

Council Minutes

Thursday, June 25th 2015 | GSS Ballroom | 5:30 pm.

(10 Minutes for presentation, 5 minutes for questions)

- **Strategic Plan;**

Presenter: Chris Roach, Chair of the GSS ad hoc strategic planning committee

- Idea of strategic plan first suggested in summer of 2013 as reaction to lack of clear direction for the society;
- GSS Student Survey was created, and results from first year are being used to guide strategic planning process;
- In the plan, will be working on things like Vision Statement, Mission Statement, Values, and Goals;
- Have held transition meeting with last year's committee members and this year's committee members;
- Will be back in September to update again, with goal of approving plan at March AGM.

- **Executive Goals;**

Presenter I: Gloria Liu, Vice-President External Affairs

- Federal election this year, running voter mobilization campaign will be an important initiative this year;
- Will make federal policy recommendations around tax credits and permanent residency, provincial policy recommendations around BC Graduate scholarship, and take part in a sexual harassment campaign in coordination with other universities;
- Lots of meetings/conference to attend for CASA, ABCS, UBCM, and locally.

Presenter II: Tobias Friedel, President

- Five main goals above and beyond general presidential duties:
 - 1) Complete 5-year strategic plan;
 - 2) Work on Harassment and Discrimination issues at UBC;
 - 3) Review of Membership in External Organizations (CASA, ABCS);
 - 4) Structure and Recognition of Affiliate Organizations;
 - 5) Improving Relationships with members and other stakeholders.

Presenter III: Charlie Deng, Finance and Executive Oversight

- Ensure financial matters are processed smoothly and properly;
- Increase transparency of the Society's financial matters;
- Make the exec oversight committee functional, want to report to council three times per year;
- Address potential complaints and disputes.

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Presenter IV: Enav Zusman, Vice-President Academic and University Affairs

- Improve maternity and parental rights – UBC already provides academic concessions so will be focused on improving social benefits;
- Acadia Park housing plans, and the university's campus plans for the area;
- Call for a 2% increase to 4-year fellowships and other scholarships;
- Provide better training for GSS advocacy officers;
- Work on revisions to UBC's sexual assault policies;
- Have graduate students be eligible for Credit/D/Fail courses – currently only available for undergraduates;

Q from Vasilii: does increasing scholarship amounts also include research assistantships?

A from Enav: will work on that but it is a different issue than fellowships. I think this is achievable.

Presenter V: Kevin Mehr, Vice-President Students

- Enhance Representation and engagement for small graduate programs – start-up funds;
- Improve off-campus initiatives;
- Develop health and well-being initiatives as part of regular programming;
- Increase engagement with Graduate Student Centre and new Nest Space;
- Support grad students and affiliate organizations.

- **GSS Budget 2015/2016 Proposal.**

Presenter: Charlie Deng, Finance and Executive Oversight

- All revenues have been put under “corporate” heading which is why it appears as a surplus, while President and VP budgets are all negative because they do not have revenue associated with them.
- Overall revenue with CPIF is \$771k, of that CPIF is \$54k.
- Overall expenses is \$842k.
- Net without CPIF is a deficit of \$124k.
- Accumulated surplus sits at \$190K as of December 2014.

Q from Elizabeth: What is CPIF?

A from Charlie: Capital Projects Improvement Fund, about \$2 per student, restricted for use on capital projects meeting certain guidelines.

Q from Chris: Draft budget sent out last week differed from the one sent out this week by about \$11k. Did this go through House Finance?

A from Tobias: Some lines were missing or wrong, had to fix. Almost the same.



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Q from Chris: What's the plan going forward? Have surplus now but after it's gone, no more reserves. If we can't increase revenues, we'd have to start cutting, is there a plan for more than this year?

A from Charlie: Want to increase revenue through moderate fee increase. If that's not possible, we may hold a separation referendum from AMS which may help us recoup some fees.

Q from Sarah: Don't you think it's rash to be spending like this without much certainty that revenue can be increased? Last time fee increase was tried, and it failed.

A from Tobias: One thing we heard at fee increase vote in March is that GSS needs to spend surplus before a fee increase becomes necessary. We are looking at other options for increased revenue too, through partnerships. But ultimately, we will either need to raise revenue to keep current levels or cut - will be up to membership to decide.

Q from Sarah: What services have been increased?

A from Kevin: New programming in off-campus sites is an example, but we need to expand our programming and to do that we need more money.

E. Council Motion I

3. BIRT GSS Budget 2015/2016 be approved as presented.

MOVER: Tobias Friedel

SECONDER: David Gill

Motivation: budget has been presented, as have executive goals, these inform each other.

Amendment to add \$1,029 to line 13-840 (VP External Travel/Conferences)

MOVER: Gloria Liu

SECONDER: Tobias Friedel

Motivation: Additional funds needed for UBCM convention registration fee. Originally thought GSS would receive discount, were recently informed that we would not receive this discount.

Amendment PASSED.

Back to motion as amended.

Chris: Still having trouble understanding plan going forward, and why more than 2/3 of reserve is being depleted. Saying fees will be increased, or separation from AMS will occur is not a solid plan.

Charlie: You are correct that it is not guaranteed. I'm a fan of sustainable growth, but we are running efficiently. We need to grow as an organization and that is done by having more programming to engage more students. If that plan doesn't work, we can scale back programming in a year or two.

Chris: I understand the plan, but there are other ways to use the surplus to benefit students. One way would be to put it in an endowment. The argument as he sees it is akin to saying the society will live a more frivolous lifestyle and hope to get a raise to cover it. Don't GSS bylaws say deficit budget must be accompanied by long term plan? Don't feel like such a plan exists.

Tobias: We're not dipping into rainy day/contingency fund. We are spending down the surplus but we are not putting the society into any debt.

Chris: I would call for this motion to be out of order based on Bylaw 11.

[time spent looking up this, motion is ultimately allowed to proceed]

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Sarah: I think this deficit is spending too much of this surplus. The Society cannot continue spending this way for more than a year and would need to take away the surplus and this would not look good. Would like to see multi-year plan for the future.

Maayan: The idea that the GSS should have some long-term growth is interesting, and I'd like to know why that needs to happen.

Charlie: We're not looking for infinite growth, but rather moderate growth. We're far away from the rest of campus in this building, we have GrasPods and other groups we're funding but can't reach all students. Goal as exec is to have fair coverage for all students. Currently we have fairly one-dimensional offerings and need to expand our audience. We are below what he considers a minimum standard of service.

Abdul: Chris was referring to previous bylaws before they were revised in December 2014. Bylaws and Policy are on the website. Also, change in Bylaws means that this motion only needs to pass by simple majority.

Krish: How large is the contingency fund right now?

Tobias: About \$97,000 and that's on top of accumulated surplus.

Charlie: Contingency (Rainy Day) fund is restricted. The accumulated surplus is unrestricted. I share Sarah's concern about spending so much of the surplus. But I think it will be difficult to achieve better levels of service without it, and if engagement doesn't follow, would cut back.

Kevin: I disagree with labelling it as a deficit budget because that's spending more than we have. It's a question of what kind of society do you want, one that wants to do more, or one that wants to simply spend to the budget line.

Vasilii: How long did it take to accumulate the current surplus?

Tobias: About 3 years. Thank you for actually debating this motion, appreciate the input. Presenting the budget as we did was a conscious decision to make students aware that surplus is being spent at a significant level. Important to voice those concerns and to think about what kind of society we want to be – one that's frugal but doesn't reach members and simply does the same things as always? We know future revenue streams are not guaranteed, but by improving services and relationships, there are ways to gain more resources.

Ingrid: This surplus has accumulated over a few years. While people are fretting about spending the surplus, in previous years when the society ran surpluses, people wanted to find ways to use it in a productive manner.

Sarah: I would still like to see a long-term plan that identifies what the society can become and the reasons why it should be spent. Don't think spending it just to get rid of it on things that are already done is a smart way to do it. This is \$190,000 of opportunity.

Chris: Have also been around for a few years, and agree we should use it. But what's the best way to get a return on our investment? What about spending \$50k over the next 4 years, could that accomplish more? Also have concerns about how this budget was dealt with at House Finance – committee did not seem to be too knowledgeable about what was in the budget.

Kevin: Agree with what Sarah was saying, we do need a plan, but feels it's unfair to ask of executives since they cannot realistically plan for the next sets of executives. Endowments need to be larger than

what we have to be effective. Every year that we're saving, we're not serving grad students. Do hope it gets built into the strategic plan, but can't enforce their ideas on future exec - council must do that.

Tobias: Don't think anyone wants to spend money just for the sake of spending it. The expenditures have been informed by the goals and proposals of the executives. Procedure has been followed, went to House Finance multiple times and had all the information. They have approved it without questions. Don't necessarily think it's a good thing but was presented to them and approved. Can't understand now saying committee members don't understand what they were voting on.

Charlie: Have ways to measure student engagement and exec will be accountable to those metrics. Don't see any difference between spending it over 1 year or over 10 years. The GSS is trying to grow and trying to reach a balanced position.

MOTION PASSED.

F. Seatings, Unseating and Appointments

4. Notice of Unseatings (*no vote necessary*)

Harry Li to be unseated as Departmental and AMS Council Representative.

Chris Roach to be unseated as AMS/ GSS Health and Dental Plan Representative.

Ali McAfee to be unseated as Departmental, Human Resource, Strategic Planning Committee Representative.

Renaë Regehr, Jenn So, and Elliott Child to be unseated as Departmental Representative.

Motion for a 15 minute recess.

MOVER: Enav Zusman

SECONDER: Tobias Friedel

MOTION PASSED by unanimous consent.

Meeting reconvened.

5. BIRT the following seatings are approved:

Leo He and Ran Xiang be seated to the Academic and External Committee.

Krish Maharaj be seated to the Code and Policy Committee.

Maayan Kreitzman be seated to the Finance Committee.

Maayan Kreitzman be seated to the House Committee.

Dylan Burrows be seated to the Human Resources Committee.

Yaying Zhong (councillor) ~~be seated to the Services Committee.~~

Chen Vu be seated to the Executive Oversight Committee.

Christie Waltham be seated to the Strategic Planning Ad Hoc Committee.

MOVER: Tobias Friedel

SECONDER: Sarah Simon

MOTION PASSED.

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6. BIRT the following appointment is approved:

Sarah Simon be seated as GSS Representative to AMS Council.

MOVER: Kreso Sola

SECONDER: Tobias Friedel

MOTION PASSED

7. BIRT the following appointment is approved:

Hamid Omid be seated as GSS Representative to the Faculty of Science Council

MOVER: Charlie Deng

SECONDER: Krish Maharaj

MOTION PASSED

G. Approval of Minutes

8. BIRT the minutes of the GSS Council meeting dated “May 28th, 2015” be approved as presented.

MOVER: Kreso Sola

SECONDER: Tobias Friedel

Amendment to remove reference to teleportation deemed friendly.

MOTION PASSED

H. Executive Remarks

(3 minutes)

- President – Tobias Friedel
 - Budget and goals over the past month;
 - Been in many meetings to make connections across UBC and to arrange for exec and staff training, in particular for advocacy officers, met with ombudsperson, have monthly meetings with VP Students, met with Linc Kesler.
 - Attended studentcare conference, met a lot of other student leaders and discussed wellbeing initiatives.
- Vice-President University and Academic Affairs – Enav Zusman
 - Budget and goals as well;
 - Two meetings about Acadia Park with Campus and Community Planning, held two info sessions about changes to the neighbourhood;
 - Met with access and diversity about maternity benefits, happy with academic benefits offered but would prefer if those were universal instead of case-by-case.
 - Have been working with Advocacy officers.
- Vice-President External Relations – Gloria Liu
 - Goals and budget;
 - ABCS meetings, looking at BC graduate Scholarship;

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- Federal Election campaign coordinator will start this month and continue work on BC Grad Scholarship, and engage with CASA Graduate council on tax credit/permanent residency policies.
- Financial and Executive Oversight Officer – Charlie Deng
 - Good news is that CRA accepted the change of our fiscal year. Currently trying to close previous budget year, which should be done by end of this month.
 - Accountant will be working on a new system of bookkeeping starting July 1.
 - Oversight – have been meeting with professors to develop evaluation matrices for executives.

I. Committee, Taskforce, and Operations Reports

(3 minutes)

- Academic & External Affairs Committee – Tal Shalev
 - Dealt a lot with zoning issues on University Boulevard and Acadia Park – UBC Board has responded, but president has not. They are saying that the space will not be sold, but will be managed by an external group.
 - Tuition for a joint Architecture/Landscape Architecture was lowered by UBC.
 - Discussed Emergency Fund, gathered stats about usage, had one request which is still pending.
 - Began discussing BC Graduate Scholarship.
- Executive Oversight Committee – Charlie Deng
 - Committee met once in May, once in June to talk about evaluations and how to support executives.
 - Working on bringing a formal report to July meeting.
- House-Finance Committee – Shona Robinson
 - Approved two applications for June events.
 - Discussed procedures on how to spend CPIF funds, still ongoing.

J. Representative Reports

(3 minutes)

- AMS Council – Tobias Friedel
 - Lots of action revolving around opening of AMS Nest.
 - AMS execs have presented their own goals.
- Senate – Sarah Simon and Nick Dawson

- Senate has not met, but student senate caucus has met to identify priorities for the next year, including assessment, flexible learning, student mental health and wellbeing, equity & harassment.

M. Council Motions II

9. Affiliate Organization Recognition

WHEREAS the following organizations have submitted a petition for recognition as an Affiliate Organization.

BIRT the following organizations be recognized as Affiliate Organizations for one year, ending at the meeting of Council in June 2016:

- Master of Software Systems Student Society;
- Centre for Hip Health and Mobility Trainee Committee.
- Reproduction and Healthy Pregnancy Cluster Committee.
- Chemistry Graduate Student Society.

MOVER: Krish Maharaj

SECONDER: Tobias Friedel

MOTION PASSED

10. HR Handbook

WHEREAS a new staffing structure has been implemented within the GSS, and

WHEREAS updates to the current Human Resources Handbook are required to reflect these changes, and

WHEREAS the Human Resources Committee has identified a number of changes to the handbook that would improve or clarify HR policies for GSS staff.

BIRT Council adopts the Human Resources Handbook (Personnel Policies and Procedures) as presented.

MOVER: Tobias Friedel

SECONDER: Krish Maharaj

Motivation: lots of structural changes to staff and exec structure and a lot of HR responsibilities have changed. HR handbook reviewed as a result. Code and Policy looked at it.

MOTION PASSED

11. Event Fund Application

WHEREAS \$140 from the Events Fund was previously approved for the Mechanical Engineering Graduate Association (MEGA) Ice Skating Social and Luncheon (February 17th, 2015), and

Whereas the total cost of the event was \$201.86 and no other funding has been available to cover the cost of this graduate student event,

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BIRT Council allocates up to an additional \$62 from the Events Fund to help MEGA cover the costs of this event.

MOVER: Krish Maharaj

SECONDER: Chen Vu

Tobias: don't think it's good to go beyond the formula that determines maximum amounts. GSOs are aware of these amounts and they should budget accordingly.

Charlie: Can I have more information about this request?

Motion to table this motion until next council meeting

MOVER: Tobias Friedel

SECONDER: Kreso Sola

Motivation: we need a few more pieces of information to properly make this decision.

MOTION TO TABLE PASSED

N. Other Business and Notice of Motions

O. Discussion Period

P. Submissions

- Budget 2015/2016 Proposal;
- Budget 2015/2016 Notes;
- Executive Goals: President;
- Executive Goals: Vice-President, University and Academic Affairs.
- Executive Goals: Financial and Executive Oversight Officer;
- Executive Goals: Vice-President, External Relations;
- Executive Goals: Vice-President, Students.
- HR Handbook Draft.

R. Next Meeting

Thursday, July 16th 2015

S. Adjournment

BIRT there being no further business the meeting be adjourned at 8:34 pm.

MOTION PASSED by unanimous consent.