

SOGS Council Meeting Minutes

APPROVED

November 26, 2009

6:10 – 8:57 pm

1. Adoption of Agenda

Change - move Sustainability motions to after Speaker's Note.

Amended

Moved – Kyle Asquith (Media Studies)

Seconded – Meaghan Pirie (Media Studies)

2. Announcements

- a) Councillors were welcomed to the November Council Meeting, with a special welcome to new Councillors.
- b) Quorum is 30.
- c) This is the last Council meeting for 2009. The next meeting will be January 28th, the room will be posted on the SOGS website.
- d) Winter bus passes will be available around the 15th of December. Please check the website for exact date and let your peers know. With the new paperless fee bill, students must have their UWO student card.
- e) Child Care, and Travel Subsidies are due to the SOGS office by 4 pm on Wednesday, December 23.
- f) A Bus Pass Distributor is required for the SOGS office for the next two terms. Anyone interested should send an email to sogs@uwo.ca.
- g) We have had a request from King's College for Proctors. Anyone interested in applying should contact Lisa Tocker (ltocker@uwo.ca).
- h) The SOGS' office will be closed from December 23 – January 3 inclusive.
- i) The SOGS Staff and Executive wish all Councillors a safe and restful holiday season.
- j) Please leave your placards when you leave the meeting.
- k) Just a reminder, that if you leave the Council meeting prior to the meeting being adjourned, you must sign out on the Attendance Sheet. Please do not take your name tags away, but leave them at the front. If you leave once the meeting has been adjourned there is no need to sign out.

3. Reception and Approval of the SOGS Council Minutes for the October 29 Council Meeting

Minutes received and approved as written.

4. Elections

Academic Committee	– Ying Wang (Mathematics)
Ad Hoc Sustainability Committee	– Meghan Laturney (Biology)
Equity Committee	– Kalin Penev (Engineering)
Personnel Policy Committee	– Kelly Bairos (Education)
	– Brent Sherar (Chemistry)
Policy Committee	– Kelly Bairos (Education)
Social Science Council	– Julie Peters (Sociology)
	– Rebecca Williams (Sociology)

5. Speaker's Note

Ex-officio members have all the rights of Councillors, except they cannot vote. They may send and second motions.

Engineering Councillor question was investigated and a ruling made. The ruling upheld the second election.

Issue regarding voting by email – Robert's Rules of Order is against using emails for voting. Until Society develops its own ruling, this will continue to be forbidden. Any committee that has used this form of vote, cannot use this form of outcome.

R. vanderZanden (Engineering) - Can a Committee Chair supersede this? (A - Speaker) – No, they cannot.

6. Executive/Committee/Councillor Reports

a) President

- Presented report.
- J. Dechene (Chemistry) – elimination of tax credit will hurt grad students.
- R. Telfer (President) – This is a complex issue – tax credits benefit those students who receive scholarships. The Federations wants to see a shift to upfront grants to students, this would be more equitable. Tax credits only help a small number of students.
- K. Penev (Engineering) – International students receive significant amounts of their funding through scholarships in order to compensate for their much higher tuition fees. A lack of tax credit on scholarships will significantly decrease the real amount of funding available for international students.
- R. Telfer (President) – the CFS proposal must be viewed in its entirety, it also proposes decreased tuition fees for international students.
- B. Sherar (Senator) – Who will represent us at the CFS meeting? GSIC selected three members to attend the meeting but weren't allowed to attend.
- R. Telfer (President) – October 16 was the registration deadline. The GSIC meeting and election of representatives was well past the deadline for registration. Due to the complexity of the national meeting the late registrations could not be accommodated.
- K. Pisters (Engineering) – self-nominated to attend before deadline, but wasn't considered.
- R. Telfer (President) – was not aware of timelines.

b) VP Academic

- Presented report.
- Ombudsperson office may be physically moving. Will keep us informed.

c) VP External & Communications

- K. Penev (Engineering) – as acting co-chair of the Equity Committee – The committee is currently constructing a map of the equity services available on campus in order to facilitate fast resolution of any equity related issues, graduate students may face.

d) VP Finance

- Presented report.
- Renovations to the SOGS office are scheduled for February.
- P. Baiden – how many graduate students benefit from the bus service?
- K. Asquith (Media Studies) – Even though Finance Committee is okay with paying for alternate transportation costs, will this still come to Council?
- R. Williams (GSIC Chair) – What do the flyers look like?
- R. Kissak (History) – Why do the Board of Governors have any ruling over SOGS fees?
- Rick Telfer (President) – Board of Governors have the right to look over the numbers of all organizations within the University.

- S. Russell (Earth Science) – Has the Board of Governors ever refused a budget?
- D. Sutherland (VP Finance) – not in recent memory.
- S. Beasley (Biochemistry, former VP Finance) – They expressed some concern when several years ago the Grad Club was experiencing financial problems.

e) VP Student Services

- Presented report.
- A. Braley (Speaker) – Orientation Committee Report cannot be submitted into record because it was voted on via email. Report was ruled out of order.
- C. Hum (History) – Van drivers may cause problems – they may be considered scab labour.
- R. English (Music) – not everyone is in support of the strike. Is this service fully supported by the GTA Union?
- Speaker – this did come up at the Union.
- R. Telfer (President) – this is not the place to discuss this. Transit Union doesn't like this, but haven't asked that it be stopped. The GTA Union hasn't taken a position.

f) SOGS Commissioners' Reports
Disabilities Commissioner
Pride Commissioner

g) Councillor Reports

h) Senator and Board of Governor Reports

Jonathan Berge, Jenny Jiang, Brent Sherar and Rick Telfer are Senators and can bring forward concerns. Jonathan Berge is the SOGS representative on the Board of Governors.

7. Unfinished Business

MOTION #4:

BIRT the Society's bylaws be revised to prohibit the practice of voting by proxy within the Society.

MOTION #5:

BIRT SOGS bylaw 15.2.4 be amended to read:

Notice of a general meeting, including an agenda showing business to be transacted, shall be advertised in university publications and on campus bulletin boards at least one week in advance of the meeting. Business which has not been included in the advertised agenda ("new business") requires a two-thirds majority in order for the new business to be added to the agenda. New business may not be added to the agenda following the adoption of the agenda. Any motion arising from new business shall require a two-thirds majority in order to be adopted.

BIFRT SOGS bylaw 15.3.11 be amended to read:

Business arising at a meeting of Council that was not included on the agenda within the Council mailout ("new business") requires a two-thirds affirmative vote for adoption. New business may not be added to the agenda following the adoption of the agenda.

Motions 4 & 5 were sent to the BCC for consideration.

BCC:

WHEREAS nothing in the bylaws currently compels parties to co-operate with election and referendum appeals; and
WHEREAS the fairest outcome of an election or referendum depends upon effective investigations of election and referendum appeals; and
WHEREAS the scope in which SOGS members should be compelled to act should be limited to their duties as elected or potentially elected officers:
BIRT Section 4.9 (Campaign Impropriety and Appeals) be amended to include:
4.9.4.1 Should a candidate/referendum group receive a request from the Deputy CRO to provide factual information which wholly pertains to an investigation of campaign impropriety, the candidate/referendum group must respond and must respond with a factually correct answer, if such an answer can be reasonably determined, within one half of the length of the investigation time.
BIFRT Section 4.9.8 be amended to include:
4.9.8 Violations of the following nature will result in automatic disqualification of the candidate:
4.9.8.4 failure to provide factual and relevant information to the Deputy CRO during an investigation of campaign impropriety.
BIFRT the bylaws be renumbered as appropriate.
Moved – S. Russell (Earth Science)
Seconded – B. Sherar (Senator)

- R. Telfer (President)– strongly opposed, to pass this motion is a terrible mistake. Must have a process of appeal. This is a piece meal approach.
- R. vanderZanden (Engineering) – there is a mechanism to appeal.
- B. Sherar (Senator) – is the word relevant a problem?
- R. Telfer (President)– multiple problems – who determines relativity.
- J. Caughlin (Education) – against
- J. Peters (Sociology) – against – refer back to committee

Motion to refer back to Committee
Moved – J. Peters (Sociology)
Seconded – J. Caughlin (Education)
Passes – motion referred back to BCC
- S. Beasley (Biochemistry) – If people have specific concerns, they should contact the BCC.

Motion 1 (Kai Pisters, Engineering):

Whereas members of the Society have submitted a petition, with more than 10% of the membership's signatures, delivered on Tuesday September 29th to the Canadian Federation of Students Ontario office, and Monday October 19th to the Canadian Federation of Students National office and

Whereas the required CFS bylaws in order to hold a referendum on the continued membership in the CFS were followed

BIRT Council officially endorses a no position on the question of the proposed referendum on continued membership with the CFS

BIFRT Council direct the Executive to officially announce that SOGS does not support any side of the proposed referendum

BIFRT Council support the rights of its membership to hold a democratic referendum according to CFS bylaws.

Moved – K. Pisters (Engineering)

Seconded – D. Sutherland (VP Finance)

- R. Telfer (President)– by not having a motion by default shows a neutral position.
- N. McGinnis (Philosophy) – against – CFS has a lengthy reform package that may change our minds about membership.
- R. vanderZanden (Engineering) – for – interference from Executive – President with letter to McGill
- K. Penev (Engineering) – for – can be adopted now and reversed later.

- K. Asquith (Media Studies) – against – it won't make a difference.
- B. Sherar (Senator) – for – Executive can have personal options, but they should not be expressed as those representing SOGS. Remaining neutral shows a responsible position.
- J. Caughlin (Education) – is this for SOGS Council or just the Executive? Why should the Executive be silenced?
- K. Godbout (English) – against – why are we voting to take a position, if later we will restate our position?
- S. Russell (Earth Science) – for – it doesn't say an individual can't express their own opinion.
- S. Colwell (English) – against – be neutral
- S. Black (Engineering) – for – Council should adopt, so that the entity will remain neutral.
- D. Sutherland (VP Finance) – for – more than 10% want to leave the CFS
- R. English (Music) – against – if this passes, has to maintain consistency

Call the question – K. Godbout (English)
 Seconded – G. Zeni (Medical Biophysics)
 Question called

20 – for
 25 – against
 4 – abstained
 Motion fails

Motion 2 (Kai Pisters, Engineering):

Whereas the CFS will appoint referendum overseers who do not support de-federation of SOGS members of the pending referenda, as per CFS bylaws BIRT SOGS Council be the governing body who elects two individuals who support the de-federation of SOGS members from the CFS (national and Ontario) to act as overseers for the referendums to be held, according to CFS bylaws.

Moved – K. Pisters (Engineering)

Seconded – B. Sherar (Senator)

- K. Pisters – If there is a referendum, there will be a committee made up of two representatives for CFS and two should be from the de-federation group.
- R. Telfer (President) – against – this is premature, parameters are not needed
- G. Zeni (Medical Biophysics) – for –
- S. Colwell (English) – against – language is adversarial.
- C. Gray (Kinesiology) - with two people from each group, how are discrepancies solved?
- R. Telfer (President) – decide on logistics – should not be an adversarial relationship.
- K. Penev (Engineering) – When does the committee have to be formed?
- R. Telfer (President) – if a referendum is called, the committee has to be called within a month.

- B. Sherar (Senator) – Amendment proposed

Seconded – K. Pisters

BIRT SOGS Council be the governing body who elects two individuals from the SOGS membership to act as overseers for the referendums to be held, according to CFS bylaws.

- K. Pisters – for new motion
- S. Beasley (Biochemistry) – for – Council will be making an informed decision
- R. Telfer (President) – for – makes it clear – people will be chosen
- D. Sutherland – is there any
- R. Telfer (President) – federal members – local appoint two people
- M. Davenport – would it be the Executive or Council to chose the representatives?

- R. Telfer (President) – they would come from Council

Call the question - K. Asquith (Media Studies)

Seconded – R. Telfer (President)

Question called

Amendment passes

8. Orders of the Day

Motions arising from the President

MOTION #1:

BIRT the Society of Graduate Students invite all graduate student representatives to the University's Senate and Board of Governors to declare and/or discuss their individual positions with Council regarding the University's proposed tuition fee increases at the January 2010 meeting of the Society's Council.

Moved – R. Telfer (President)

Seconded – R. English (Music)

D. Sutherland – to omnibus Motions 1 and 2.

Seconded – R. Telfer (President)

MOTION #2:

BIRT the Society of Graduate Students initiate an e-mail campaign directed at the University's President, Dr. Amit Chakma, to oppose increases to the tuition fees of international students in accordance with the Society's position as adopted by Council on October 29, 2009.

BIRT the Society circulate/publish an open letter within the university community opposing increases to the tuition fees of international students (in accordance with the Society's position as adopted by Council on October 29, 2009) and that the letter be sent to all members of the University's Senate and Board of Governors.

BIRT the Society's Vice-President External, together with the Society's President, be assigned responsibility for fulfilling this directive.

- K. Pisters (Engineering) – good idea

- S. Beasley (Biochemistry) – for

- B. Sherar (Senator) – Senators and Board of Governors graduate student representatives cannot be forced to discuss their views.

- R. Telfer – initiated email campaign to send emails to President.

- R. Kissack (History) – what power does he have? Why target him specifically?

- R. Telfer (President) – informally informed that it is the President who wants to raise international tuition fees.

Call the question - K. Asquith (Media Studies)

Seconded - M. Pirie (Media Studies)

Question called.

Motions 1 & 2 pass

MOTION #3:

BIRT the Society of Graduate Students invite the Canadian Federation of Students' Task Force on Campus Racism to visit and hold hearings at Western prior to the end of January 2010.

Moved – R. Telfer (President)

Seconded – J. Peters (Sociology)

- R. Telfer (President) – take in a lot of different people

- J. Peters (Sociology) – good idea
- G. Keller – what will happen if they can't make it by the end of January?

Amendment :

BIRT the Society of Graduate Students invite, prior to the end of January 2010, the Canadian Federation of Students' Task Force on Campus Racism to visit and hold hearings at Western.

- B. Sherar – for – who will incur cost of this visit?
- R. Telfer (President) – CFS will cover costs.

Call the question - S. Russell (Earth Sciences)

Seconded - S. Horvath (Earth Sciences)

Question called.

Motion passes

MOTION #4: - motion withdrawn by President

BIRT the Society of Graduate Students hire an independent reviewer to examine the Society's policies and procedures in relation to elections and referenda in order to make recommendations for improvement aimed at ensuring fairness and impartiality in the Society's electoral process.

BIRT all records pertaining to the 2009 presidential election, including e-mails sent to and received by the e-mail account of the Speaker/Chief Returning Officer, be made available in order to assess whether the integrity and neutrality of the electoral process was jeopardized or compromised by collaboration or communication among or involving officials of the Society.

BIFRT the Executive together with the Speaker nominate an independent reviewer, and also propose parameters for the reviewer's work terms, for Council's approval at the January 2010 meeting of Council.

Motions arising from Other Committees

Sustainability Committee

1) Whereas The Sustainability Committee is committed to economic, social and environmental sustainability

Whereas Sustainability is a growing concern among graduate students

BIRT The Society endorse the promotion of sustainability through the Sustainability Committee

BIFRT The Society endorse the addition of sustainability material to the SOGS website.

Moved – Tanya Berkers (Biology)

Seconded – Ahmed Alassuity (Engineering)

Motion passes

2) Whereas the sustainability of SOGS office and the Grad Club is a complex issue Whereas an in depth analysis would require a large investment of both time and skills.

BIRT the Society endorse a sustainability audit of both SOGS office and the Grad Club in collaboration with the Masters in Environment and Sustainability program.

Moved – Tanya Berkers (Biology)

Seconded – Kai Pisters (Engineering)

Motion passes

Health Plan Committee

Whereas the current Extended Health & Dental Plan (EHDP) opt-in/opt-out period allows students to add/remove themselves or add family members to the plan, and

Whereas the opt-in/opt-out period runs for one month, (e.g., students starting in September can opt in/out from September 1-30) and
Whereas new post-doctoral fellows and special circumstance graduate students can begin contracts/studies at any time in the academic year,
BIRT SOGS adopt a new policy giving post-doctoral fellows and special circumstance graduate students 30 days (from new contract start date) to opt-in/out of the EHDP, so as to be consistent with the current practice for graduate students starting during the first month of a new term (Sept./Jan./May).
Moved – J. Jiang (VP Student Services)
Seconded – R. Telfer

Call the question - D. Sutherland (VP Finances)
Seconded – J. Caughlin (Education)
Question called

Motion passes

Other Motions

9. New Business/Open Forum

K. Penev (Engineering) – would like to propose a motion that directs BCC to create a motion that will allow SOGS Committees to use emails to BIRT Council direct BCC, or the Policy Committee, to develop a bylaw, or a policy, that will allow SOGS Committees to deliberate and vote on committee business via email, if required due to time constraints, at the discretion of the committee's chair.
Moved – K. Penev (Engineering)
Seconded – S. Horvath (Earth Sciences)

2/3 needed to pass

Motion fails

Motion to Adjourn – 8:57 pm
Moved – D. Sutherland (VP Finances)
Seconded – J. Peters (Sociology)