



GRADUATE STUDENTS' UNION

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
LOCAL 19, CANADIAN FEDERATION OF STUDENTS

**GSU General Council Meeting
Thursday November 26, 2009
6:40pm following the Annual General Meeting
Bahen Centre for Information Technology
40 St. George Street, Room 1130**

Nancy Dawe called the meeting to order at 6:30pm. She added that the room is dim and if needed, contact Ruth Perkins for larger print documents to ease the eye-strain.

1. a) Agenda

Motion: Be it resolved that (BIRT) the Council approve the agenda.
Leo Mui/Christine DeLuca

Carried

b) Roll call

The members of the Graduate Students' Union (GSU) Council introduced themselves.

c) Minutes

Vanessa Parlette brought forward five amendments to the October 29, 2009 minutes. She stated that: (1) on page 10 of the minutes on the second line under the heading 'CUPE 3902 Report', that "professional" should read "sessional"; (2) on page 11 on line 2 she said that the statement "...the conciliation process is getting both sides to come to an agreement..." should be clarified by further stating that a conciliator is involved in the process to help both sides reach an agreement. This was reworded to read, "She said the conciliation process is attempting to get both sides, with the involvement of a conciliator, to come to an agreement"; (3) on line 4 of page 11, the sentence "This signals that an agreement is not going to be reached", should be appended with "...through that process"; (4) on the sixth last line of the first paragraph on page 11, the phrase should read, "...in terms of Unit 3 at the 1.3% rate..."; (5) On the second last line of the first paragraph on page 11, "CUPE 3902" should instead read "your course union".

Motion: BIRT the minutes of October 29, 2009 Council meeting be approved as amended
Gillian Kwiecien/Laura Mandelbaum

Carried

d) Business Arising from the Minutes

St-Amour brought forward a report on the University of Toronto (UofT) Libraries Direct Borrowing Fee (which can be found on pages 5 and 6 of the October 29, 2009 minutes). She said that the UofT Library Systems Advisory Board—which was unaware of the fee due to a lack of process—met on November 10, 2009 and Dean Corman of the School of Graduate Studies (SGS) joined them. She stated that Corman said that the fees "made a lot of sense" and he reported that deans from across the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) and Ontario met with him and all of them recognized that graduate students across Ontario benefit from UofT's library resources while UofT is responsible for financing the use of

these resources. Further, she stated that when Corman was asked about the lack of process he said that it was a “budgetary issue that does not come to the board”. She said that the advisory board and others who were previously opposed to these fees have been appeased and are no longer on board with the coalition. She said that she also met with Cheryl Misak on November 17, 2009, who further stated that there would be a “browsers fee” put into place next year (in addition to the direct borrowers fee), which means there will be a fee (value currently unknown) for external users to enter the library itself. She said that Misak said this is not a policy issue, but a practice (does not need to be recorded anywhere in writing), and that no governing body would oversee this as it was her, the Provost and Carole Moore’s decision to make. She said the coalition against the external user borrower’s fee is still working on the issue. She said they wrote a letter to Minister Malloy (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities) asking for his involvement as the province of Ontario provides a substantial amount of public tax dollars to UofT libraries, particularly Robarts’ Library. She concluded that he said that (in response to the letter which is posted on the GSU website) as long as people could use the in-house library resources for free then it was not against the Reciprocal Borrowing Act of 2002. She said that, however, since there will be browser fees introduced, this would be in violation of said Act, and another letter will have to be written addressing this particular issue.

Ruth Perkins said that OPIRG (Ontario Public Interest Research Group) contacted the GSU to apologize for not attending the October 29, 2009 meeting for their scheduled address to Council, however they will be at the next GSU General Council meeting in January.

Greg West congratulated CUPE 3902 on successfully negotiating their contract.

St-Amour addressed the issue regarding mandatory applications of a Thesis Completion grant in OISE (Ontario Institute for Studies in Education) for 5th and 6th year graduate students (on page 8 under the course union reports of the October 29 minutes). She said that she has researched it and it is not forbidden for people with external or UofT scholarship funding to apply for this thesis grant. She assured Council that they are going to clarify as to the purpose of these grants.

- e) Centre for Women and Trans People

No reports

2. Sub-Committee and Caucus Reports

- a) Academics and Funding Sub-Committee

St-Amour said that on behalf of herself and Ellie Louson, they are holding a petition drive next term concerning reducing post-residency fees from the National Graduate Caucus of the CFS (Canadian Federation of Students). She said they will be starting meetings with the Office of Research regarding whistleblowers protection policy, which is currently lacking at the university, thus the Academics and Funding Sub-Committee are currently investigating policies in departments and collaborating with Vice-President (research) Paul Young on this issue.

Laura Mandelbaum asked if there was a transcript of the meetings where the library user fee was discussed.

St-Amour said minutes are not available yet and to also take into consideration that the advisory board is not a decision-making body, so the minutes are not as detailed as is typical for decision making-bodies. She also said the meeting with Misak was an informal meeting and that no minutes are available. She said if you are interested in obtaining minutes of any of the formal meetings they have been attending, to contact her at michelle@utgsu.ca.

b) Social Justice Sub-Committee

Sara Suliman said the Day of Action took place on November 5th and leading up to it they hosted a screening of "Street Nurse", the movie. She said the event "Out in the Cold" took place on November 20th which consisted of a sleepover of students in front of Hart House which gathered a lot of media attention and discussion of the statistics concerning homelessness in Toronto. Reporting on the Day of Action, she said that attendance was lower than previous years, however the weather was bad, but there was still good media attendance. She said approximately 3000 students participated in the protest in Queen's Park and a delegation from the Ontario Coalition against Poverty was in attendance. She said that in light of the new "Reaching Higher" framework that will be announced alongside the provincial budget in March that the Social Justice Sub-Committee is working on hosting events to highlight this issue concerning post-secondary funding and raise awareness. She said there will be a movie screening of "The Constant Gardener" on December 8th with discussion on clinical trials and ethical regulations and to look for information regarding this event in the GSU digest.

c) Sustainability Sub-Committee

St-Amour said the Sustainability Sub-Committee met on November 2nd where they passed 3 motions: the first was to give a donation to the graduate student delegation going to Copenhagen, the second was to give promotional support to Bikechain in order to raise awareness of the services they offer, and the third was to support raising awareness of the referendum for Bikechain via material promotions, beginning in January. She updated Council on the situation at St. Joseph's and Queen's Park intersection, where another 4.5 hour watch was undertaken at which over 350 signatures were collected on the petition. She reminded Council members to get members of their course unions to sign the petitions that have been circulating regarding this unsafe crosswalk issue and return them to the GSU. She then informed Council of a resolution from Toronto City Hall to incorporate UofT's St. George downtown Campus into the Walking Strategy campaign, which allows UofT to close portions of St. George, Wilcox and Devonshire streets. She said the Sustainability Sub-Committee met on November 12th to discuss options for this allowance and they gave a 2 page report to the UofT Area Community Liaison Committee containing suggestions as to the use of these spaces. She said that as of March 2010 they would be restricting motor vehicle use of Devonshire and part of Wilcox Streets and planters, painted streets, chairs, et cetera would be implemented in an effort to make the streets more walkable. She further stated that doing so on St. George St. would be more challenging due to the presence of bike-lanes, which should be preserved while pedestrianizing it.

Nikita Reznik asked if these suggestions would be put to a Council vote or if this would be an executive decision.

St-Amour responded that the motion was passed at City Hall and is thus out of the hands of the GSU in terms of pedestrianization, however it has some control over what is to be done with the space. She said that city planners and facility and service planners were a part of this decision and she encouraged people to talk to her that have issues with this as she is the student representative in this decision.

d) University Affairs Sub-Committee

Anton Neschadim was at the CFS National General Meeting and unavailable to report in person, however a written report could be found in the Executive Report.

e) International Students' Caucus

Suliman said the International Students' Celebration took place with a substantial turn-out on November 17th and Chris Klinger made a presentation on the GSU, its respective campaigns, and how to get involved. She reported that on November 30th the Sub-Committee is finally going to have enough petitions to send to the Ministry of Health concerning the recent resignation of the Minister of Health and in particular with regards to international student inclusion in the provincial health-care system. She encouraged Council members with any questions to email her regarding international students' health-care and funding at sara@utgsu.ca.

f) Queer Caucus

West said that they are having a monthly social on November 27th at the GSU pub at 9pm.

g) Women's Caucus

Bodia Macharia was at the CFS National General Meeting and unavailable to report in person, however a written report could be found in the Executive Report.

Dawe informed Council members that they could contact Neschadim or Macharia regarding their reports via email if there were any questions or concerns.

3. Reports

a) Course Unions

Leo Mui, Chemistry course union Representative, announced that the Chemistry Graduate Students' Union is starting a fundraising campaign during the period of December 1st-18th for the Toronto Daily Bread food bank. He encouraged Council members to encourage staff, faculty and students in their course unions to make donations. He said you could sign up on the Daily Bread food bank website at www.dailybread.ca and that you can make donations there or set up someone to collect cash. He added that a donation over 15 dollars would merit a tax receipt and that his course union is currently trying to get the department of Chemistry to match donations and encouraged other course unions to do the same with their departments.

Patricia Rodriguez asked if the website is the only place to get information about this event.

He said dailybread.ca is good at responding promptly to emails and thus far he has done this for his own course union online. He said there is a sign-up form on the website where you can take part on behalf of your student union and that their own goal was outlined to be 2000 dollars and an email was sent to his own department informing them of this. He also said that it is better to donate money than participate in a food-drive because Daily Bread is able to stretch a dollar further than an individual due to their knowledge, experience and connections.

Rodriguez from Laboratory Medicine and Pathobiology said that her course union brought up the issue of reducing tuition fees in second year when graduate students (for the most part) are no longer taking classes. She said she was wondering if there is anything the union can do to address this issue.

West responded that there has been a campaign regarding this at UofT for several years at the Governing Council level and St-Amour is representing the GSU regarding this issue currently. He stated that he and Olivier Soren have been pressing administration about this and they will report on it in meetings to come. He said there are several hundred petitions

which will be presented to the Governing Council asking them to express the reason behind post-residency fees. He encouraged course unions to raise awareness among their members and to email him or St-Amour for more information on how to get involved at greg@utgsu.ca or michelle@utgsu.ca.

Peter Coppin, Faculty of Information representative, said that the issue regarding students receiving external awards and losing funding, which was mentioned last time, has not been resolved. He said this has been happening to international and domestic students and asked others who have similar experiences to speak with him.

Suliman responded that the main problem with international student fees is that there is no grant policy on how to offset differential fees imposed on international students. She said she asked last year how she could offset her own but there was no policy in place. She added that it needs to be dealt with systemically and there needs to be accountability. She said that individual departments need to show how they account for these fees, including supervisors themselves.

Allan Olley said he was under the impression that a graduate student can defer fees if you have any funding at all.

Dawe responded that the issue is that there is no top-up and it is not the same across all departments.

West asked if international students have ever lost money due to an external award or if it is a question of not receiving a top-up.

Coppin said that his own department has an algorithm to determine funding that they will not disclose, but they do provide the minimal 15000. He said it isn't about the prestige, but about survival. He said this formula makes it so that there is no incentive to apply.

Bhaskar Chanda asked West why the stipends remain the same while the cost of living and tuition goes up.

West responded that he agrees that funding should increase with inflation and that graduate students have been fighting for years to make it so that they never have to live below the poverty line. He said the GSU is always negotiating to get stipends increased, which last year was increased to a minimum guaranteed funding amount of \$15000 (raised from \$13500).

Chanda asked if there is an algorithm to determine this.

West said no, there is no algorithm in place to determine minimum funding.

Ross Cuthbert asked Coppin if, with the scholarship, one is able to keep the TA hours or if they are absorbed as well.

St-Amour responded that you do not keep your TA hours in Linguistics. For example if you have a first-year OGS award, the department is only required to give you the same amount of hours for three years, which can pose a problem getting TA hours if you did not have any in your first year due to your award.

b) Executive/Staff Announcements/Questions/Correspondence

Suliman said that on November 17th she attended the City Council meeting on behalf of the GSU and there was a motion to extend TTC student discounts for high school students to all postsecondary students across the GTA without an age requirement and to accommodate students in many types of programs, such as part-/full-time or professional

programs. She said there is confusion across the GTA defining “part time student”, so the TTC might extend this to all students.

West notified Council that the benefit coverage of drug payments has increased by 100% to \$5000. He said to go to your department and tell them about the Green Shield portal online which informs members of eligibility for certain coverage, allows printing of drug reimbursement forms, and sign-up for direct deposit reimbursements.

Motion: BIRT item 1.e), Women’s Centre Report, be revisited on the agenda.

Mike Bailey/Marta Kisiel

Carried

1.e) Centre for Women and Trans People

Sabera Esufali said that they are across from the GSU at 563 Spadina Ave. She explained that it is a drop-in space for all students—particularly women and trans people—and they provide support and advocate on issues such as racism and homophobia as well as organize workshops and events. She said there are 12 concurrent volunteer programs going on and a recent event consisted of creating a community mural on gender and violence. She brought forward some of the events and groups that are active at the centre, including: “The Spice”, which is a community cooking program that emphasizes meals that are cost-effective and nutritious, the event is free and takes place every Thursday from 12:00-3:00pm; Aboriginal Women and Women of Colour group get-togethers occur every Tuesday; on December 1st a “poetry and spoken word” night will take place alongside a “Words of Resistance” potluck from 4:00-6:00pm; December 3rd is crafting night, which is anti-capitalist holiday gift making. She added that the centre is equipped with computers, lounge-space, a fridge and a full kitchen to cook your meals in. She encouraged those interested in volunteering to visit www.womenscenter.sa.utoronto.ca for more information.

c) CUPE 3902, Governing Council, Graduate Education Council

Parlette, Liaison for CUPE 3902, said that unit 3 was able to reach a contract without going on strike. She said that at 2:45am on November 8th they came to a tentative agreement where 93% were in favour. She said that the details could be found on the CUPE 3902 website and thanked everyone that showed support. She said they are currently focusing on mobilizing unit 1 members and she encouraged course union representatives to have a CUPE 3902 Unit 1 representative come to their respective course unions to speak about what is being done on the students’ behalf, and to direct questions about this to herself at liaison@cupe3902.org. She said they are currently trying to address concerns of unit 1 course instructors, which are graduate students who teach their own courses but do not receive the same resources that a sessional contract worker or full time faculty member would get in terms of TA support or photocopying, et cetera. She said they are currently setting up a committee and some focus groups in the winter terms to focus on this issue. She also informed Council members who are TA’s that a general membership meeting would be taking place on December 10th from 12:00-2:00pm at Hart House in the east common room.

Olivier Soren introduced himself as the representative to the Governing Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences and he encouraged those with any concerns or questions to email him at oliviersoren@gmail.com or greg@utgsu.ca. He said they are involved in pushing for better IT, infrastructure, email systems, et cetera. He notified Council that there will be a multimillion dollar overhaul of the system and that you are welcome to suggest

what you would like to see in the new upgraded system as he can represent those particular interests.

West introduced himself as the representative of Life and Physical Sciences to the Governing Council. He said he has brought forward the year-6 and -7 post-residency fees issue and has been targeting funding issues for people who find themselves outside of the funding cohort, who are thus more likely to relapse given that they are still required to pay tuition. He said that he himself, Soren and St-Amour would be meeting with Dean Corman to discuss how more progressive funding models need to be put in place for graduate students. He said Corman has given positive feedback at previous meetings, especially regarding international students, and he added that they will be following up on this for domestic students as well. He invited council members to a meeting on December 1st that they will be having with CUPE 3902 regarding the upcoming December 10th Governing Council meeting.

St-Amour, representative of Graduate Education Council on the GSU, said all motions are passed at faculty councils, sent to the Graduate Education Council then sent to the Governing Council for approval. She outlined minor program changes to either admissions or requirements and new diplomas, which can be found on the Executive Reports document on page 7 under "Graduate Education Council: November 17th". She said that the SGS found a discrepancy in the calendar and what was cast originally by the department with regards to Political Science Master's requirements. She said the GEC (Graduate Education Council) was uncomfortable voting on the motion before it went to the faculty first so it was tabled until January. She asked Council members to email her if more detail regarding these changes is needed or if there are any questions pertaining to them.

3. Other Business

Sarah Collier from Public Health said the Dalla Lana School of Public Health is working in collaboration with The Centre for International Health on a presentation on December 1st in the Great Hall, Hart House at 4:30 titled: "Pandemics and Academics: How universities can fight global killers".

Ajamu Nangwaya announced that the GSU executive purchased 4 tickets for a fundraiser concert for December 13th from 3:00-6:00pm in support of the Philippines typhoon survivors. He said that this is a way for the GSU to show solidarity with the Filipino community and to fill out raffle tickets on the way out of the meeting.

Perkins said the winner of the Raffle would be announced at the Council Social following the meeting, or contacted via email/phone.

4. Date of Next Meeting

Dawe said that the next meeting would take place on Thursday December 10, 6:10pm sharp, Bahen Centre, Room 1130.

5. Adjournment

Dawe declared the meeting adjourned at 7:33pm.