

## **Toronto School of Theology Graduate Students' Association Board Meeting Minutes– October 12<sup>th</sup>, 2016**

Present: Allison (President), Fiona (VP Academic), Marie (VP External), Gordon (Treasurer), Benjamin (St. Mike's), Robyn (Regis), Sheng Peng (Historical, approved in meeting), M.J. (Knox), Steve (Wycliffe).

Regrets: Melanie (VP Conferences), Trent (Bible), Lindsay Anne (Emmanuel)

### 1. WELCOME AND INTROS

Allison officially welcomed everyone to the meeting, and introduced to the Board Sheng Peng, who has volunteered to be the Historical rep. Under the TGSA governing rules, outside of the election period the Board is allowed to appoint new member(s) onto the Board by vote.

**MOTION:** To nominate Sheng Peng as Historical Rep [moved by M.J.]. Seconded by Robin. Carried

### 2. HOUSEKEEPING

Approval of September 12<sup>th</sup>'s meeting minutes: Minutes were distributed for approval. Gordon noted that his attendance was not noted in the minutes.

**MOTION:** To approve the September 12<sup>th</sup> meeting minutes with the correct changes [moved by Gordon]. Seconded by Sheng Peng. Carried

Clarification of meeting minutes and agenda approval process: Allison explained that a UTmail or google drive will be started so that the Board can view the agenda ahead of time, the execs can add items on agenda, and for the Board to edit meeting minutes. It was suggested that using the OneDrive system through UTmail will better. Allison will create the group through her own personal UTmail account, as the TGSA email account uses the old utoronto system.

### 3. EVENT DEBRIEF

SSHRC/OGS workshop: Fiona noted that there was a good turn out (around 20 people). People were engaged with the presentations and learned a lot from the workshop. She thanked everyone who helped out and attended the event. Allison said that there was a complaint from a professor about the scheduling of the event. She noted that there will always be scheduling conflicts as there is not a slot of time where students do not have classes, besides Fridays, where most students will not be on campus. A Question was raised regarding the effectiveness of having a SSHRC workshop 6 weeks prior to the due date. Allison noted that the event is held in September to allow first year students to attend the workshop. Robyn stated that the SSHRC departmental due date is set by the individual departments. Further questions included: whether TST can move this date back/why is TST's due date not on par with other departments, and whether the workshop can be filmed and posted online so people can have access to this information throughout the year. Fiona noted that filming will entail TGSA receiving written permissions for all participants, including the audience, and that some panelists were hesitant about giving their consent for filming this year as filming might inhibit the audience's participation (they may not want their question to be recorded). It was suggested that something should be included in the welcome package, which lets the students know in advance what documents they will need for their SSHRC application, and that TGSA will be hosting a SSHRC workshop in September.

*TO DO: Ask David who does the welcome packages, and that if necessary TGSA is willing to make a flyer about this to be included in the TST package.*

Welcome back BBQ: Gordon noted that there was a great turn out (39 people, including some staff/faculty members of TST), and that the total amount spent at the event should be \$502 (invoice has yet to be received), \$2 over budget. M.J. thanked Dorcas Gordon, principal of Knox College, for being present and welcoming the students at the event.

#### 4. COLLEGE UPDATES

M.J. reported that Knox had their first “First Thursday” event in hopes of forming collegiality.

Robyn reported that Regis hosted their Art Exhibit and Open House events. She invites all to attend the Lonergan Lecture seminars on October 20<sup>th</sup> (M. Shawn Copeland) and 21<sup>st</sup>.

Benjamin reported that St. Mike’s had their first “Pro Graduate Seminar”. This event will be open to all TST students to attend, but the presenters will be from St. Mike’s. He also noted that St. Mike’s will be starting a tradition of hosting a small reception after all their PhD defences.

#### 5. AREA UPDATES

Historical: Wycliffe hosted a book launch, *Reformation Worlds: Antecedents and Legacies in the Anglican Tradition*. The book celebrates Alan Hayes’ career as a Church historian. Lastly, there was a call for papers by the *Canadian Society for Church History*, due in September.

Biblical: Allison notified the Board that she received a letter from the Biblical Seminar group asking TGSA for some financial support for their upcoming Biblical seminar. Funds (\$100) have already been allocated in the approved budget for this group.

#### 6. VP ACADEMIC UPDATE

Regarding Academic Council (AC): Fiona updated the Board about the MA proposal. It has been approved by UTQAP, and is being approved by the Ministry for funding and finance purposes. She reports that TST can advertise about this program, but cannot send acceptance letters prior to the final approval. The Board was also notified that the “Certificate in Spiritual Care and Psychotherapists” is undergoing approvals as well, and that the “Certificate in Sacred Scripture” is under works.

Regarding Graduate Studies Council (GSC): There will be a “Student Roundtable” created, which will be the Basic Degree version of TGSA. As this is an open group, all students of the University are part of the group. The next meeting, to approve their Constitution, will be in November. There will also be a teaching training session in November for all new instructors and non-conjoint PhD students. Marie asked for more details about this event (who is attending and who is presenting at this workshop).

*TO DO: Ask Alan Hayes for more details regarding this event.*

AAR/SBL reception will be on Saturday November 19 at 9 p.m., in the Marriott Riverwalk (2<sup>nd</sup> Floor), program item # M19-427. Fiona and Allison also reported that the AGO will be having an art exhibit curated by an alum of Regis. Alan Hayes expressed interest in making a TST-wide outing to see the exhibit.

Fiona reported that there were reviews and comments on the PhD cohort courses taken seriously, and changes were made accordingly. Benjamin questioned whether the marking schemes for the two courses remained the same (“pass or fail” for the research and scholarship course and an actual grade for the course design course).

*TO DO: Ask TST about this question.*

Regarding M.J.’s query last meeting about Cumulative GPA versus letter grade average: Fiona reported that GSC took this concern seriously and that other professors reported having similar instances where students’ CGPA did not match the letter grade average. She noted that this issue will be on the agenda for GSC’s next meeting. M.J. wanted to know what is going to happen to those students who are in this situation, especially those who are in their comps stage.

*TO DO: Bring this question up at GSC.*

Fiona updated the Board with the reception of TGSA’s video on Facebook. In total there are 63 members in the Facebook group: 52 members viewed the video/post, 9 Likes, and 4 comments all in support with the essay option. She suggests that TGSA should email the YouTube link to the Listserv so more students can view the video and be notified of the proposal. Robyn raised the question of standardization: if the general examinations are standardized then TST needs to show to the students how the marking criteria and outcomes for both options will be equivalent with one another; the two options must have the same/equivalent requirements that the student must fulfill. M.J. noted that the inclusion of an essay option would be good as it reflects TST’s willingness to accommodate different learning styles. This sentiment was echoed by Sheng Peng. Steve emphasized that if this proposal is approved, the decision regarding which exam option the student will complete, must be the student’s decision and not forced upon by the committee.

*TO DO: Email David with a summary of the proposal and a link to the video.*

Benjamin raised the issue of language courses. He explained that he was interested in taking the undergraduate course German 300, and had asked the German department if there could be accommodations made for him as a PhD student: instead of an actual grade, his mark will be Pass or Fail, with “Pass” at 70%. However, the German department said no exemptions can be made. Benjamin would like to know if TST can coordinate something with the language departments so that there is the choice of having the course as Pass or Fail instead of an actual grade for TST’s graduate students.

*TO DO: Bring this question up at GSC.*

Robyn reported that there was a case where students who took Latin 100 through the undergraduate departments, were not prepared for the recent Latin exam. The past Latin exams were from the Vulgate Bible, but this year’s exam piece is much more difficult (Litantius). Thus, there are discrepancies with the exam itself; the difficulty of the exam is not standardized. Furthermore, the exam itself does not reflect what students learn from a basic introductory level Latin course.

*TO DO: Bring this issue up at GSC.*

Benjamin also reported that he had German 200 in his transcripts before entering his PhD studies at TST, yet it was not counted and he was required to take the German exams. The Board would like to know why this is the case, especially when it is stated in the handbook that a student will be

exempted from completing a language exam if he/she demonstrate proficiency in the language, which includes a full year study of the language within 5 years of the application date.

*TO DO: Bring this issue up at GSC.*

Lastly, the Board notes that the cancellation of the language courses are not helpful for students who need those courses for their program.

*TO DO: Bring this up at GSC.*

#### 7. VP CONFERENCE UPDATE

Melanie was not present. Allison referred all those who want to help or have ideas to email Melanie.

#### 8. VP EXTERNAL UPDATE

Marie reported that the next UTSU AGM is on the 27<sup>th</sup>. Members of the Board expressed their displeasure with the recent raise in the amount one has to pay for Hart House membership. M.J. questioned why TGSA is not part of GSU.

#### 9. TREASURER UPDATE

Gordon reported that there is not much to update as there has only been 2 transactions. He explained about cheque requisition to the Board: one must send an email to Gordon stating what one had spent money on, and the amount. There are now 2 co-signers on the cheque.

#### 10. UPCOMING EVENTS

Oktoberfest: Allison asked for volunteers to help organize the event, and M.J. volunteered herself. The time is TBA, and will most likely be at a nearby pub. The budget for the event is \$100; TGSA will purchase snacks and participants will buy their own beer.

Mental Health Workshop: This event is spearheaded by Melanie and Marie. Details to be announced at the next meeting so TGSA can promote the event.

#### 11. APPOINTMENTS

CRO/Secretary Posting: Allison noted that TGSA still needs a CRO and secretary, especially for the referendum process. As such, the CRO position needs to be filled by next meeting, as he/she needs to chair the referendum committee. This way, TGSA can approve the question in December, and host the referendum in February. Allison suggests that the CRO and secretary roles be filled by one person, who will be required to attend all TGSA meetings, oversee Spring election process and chair referendum committee. According to Michael Buttrey, TGSA can offer a small stipend for such roles.

**MOTION:** TGSA to authorize a CRO/Secretary position at \$150; responsibilities include taking meeting minutes, chairing referendum committee, and overseeing elections process. Moved by Allison, seconded by Robyn. Carried.

Appeals Committee: TST will be creating an appeals committee, and requested for a student representative to the committee. Robyn volunteered to be representative, and M.J. volunteered to be alternative.

Library Committee: M.J. volunteered to be the TGSA rep on the Library committee, though the Board is not sure if the Committee is having meetings this year.

*TO DO: Ask TST regarding Library committee.*

#### 12. MEETING DATES

The next meeting dates are scheduled for Nov. 7 (Robyn and Ben will not be able to make it) and Dec. 7.

#### 13. OTHER BUSINESS

M.J. reported that a student experienced difficulty withdrawing from the UTSU health plan. Allison answered that the student will have to contact UTSU or the TST representative Orvin Lau.

Robyn asked the Board to keep in their prayers Matthew Charlesworth, recent alum of Regis, as he is involved as a mediator in an escalating students-University issue in South Africa.

Steve noted that the Robarts Carrel application process is not entirely fair. There is a case where two people applied for carrels, but one person's application was rejected based on how far along the person is in their studies (Year). More discussion to follow at next meeting.

*TO DO: Add "ROBARTS CARREL DISCRIMINATION" on next meeting's agenda.*

#### 14. ADJOURN

Without further business, Allison adjourned the Board meeting.

Amended and approved – Nov 7<sup>th</sup>, 2016