

TGSA Board Meeting
Wednesday, March 17th, 2021 3:00 - 5:00 pm
Via Zoom

In Attendance: Mia Theocharis, Patrick Nolin, James DeGurse, Vincent Jizhang Yi, Jordyn Tower, Samuel Needham, Nathan Williams, Hannah Scanlon, Morgan Bell, Gustave Ineza, Maureen Ononiwu, Josefine Noble

Absent: Jordan Balint, Deborah Lee

1. Prayer and Territorial Acknowledgement

- Mia T. called the meeting to order at 3:04
- Morgan B. offered a prayer
- Mia T. acknowledged the traditional territory upon which we gather

2. Approval of Agenda and Meeting Minutes from February 24th, 2020

- Samuel N. motioned to approve the agenda and the meeting minutes.
- Hannah S. seconded.
 - **All approve. Motion passes.**

3. Reports

A. PRESIDENT

Meeting with Pam Couture

- TST wants to send out a survey to gauge student comfortability regarding an in-person return to campus in Fall 2021
 - Mia T. further explained that there is a goal to be in-person in the fall given vaccination rollout in the province of Ontario
 - Pam C. has asked TGSA for input on specific things TST should ask of the students in the survey
 - Mia T. shared some of her own questions. For example, some people will be vaccinated, some will not – how does this effect in-person classes for all? Will there be childcare in the event that regular channels (e.g. schools, daycare) are unavailable?
 - Sam N. asked whether it was likely that TST will have mandatory in-person classes without any online option
 - Nathan W. noted that a move to Canada may not be feasible for many international students. Could classes then still be dual delivery or online for students for whom this is their only mode of access?
 - Hannah S. asked Mia T. how UofT policy on school opening relates to TST policy
 - Mia T. responded that TST must act within the parameters set by UofT, but has freedom to make its own decision in accordance

with UofT policy (i.e. UofT may open for in-person instruction in the fall, but TST could in principle continue to offer online classes)

- Mia T. further noted that this survey pertains only to the TST and not to the wider university
- Gustave I. asked if there would be any chance of UofT offering vaccination through its internal health system. Mia T. noted that vaccination supply has been an issue in the province and is not aware of any effort for the university to provide its own vaccinations
- Nathan W. suggested that the survey include a question pertaining to student comfortability of extracurricular events being held in person, library access, etc.
- Vincent Y. asked whether 4-hour comprehensive exams (normally hosted in person as opposed to the take-home option) could be proctored online
 - Morgan B. noted that TST had protocol in place for at-home examinations for the language examinations hosted in summer 2020. Perhaps this could be explored further with reference to comprehensive examinations.
- Nathan W. asked what the proposed timeline for the survey was. Mia T. was unsure, but noted that Pam C. wanted it to take place soon

Academic Writing Conference

- Mia T. has been working in collaboration with the Academic Success office to host a workshop on academic writing
- Academic Success has provided TGSA with two options:
 1. Collaborate with Academic Success for their academic writing event in April, or:
 2. Make a stand-alone event toward the end of March. It would be opened up to students in other programs (history department, religious studies department, etc.)
- Mia T. asked the board for their thoughts
 - She further noted that the representative from Academic Success will reach out to Mia T. and inform her about what works best for them
 - The board expressed comfort with either option

Decreased Student Fees

- Given the proposed return to campus, and the conversation from the meeting of 24 February, Mia T. proposed that the board revisit raising TGSA student fees back to their pre-COVID levels
 - Sam N. asked how much a fee restoration would be in dollar amount
 - Mia T. replied that it would amount to around \$2/semester per student
 - Noting the relatively small increase, Sam N. was in favour of restoring student fees to their pre-pandemic level
 - Gustave I. wondered if fees could be restored if this had not been communicated to students. Mia T. reported that when the pandemic began, she sent an email to students explaining the temporary nature of the fee decrease and that upon a return to campus, fees would be restored to their normal level
- Patrick N. moved to restore fees to their pre-pandemic level
 - Nathan W. seconded the motion.

- **All in favour. Motion carries.**

Policy and Procedures

- Mia T. relayed the need for a TGSA Annual General Meeting (AGM). There was no AGM for the 2019/2020 term given the COVID shutdown in March 2020.
- TGSA must host an election at this AGM and therefore must seek out a Chief Returning Officer (CRO)
 - Positions that will be vacant include: VP External, MA Representative, Emmanuel College Representative
- Mia T. wondered if Sam N. would serve as CRO given that his stepping-down from an executive position would remove him from any conflict of interest
 - Personal circumstances would make this difficult for Sam N. and he declined the position
 - Mia T. will approach potential candidates for the CRO position
- Mia T. further noted that any TST student can nominate candidates for elected positions withing TGSA
- The AGM must include a financial statement for the year and a projected budget for the following year
- Mia T. provided a tentative timeline for the elections process and the AGM:
 - The nomination period would span from 26 March -16 April
 - A ratification meeting would be held on 19 April
 - The AGM and the elections would take place on 21 April
- Gustave I. moved to accept the President's report.
 - Nathan W. seconded.
 - **All in favour. Motion carries.**

B. VP ACADEMIC

Delay in Funding and Distribution of Monies

- Mia T. and Nathan W. brought this issue up at the Graduate Studies Council where they felt the concern was sympathetically received
 - Pam C. suggested it be brought up at the Senior Executive Council Meeting, which it was
 - Members of the Senior Executive Council suggested that the delay was due to UofT policy and COVID-related difficulties rather than any delays or issues within member colleges' registrar offices
 - Chris Brittain, principal of Trinity College, will gather information from registrars on how monies are distributed with an eye to a uniform mode and timing of distribution across TST

UTQAP

- Nathan W. participated in the Graduate Studies Committee UTQAP review
- He felt that the external reviewers were "asking the right questions"
 - Question topics included: student funding, teaching opportunities, etc.

- Nathan W. shared his sense that given the previous UTQAP resulted in a significant structural change to the PhD program in 2014, TGSA must keep an eye on what changes emerge from this UTQAP review
 - Nathan W. reported that there will be an Academic Council Meeting this coming Monday, March 22 which he plans to attend
 - Mia T. asked what the topics discussed at those meetings were
 - Nathan W. replied that it is the meeting of the heads of college and in many ways a way of ensuring that each member college is ‘on the same page’ regarding common issues
 - Gustave I. asked if that body discussed accreditation standards and requirements
 - Nathan W. responded that accreditation is under the purview of UTQAP and ATS reviews
 - Patrick N. moved to accept the report of the VP Academic
 - Gustave I. seconded
 - **All in favour. Motion carries.**
- C. VP EXTERNAL (also Social Chair)

Games Night

- Sam N. reported that the TGSA Games Night, hosted via Zoom on 12 March 2021, was a success
 - There was an attendance of seven
 - All enjoyed the event, which was an unstructured time of online gaming
 - Sam N. is thinking about a socially distanced event for students in Toronto (such as a walk or a meeting in the park) when the weather improves
 - Sam N. asked for the board’s opinion on whether another event should be planned before the end of classes
 - There was excitement at the prospect of another event
 - Suggestions included an online cooking class or a craft night
 - Sam N. will explore these options
 - Gustave I. motioned to accept the report of the VP External
 - Nathan W. seconded
 - **All in favour. Motion carries.**
- D. VP CONFERENCE

TGSA Conference

- Patrick N. reported that the Call for Papers has gone out to a variety of institutions
 - So far, he has received around a dozen submissions and anticipates more as the deadline approaches
- He also related that the keynote speaker (Joseph K. Gordon) has confirmed his participation
- Conference information has also been uploaded to the TGSA website

- When Patrick N. spoke with Pam C., she inquired as to whether faculty could propose papers for the conference
 - Patrick N. was hesitant as he wouldn't want to pass over student papers in favour of faculty submissions
 - Nathan W. echoed that we should honour the student focus of the conference. He suggested that Patrick N. could approach faculty after the schedule has been finalized to supplement the students' presentations
 - Hannah S. added that faculty could serve as respondents to student papers as a way of facilitating conversation and affirming student work
 - Patrick N. will explore these options further

- Hannah S. moved to accept the report of the VP Conferences
 - Sam N. seconded
 - **All in favour. Motion carries.**

E. TREASURER

- Hannah S. reported that the TGSA bank account balance stands at \$758.09

- Patrick N. moved to accept the Treasurer's report
 - Gustave I. seconded
 - **All in favour. Motion carries.**

F. COLLEGE REP'S:

I. Emmanuel

- In Jordan B.'s absence, Morgan B. shared some pertinent news from Emmanuel College

ATS Self-Study

- Emmanuel is nearing the completion of its 10-year ATS Self-Study
 - Salient features of the report include a recommendation that Emmanuel move to offering dual delivery (in-person and web-based instruction) for its Master of Divinity program and continue to explore its interfaith program offerings
 - Report will be finalized and sent to ATS in the summer

Principal of Emmanuel College

- Emmanuel's principal, Michelle Voss Roberts, has announced her resignation from that post effective 30 June 2021. She will remain as a faculty member of the college.
- A principal search committee is being formed.

II. St. Mike's

Tuition Fee Exemption

- Gustave I. reported that those students at St. Michael's College who are in their exam and dissertation stage may have extensions and financial support provided on an application basis

- Gustave I. also noted that social life at the college is vibrant. There was a St. Patrick's Day event, regular masses and services of worship, and other social events.

III. Knox

- N/A

IV. Wycliffe

Meeting with Principal

- Bishop Stephen Andrews, principal of Wycliffe College, seemed skeptical about the argument TGSA has put forth regarding financial aid/program extensions for students sitting their comprehensive exams during COVID
 - He believed if support were extended to these students, it would be impossible to not offer similar support to all students
 - He doubted that the Senior Executive Council would approve TGSA's request
 - Mia T. reminded the board that student support is not a SEC issue. Such decisions are up to the individual member colleges
 - Hannah S. will clarify that point with Bp. Andrews and continue to make representations, specifically pointing the bishop to other colleges' decisions
- Hannah S. also noted that an emergency fund of \$4500 was set up at the beginning of COVID for students at Wycliffe

V. Regis

- James D. reported on the vibrant social life of Regis College events including weekly liturgies and extracurricular social events

Tuition Exemption

- James D. met with Sr. Susan Wood about tuition exemption for students in the exam phase. Sr. Wood declined to take the option
 - She noted that students have always had access to electronic resources and that modified library access meant students were not at a significant loss with reference to their examination preparation
 - Sr. Wood, however, did say she would consider a tuition exemption for students whose fieldwork was interrupted by the pandemic
 - James D. will follow up with Sr. Wood to clarify TGSA's position on tuition exemption

VI. Trinity

- Vincent Y. spoke with Dr. Christopher Brittain
 - He was not provided with specific information about how Trinity will provide tuition exemption for exam-sitting students, but was assured that such support was coming
 - Vincent Y. noted that there is a Trinity emergency fund. It is as yet unclear who is eligible or how it will be disbursed or advertised
 - In his meeting with Dr. Brittain, Vincent Y. was informed that Trinity College will be welcoming 6 incoming PhD students and 2 MA students in Fall 2021

- Patrick N. moved to accept the reports of the College Representatives
 - Sam N. seconded.
 - **All in favour. Motion carries.**

G. AREA REP'S:

I. Master of Arts (MA)

Nothing to report.

II. Master of Theology (ThM)

Institutional Alliance between St. Mike's and Regis

- Given concerns, Josefine N. noted that the explored alliance between Regis College and St. Michael's College is not an imminent plan
- Mia T. noted that there were questions about the differences between the MA and ThM at the UTQAP review
 - She further noted that at the Graduate Studies Council, members wondered about opening up the MA Cohort Course to ThM students
 - Josefine N. took the cohort and believed this to be a good idea
 - Nathan W. noted the potential issue of part-time ThM students – it is difficult to call them a “cohort” given the fact that students progress through the program at varying speeds

III. Contextual

Nothing to report.

- Sam N. moved to accept the reports of the Area Representatives.
 - Vincent Y. seconded
 - **All in favour. Motion carries.**

H. NON-VOTING CHAIRS

I. Communications

Facebook Group

- Mia T. noted that given the creation of the new TST Graduate Students' Facebook group, clear messaging regarding the outdated group was needed
- Nathan W. reported that there are only 40 members in the new group and suggested that members of the TGSA executive should take some time to invite friends to the group

4. Events/Workshops

- “Planning Your Writing” via Academic Success — **TBD**
- TGSA Conference: Traditioning Sources for Contemporary Theological Engagement — **June 11, 2021**

5. Questions/Concerns/New Business?

- **Next meeting(s):**
 - **Wednesday, April 7th from 3:00 - 5:00 pm**

Patrick N. motioned to adjourn at 4:48.

Respectfully submitted by Morgan Bell

17 March 2021