient, and represent a big improvement.

MOTION PASSES

6. Policy Manual section 7 and 12

BIRT council approves the proposed amendments to section 7 and 12 of the Policy Manual as presented.

**MOVER:** Tobias Friedel  **SECONDER:** Jack Hickmott

Motivation: Following the last Council deliberations, House Finance Committee forwarded a request to amend the Policy Manual to the Code and Policy Committee. In essence, the Departmental Organization Fund and Special Events Funds were combined into the GSS Event Fund. This new policy will make funds more accessible for on and off campus events held by organizations recognized by GSS council.

MOTION PASSES

BIRT council approves the proposed amendments to section 4.12.3 and 4.12.4 of the policy manual as presented.

**MOVER:** Kevin Mehr  \hspace{1cm} **SECONDER:** Christopher Roach

Motivation: At the last Council the issue was discussed at length. The updated policy allows for the wide representation of graduate students and council involvement in the graduate council. It was further noted that 5 positions are to be seated next Council meeting held in August.

**MOTION PASSES**

C. **Introductions**

D. **Presentations to Council**

*(10 minutes, 5 minutes for questions)*

- **GrasPods**
  - GrasPods is a non-profit society incorporated in 2009.
  - Mission of the society is to provide academic, professional and social support to its members; promote for effective communication, networking and professional development by hosting events, workshops and professional meetings.
  - Membership: no fee; any student can become a member of the society including students from outside the UBC.
  - Approximately 120 graduate students from 10 different programs are members of the society; there are over 1,000 students located off campus.
  - Operation: 21 events this year; GrasPods are planning to grow by increasing the number of events and establishing off-site representation, reaching even more members.
  - GSS sponsorship is acknowledged with GSS logo used during all events.
  - Funding: supported exclusively by GSS for the past 9 years.

- **GSS Executive restructure**
  - Organizational restructure of GSS, both staffing and executive.
  - Goal: establish effective operation through better defined roles and accountability.
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- Changes: removal of VP Administration, splitting VP Academic and External into VP External, and VP University and Campus Affairs, establishment of Financial and Executive oversight officer
- The Executives work with the General Manager and the staff. The General Manager would report to council on staff projects.

- GSS Goals
  - GSS Executive team goals for the period of 2014-2015.
  - Overall themes of GSS actions are the establishment of GSS as a student voice on graduate student education, the establishment of sustainable and long-lasting relations with internal and external partners of GSS, the development the strategic plan for the next three years based on the feedback from students.
  - A number of important projects were put forward, e.g. Strategic Communications Plan, GSS Plan of Actions, Internal Restructuring, GSS Building Renovations, Fund Reform, GSS Lobbying, etc.

Motion to recess taken at 7:04 pm.

MOVER: Christopher Roach        SECONDER: Mahsa Mojahednia
MOTION PASSES

Meeting reconvened at 7:30

- GSS EOC report
  - Executive team performance evaluation.
  - The results are based on the survey conducted among councillors, staff and executives.
  - The report concludes the overall satisfactory to outstanding team performance.
  - Overall the Executives are doing well; however, there is always room for improvement.

- CPIF
  - Building renovations estimated at $3500 necessary to meet safety requirements.
  - Renovations include replacement of the broken pub entrance door and purchase of the waterproof cover for exterior storage cage.
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Motion to amend the Agenda to move paragraph 1 of Council Motions immediately following the Presentations to Council.

**MOVER:** Chris Roach  **SECONDER:** Colúm Connolly
**MOTION PASSES**

**E. Council Motions (Part 2)**

8. AMS-GSS Extended Health and Dental Plan Administrative Agreement.

BIRT the GSS council approves the AMS-GSS Extended Health and Dental Plan Administrative Agreement.

**MOVER:** Chris Roach  **SECONDER:** Jack Hickmott

Motivation: AMS-GSS Extended Health and Dental Plan Administrative Agreement is a joint initiative between AMS and GSS aimed at providing medical coverage to both undergraduate and graduate students. According to the agreement, AMS signs up, collects fees and holds communication with insurance providers.

It was noted the poor work of the respective Committee in the past and asked how the extended agreement will affect the work of the Committee in the future, to which the answer was the new agreement has clear definitions eliminating ambiguity in roles and responsibilities. It was further asked what methods of accountability and oversight are available to regulate the work of the Committee, to which the answer was AMS and GSS hold the Executives accountable for the respective work of the Committee.

Speaker requested opposition to hear Lena’s email addressed to Colum Connolly and Christopher Roach.

**No opposition expressed.**

"In regards to the proposed Extended Health and Dental Plan Administrative Agreement, that is being brought forward for approval today: as it is only now being circulated among Council members, I strongly suggested that the motion is tabled, to give the Council at large adequate time to review it, prior to approving it. This document, in theory, defines the various..."
responsibilities and powers of the AMS/GSS Health and Dental Plan Committee (H&DPC). It should therefore be carefully reviewed, prior to being brought to vote.

Though mostly in favor of the proposed agreement, I am rather concerned that, in practice, this document will have very little impact on the issue at hand, as the current version of this Agreement, though in effect, is still almost completely ignored by the H&DPC. For example, to my knowledge, the dates and times that the Committee meets, as well as the minutes from these meetings are still not circulated or made directly accessible to the Council, which is in violation of what is currently stipulated. As you recall, transparency and accountability was two of the primary concerns I raised in April 2013, prior to discovering the existence to the current Agreement in the AMS archives in July 2013. A discussion of how much power should the H&DPC have (keeping in mind its shady manner of operation in the past), and how much executive power in relation to the Health and Dental Plan ought to remain with the Council is also warranted at this stage (prior to voting in the proposed updated version).

Have any of the concerns raised last year (e.g. in regards to pharmaceutical coverage or any special provisions made for students with disabilities) been addressed by the H&DPC? Again to my knowledge, and please correct me if I am wrong, the only documented change I have seen since last September is voting in the existing contract, so as to avoid any future headaches…”

It was further asked the action of the motion passed, to which the answer was the motion passed approves the legal contract between AMS and GSS.

MOTION PASSES

9. BIRT the GSS approves up to $3500 for the proposed Pub Exterior Work from the CPIF budget line (12-811) pending the submission of three quotes for the concrete base work to the VP Administration.

MOVER: Kevin Mehr SECONDER: Colúm Connolly

MOTION PASSES

WHEREAS Council has approved the code changes establishing the GSS Events Fund.

BIRT the remaining amounts in budget lines 12-800 (Departmental Organisation Fund) and 12-809 (Special Events Fund) be reallocated to line 12-813 (GSS Events Fund).

WHEREAS the GSS has supported Graspods with donations in the past.
WHEREAS GrasPods has used that financial support to the benefit of a large number of graduate students through off campus events and initiatives.

BIRT Council approves a donation (budget line 12-802) of $5000 to Graspods for the budget year 2014/15.

**MOVER:** Tobias Friedel  
**SECONDER:** Barack Caracheo

Motion to amend to $3500 instead of original amount of $5000.

**MOVER:** Kevin Mehr  
**SECONDER:** Daniel Wood

Motivation: groundless increase in sponsorship. The concerns over absence of oversight instruments were expressed.

**MOTION FAILS**

It was proposed to amend original $5000 for three years to $5000 for one year.

Motion to amend to $5000 for the next two years.

**MOVER:** Jeff Lam  
**SECONDER:** Omid Nourbakhsh

Motivation: the period of three years of financial support was noted as a long term. It was proposed to introduce more flexible funding scheme, to which the answer was that an increase in funding would allow to achieve goals of the society and to have better return in a long run.  
It was also remarked that there is no agreement between GSS and GrasPods regulating the accountability and funds expenditures.

**MOTION FAILS**

BIFRT agreement between GSS and GrasPods renegotiated accordingly.

**MOVER:** Tobias Friedel  
**SECONDER:** Daniel Wood

Motivation: The agreement between GSS and GrasPods shall outline the instruments of oversight, accountability and financial reporting.
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MOTION FAILS

Motion to postpone further deliberation till the next Council meeting

MOVER: Michael Ries   SECONDER: George Furey

The opposition to postpone was expressed with the following proposition to adopt the funding for the period of one year.
It was further noted that $5000 is a large sum of money and the deliberations should be postponed.

MOTION FAILS

Quorum was called lost as of 9:07 pm

F. Executive Remarks
(3 minutes)

• President – Colúm Connolly
  - Thanked Pooya Hosseini for diligent work and contribution in the position of the House-Finance Committee Chair.
  - Working on GSS swag stock for the upcoming Orientation.
  - Working on the GSS website renovations.
  - In the process of updating the GSS brochure.
  - Conducted Graduate Student email survey.

• Vice-President Academic & External Affairs – Daniel Wood
  - Thanked George Furey for hard work in the position of the Academic and External Committee Chair.
  - Volunteered for the Inspire Democracy Workshop Series.
  - Updated handbook for both academic and external and advocacy sections;
  - Voluntary training on weekends with the centre for democratic institutions to improve communications at council;
  - Revisiting advocacy office processes, compiling resource database and papers.
  - Hiring new policy analyst.
  - Planning for municipal elections with AMS.
  - Looking for new abcs director, new chair for the Academic and External Committee, new advocacy officer.
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- Vice-President Administration – Kevin Mehr
  - Reinforced a number of building renovation projects.
  - Working on office renovations.
  - Hired Events Director and Administrative Assistant.
  - Worked on the GSS Funds Reform within House and Finance Committee.

- Vice-President Finance – Tobias Friedel
  - Working on the GSS Fund Reform.
  - Working on the lease agreement renewal.

- Vice-President Services – Min Xia
  - Working on GSS events tracking, evaluation and improvement;
  - In the process of introducing new student services;
  - Enhanced collaboration between GSS and other organizations on campus.
  - Planning for the upcoming orientation.

Any further business was postponed till the next Council meeting on August 21, 2014.