

TGSA Board Meeting: Wednesday, July 15, 2020 — 1:00-3:00pm
Via Zoom

In Attendance: Michael Rogers, Samuel Needham, Jordan Balint, Mia Theocharis, Hannah Scanlon, Nathan Williams

Guest: Colleen Shantz

Absent: Maureen Ononiwu

Call to Order 1:05 pm

1. Prayer; Territorial Acknowledgment — 1:05 pm

- Michael R.. offers prayer; Mia T. offers territorial acknowledgement.

2. Approval of Meeting Agenda/Meeting Minutes — 1:10 pm

- Mike R. motions to accept meeting agenda and minutes, Hannah S. seconds.
- **Both motions carry, agenda and minutes approved by consensus.**

3. Colleen Shantz — 1:15pm

- Colleen S. mentions ongoing discussion about tuition reduction. Also presents about a survey for UofT called UTQAP.
- Colleen S.: It is possible that grad students can register with tuition remission under special circumstances. Maximum of one academic session possible for this (one trimester). For students actively writing their dissertations and having experienced significant delays. Focused in scope, this isn't available for all.
- Mia T.: Is this document written by GCTS?
- Colleen S.: No, it's from the dean of School of Graduate Studies, with some complex institutional relevance to TST.
- Hannah S.: Is this related to another form Nathan W. had circulated earlier?
- Nathan W.: Unsure if this is the same.
- Colleen S.: Both documents likely related, since they are both SGS-generated.
- Colleen S. shares screen to show document. Characterized as "a minimal but reasonable response" to the troubles caused by COVID-19.
- Mike R. expresses appreciation for SGS response. Two issues: SGS way doesn't address parents' circumstances, nor mental health issues caused by COVID crisis.
- Colleen S.: There will not be a general remission of fees for these hardships; the response will be very limited. Some colleges have set up funds for students, however, as are leaves of absence. Colleges don't count leaves of absence against either time in program nor funding schedules. Recommends not putting all eggs in tuition remission basket.
- Mike R.: Will funding levels be maintained? And will the levels be re-affirmed? Possible delays in funding to students...
- Colleen S.: Naturally this varies by college, but expect that funding levels are consistent and not interrupted by COVID. Colleges should see funding promises as contracts.

- Hannah S.: If students call for tuition remission for all students on the basis of quality of education, would that call be heard at all by the administration?
- Collen S.: This argument would likely not be successful. It would have to be argued in court, not in a negotiation with university administration....Has GSU or UTSU discussed tuition reduction?
- Sam N.: Not to my knowledge, no.
- Hannah S.: The reduction of university provision for students can be seen as a justice issue for students.
- Colleen S.: True, but limitations present on the ability of organizations to accommodate student requests make it a different moral calculus. But the conversation is ongoing...Switching gears to UTQAP, the survey should take 30-40 minutes. Some overview of the survey. Happy to put us in touch with resource people at UofT as needed.
- [minutes secretary lost connection for a minute or so]
- Collen S.: Has TGSA discussed a vision or goal for the year?
- Mia T.: Not yet, to be discussed likely at the next meeting.
- Mike R.: This would be a topic for the August meeting.
-
- Jordan B.: Does the survey to be sent out clarify the questions about “pre- and post-COVID?”
- Colleen S.: Asks for question to be re-stated.
- Mike R.: Seems that St. Patrick’s Day 2020 was a cutoff for experiencing COVID
- Jordan B.: That’s a helpful marker
- Colleen S.: Suggests having March be the cutoff on the survey...Orientation will be remote, and part of the time will be spent in smaller groups with a “mixer” element. Familiarity with icebreaker games asserted.
- Hannah S.: Date and time for orientation?
- Colleen S. and Mia T.: Friday, September 11th.
- [Colleen S. leaves meeting]

4. Reports — 2:15 pm

- President’s Report:
 - Update on UTQAP: Pam Couture asked TGSA to write a portion of the UTQAP report.
 - [minutes secretary lost connection for a few minutes]
 - Mia T.: Hannah S. and Nathan W. have volunteered to work for Couture toward completing student portions of UTQAP.
 - Mia T.: We may need records going way back.
 - Hannah S.: We have financial documents from former President Fiona L.
 - Mia T.: An email has just been sent out from TGSA regarding COVID and student concerns. In August, we will go through what we’re hosting this year—social events, live online events, etc. Also, Shantz is resigning from her GCTS job in

December. Further, TGSA fees have been reduced to \$2 and change due to COVID this coming year.

- Mia T: We very much need Trinity and Knox reps. Josh Heath (Trinity) and Eser Kim and Deborah Lee (Knox) recommended.
- **Motion to empower Theocharis to contact Heath and Lee about representation. Approved by consensus.**
- **Motion to accept Mia T.'s report. Approved by consensus.**
- Vice-President External:
 - Sam N. summarizes conversations with UTSU and UTGSU representatives. Possibility of maintaining UTSU relationship, but with a la carte services contracted with university.
 - Hannah S.: Timeline for affiliation changes?
 - Sam N.: Likely affiliation would not change until after academic year 2020-2021. But a la carte services could possibly be sooner—depending on process.
 - Mike R.: Strong preference for GSU relationship, for several reasons.
 - Sam N.: Agreed, with the caveat that TGSA constituents will finally determine the value of each affiliation.
 - **Motion to accept Sam N.'s report. Approved by consensus.**
- Vice-President Conference:
 - Nathan W.: Viable to do originally-scheduled May conference online in the fall. Connor Wood contacted for main speaker.
 - Mia T: Will conference be in conjunction with TST?
 - Nathan W.: Unclear at this point.
 - Mike R.: Many reasons for close association of TGSA conference with TST conference at the time the decision was made; circumstances have changed now.
 - Nathan W.: Prepared to go forward with TGSA Conference plans for Fall 2020.
 - Mia T.: Recommends contacting Colleen S. about TST conference plans as well.
 - Nathan W.: Will do.
 - Michael R.: Will we re-open a call for papers?
 - Nathan W.: No, likely not.
 - **Motion to accept Nathan W.'s report. Approved by consensus.**
- Treasurer's Report:
 - Hannah S.: All people at TST bear burden of COVID interruptions and setbacks. Strong advocacy for students' fees to be remitted or adjusted based on this fact.
 - Jordan B.: Is the question of impact the best way to speak about this issue?
 - Hannah S.: The argument is that COVID has created a condition where we cannot be in person with educators and colleagues, and are moved online, which has a significant impact on our education. Plus facilities are off limits to us, including the libraries and study spaces, and social environments. All of this adds up to a loss of experience as students. Because of this, students argue from a position of justice that they should be compensated for these losses. However, Shantz's perspective is compelling also.

- Mike R.: Three points: 1) we wanted tuition to be commensurate with the ThD for time students have lost because of COVID at the end of the dissertation phase – received essentially this, in the form of free delays in the program at dissertation phase. 2) TST must still pay many people and so doesn't have significant savings from COVID from which to compensate students. 3) Many BD students won't be able to matriculate this term, leading to loss of revenue and strained finances.
- Hannah S.: Other thoughts?
- Sam N.: It's important for students to have advocacy from TGSA, so Scanlon as Treasurer should be empowered to see how she can advocate for students, even if tuition remission is not possible.
- Mike R.: Actually the role of liaising with administration in this matter is the role of VP Academic.
- Jordan B.: Necessary to push administration on the reliance on leaves of absence, which are not fair accommodations for students.
- Mike R.: Again, necessity of consensus and planning for TGSA when issues are pursued with administration (whether at college level or TST wide).
- Hannah S.: Research into the issue could at least meet the demand of advocacy for students, even if our initial goals are not met. Possible that we can get something we do not yet know to ask for.
- Mike R.: Realistically, we must pick our battles, and it is not realistic to bring financial advocacy to TST—must focus on non-financial issues at TST level, since colleges control all money decisions. TST itself has no money.
- Hannah S.: How then do we proceed?
- Mike R.: Perhaps TGSA should contact student societies at each college vis a vis financial advocacy. Likely approaching heads of colleges would be ineffective. Also, potential ethical problem of making financial demand when colleges might have to cut jobs to afford tuition cuts.
- Hannah S.: Understood, and we should see this as an advocacy issue for students, not a hard-line negotiation with administration.
- [Nathan W. leaves around 3pm]
- Mia T.: interjecting, suggests to table conversation until Friday, when several of us are scheduled to meet about the topic of tuition reduction/student advocacy.
- **Motion to accept Hannah S.'s report. Approved by consensus.**

Motion to Adjourn at 3:12 pm
Approved by Consensus.

Respectfully submitted by Sam Needham
July 20th, 2020