

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE MEMBERS OF THE STUDENT AFFAIRS AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE held at the University of Toronto Students' Law Society Office (P322) at 78 Queen's Park, Toronto, Ontario, M5S 2C5 at 12:35 p.m. EST 13 Nov 2018.

Members in attendance: Solomon (Sol) McKenzie, SLS President
Morgan Watkins, VP Student Affairs and Governance
Catherine Ma, 3L Representative
Zachary (Zach) Biech, 3L Representative
Benjamin Bouwman, 3L Representative
Alison Durran, 3L Representative
Sarah Kanko, 2L Representative
Renuka Koilpillai, 1L Representative
Rachael Girolametto-Prosen, 1L Representative
Alex Severance, 1L Representative
Mehak Kawatra, Equity Officer
Shamus Slaunwhite, Communications Director

Honghu Wang, UV Editor
Shari Nathan, UV Editor

Call to order: 12:35 p.m.

I. Organization

Morgan Watkins chaired. Notice of the meeting was duly given. Zach took minutes.

II. Land Acknowledgment

Spoken by Zach Biech.

III. Approval of Minutes

Motion to approve by Alex, seconded by Sol. Unanimous approval (except those absent).

IV. Policy

A. Moot Court Committee

Morgan: We had our first meeting on November 1, 2018 before reading week.

Alex: Mandate letter items (split credit for Jessup moot, requirement for one upper year competitive moot only) have been resolved.

Morgan: We do not have a mandate letter for this year. Committee chair asked us whether we have any issues from the student perspective. We said we are in touch with the Moot Court Committee (MCC) and will raise them with this Committee if anything arises. Discussed the possibility to have an MCC member to sit on the Dean's Committee, or institutionalizing the practice of one of the Dean's Committee meetings being joint with the MCC exec. Also discussed increasing opportunities for 1L mootings, some support and some resistance from faculty members on this. More to come.

B. Gender Accessibility and Diversity Dean's Committee

Morgan: GAD is meeting on Thursday, November 15th at lunch to prioritize last year's final report recommendations and discuss strategy for implementation. I would like us to discuss some of the recommendations and hear your ideas and views on what should be the priorities, focusing on recommendations 4, 5, 8, 6, 9-12, 14, 16.

Starting with 4, 5 and 8 regarding more conversation about class and privilege, diversity, Indigenous issues, the committee is looking at ways to help enhance the content of those discussions/training sessions.

Mehak: Need to look at how meaningful this sort of discussion/training to make it more long lasting - perhaps consider making the training more topical, more frequent shorter discussions rather than two long days?

Sol: The personnel who run the ethics training breakout sessions could be an area for improving by bringing in professionals who specialize in these areas.

Catherine: Note that the admin have concerns with including these kinds of training in the O-Week schedule (recommendations 4 and 6), so we might want to be alive to timing

Sol: Possibly they are dealing with a time crunch.

Shari: During my 1L year, the session did not go over well. It was held on a Friday morning after other activities were held on the Thursday night, so barely anyone came.

Morgan: Moving to recommendations 9-12 re: CDO - apparently these have been implemented?

Sol: Would be worthwhile looping new CDO staff member into this.

Mehak: There was not very much information for minority students about the recruit.

Rachael: There are boundaries to including more discussion in O-week, but maybe there are ways of finding more time in smaller groups i.e. social events.

Sol: Yes there are lots of good ice-breaker type events which can get more substantive dialogue

Morgan: Moving to recommendations re: prayer spaces, both at the school and off-campus during OCIs. Has anyone heard complaints/experiences? Any other thoughts?

Sol: SAD lamps?

Rachael: There should also be a door tag that you can flip if you are using the room, so others know to enter the spaces without disturbing

Mehak: Was there a CDO announcement about these services?

Morgan: I am not sure that there was an outright announcement, but the CDO did mention to students in the OCI scheduling information emails that they could schedule their OCIs around breaks for prayer.

I will double check that this was done. Moving forward, it will be important to make sure this space and information is provided by CDO every year. Maybe taking up Sol's suggestion to create a CDO/GAD subcommittee working group. This subcommittee would also tie in with the recommendations for improved resources for racialized students during the job recruitment process.

Morgan: Moving to recommendations about starting more dialogue - there is a suggestion to have poster campaigns.

Sol: Poster campaigns can be ineffective. We will want to be careful with this one.

Morgan: Also unclear who the audience is.

Shari: My understanding of a typical poster campaign is what they did in Hart House a couple of years ago. That was posters in the changerooms and around the gym that displayed a question an equity facing group (e.g. Trans people) had been asked which was inappropriate or offensive to a member of that group. The idea is for people to see the poster and think twice before asking a question about whether it may be offensive.

Rachael: There are some posters at Western which are less direct and more inviting of dialogue.

Sol: Yes the audience/particular space is a more important focus.

Mehak: My previous conception about poster campaigns is that the posters ask questions for students to write their answers to - instead of a poster campaign maybe we should try a anonymous suggestion mechanism for students to provide their comments.

Renuka: Who would be the recipient of the questions?

Mehak: It could go through GAD, building on previous GAD surveys, then GAD can talk about whether it should go to the admin.

Morgan: There may be worries about the mechanism becoming more like an honesty box. I expect the admin will say this kind of feedback is the aim of the GAD Survey that goes out every year.

Sol: For your next meeting, it would be good for SLS GAD members to decide maybe 5ish recommendations that we want to prioritize.

Catherine: The next meeting has an ambitious agenda. Alexis or Sara signalled that we would discuss recommendations #1-16 next meeting, so it would definitely be good for SLS GAD members to be prepared in case.

Morgan: Sidebar on recommendation #22 - I think it will be important to prioritize this one given the recent concerns around the Mandatory 1L training. The recommendation is to improve the communication with guest speakers about the law school's values regarding inclusivity before they come and speak to students. We will first need to ask what is currently being communicated, and how the admin proposes to improve it (or do it to begin with).

Sol: There is an ethics guideline for U of T. Perhaps that should be provided on our website and communicated to speakers before they come in. It should also be available for students in person.

Morgan: Turning to recommendations 17-22, 24 about third parties, i.e. training for faculty, staff, and recommendations regarding alumni. The concern for the past few years is that requiring faculty and staff to do mandatory training about sexual harassment, Indigenous identity and history, diversity training is complex and problematic. We need to make a deliberate decision to prioritize this year, and I think that starts with what the students bring to our meeting on Thursday.

Mehak: We should steer the discussion towards how people in positions of power can use their position and take responsibility/empowering them to create more inclusive spaces - we want to avoid this issue being pushed off to future years, so the discussion can be long term and more impactful.

Alex: Regarding recommendation #17 - does the peer mentor program and alumni mentorship program already have this set up?

Sol: Partially. The mentorship program is more accessible for LGBTQ+ individuals since the admin knows more alumni who identify as so. It is more difficult to navigate for racialized groups, as the admin's identification of those individuals is much shallower / only from recent years.

Renuka: Do the profs have any training in diversity, Indigenous perspectives, etc?

Morgan: Some attend trainings that are made available to them. But nothing mandatory. There are some complexities with making professors attend mandatory training.

Sol: Professors have access to a Quercus-like system where this content is available. Connect with the TRC folks for more information. TRC Committee talked about this idea last year; unclear whether it has been completed.

Zach: Not clear where TRC is at on that, we haven't yet met.

Catherine: Recommendation #16 is about liaising with TRC to create a central database of research memos - admin said this was complete.

Sol: This would be worth asking Amanda Carling about to ensure completion.

Mehak: Would be good to figure out what they mean by "complete". Can faculty access it? Have they been? Can students?

C. Library Committee

Rachael: Meeting on Friday, November 16th. Communications not getting out to SLS committee members about the upcoming meeting, will follow up.

D. Mental Health and Wellness Committee

Ali: We are also meeting on Friday, November 16th. Quick update on Peer Mentorship Mental Health Program funding request - the request they put in was for next term. SLS' VP Social says they still have to look at it, and will be considered soon.

Morgan: There was a Mental Health and Wellness Open House event at lunch today put on jointly by the Peer Mentorship Mental Health Program + Health & Wellness Student Committee. Perhaps someone on the Dean's Committee could get in touch with that group to get a sense of the feedback and how it went.

IV. Student Concerns

A. Listserv

Shari: I am still not on the SLS Weekly email listerv.

Sol: Apologies. We will fix that. We have always faced issues with our listservs because the faculty does not provide us with student emails for confidentiality reasons. We get new students from the e.legal listservs by hand. Ongoing challenge.

B. Ultra Vires Fee Levy

Morgan: Opening up the discussion about this. Have members heard any feedback? Have any additional thoughts since the last time we spoke?

Sol: One idea being tossed around is a one-time lump payment from the school to fund the UV website. The admin cautiously advised against a referendum to raise fees. Another thing to consider is that for SLS's long-term SIP Indigenizing project, if we want to create an officer position to handle our Indigenization it would require a constitutional change, which will require a referendum as well, so we have to be mindful of how we spend our energy in making changes.

Morgan: [At UV Members] Anything you would like to say? How has the feedback collection on the \$6 fee levy been going?

Honghu: We are keeping an eye on the poll and reviewing feedback as it comes in.

Sol: (Reiterating what SLS would like to know from UV, mentioned at previous meeting) - (1) What is the general sense from students? (2) Is a fee levy the only way to do this? What are some other possibilities? E.g., suggestion for increased web presence, updating of UV online portal to which the admin might contribute (3) What would the language of the referendum be?

Morgan: There are also commitments to financial transparency which we should be aware of. Perhaps Brendan can help UV look into this - what is required in terms of budget accountability, auditing, etc. when an association starts receiving their funding directly from students via a tuition fee?

Honghu: Where is that from?

Sol: The admin said this to us, and UofT central requires this, certain responsibilities come with levying fees on students to fund your activities. For instance, we have to complete an annual audit, and pay for this to be completed. We also have to provide public books.

Morgan: In addition, students voting in a referendum would probably like to know that there is some accountability in relation to how their tuition fees gets used.

Sol: From McGill students' experiences, there are other consequences which could complicate things to the point where it's not as simple as being financially independent and that's the end of it.

Shari: We will still have some questions about the lump sum idea.

C. Tuition Campaign

Catherine: There are a number of students on exchange who expressed interest in being able to attend another post-graduation career and student debt information session, perhaps we can ask for them to put on another one next semester.

Sol: UTSU is considering taking the letter to the central admin body, so there will be some cooperation between UTSU and the campaign.

D. 2L Recruit

Morgan: Any feedback from students who participated in the recruit that you would like to discuss? Thoughts on what we should be doing?

Mehak: We should be actively soliciting feedback from the students while it's still fresh on their mind. If they have any concerns - what would be the most effective way of doing that? - Also there are many students who do not have social media who do not get the updates as frequently, we should be mindful that email would be the best way to reach all students.

Sol: We use emails for our major announcements so that's how we can reach them and monitor reach.

Mehak: We can still come up with a thorough way of reaching as many people as possible.

Morgan: We should be mindful of the anonymity concerns of students as well.

Mehak: Agree. But one of the big things I've noticed about this role is that as student representatives, students want to identify themselves to us so we can represent them - it's that step in the middle between going directly to admin.

[Zach left. Sarah took over minutes at 1:35pm]

E. 1L Business

Morgan:

- 1L's closing study groups today
- CDO list of upper-years that are willing to chat about jobs in the 1L recruit
 - Has this list been updated on UTLC? Morgan to find out.

Sol: If students fill out information about their job status on the CDO website, the act of doing so is meant to be their approval to release their contact info in the UTLC chart.

V. Building Business

Morgan:

- Water filters becoming a big problem...

Ali: @Catherine - thank you for leading the communication around getting a new kettle in the kitchen.

Alex: Not building business, but affecting students generally... Paid negligible amount of money less than supposed to for tuition, and as a result, library privileges were suspended

- Even though paid, still have suspended library privileges
 - way of fixing? it has been a month since balance paid

Sol: Worth asking about, but may get an unhelpful response

Morgan: Ask, and let us know what happens

Alex: Ask at library committee how many people this affects and why they can't just fix it

Rachael: Many complains about the fact that bathroom in library (main floor by fishbowl) doesn't lock.

Sol: Ongoing problem. Make sure you just wait for the door to fully lock and wait to hear the click.

Mehak: Also just approach with caution... knock out of courtesy for anyone?

Honghu: What about asking whether it would be possible to add lights to accessibility washrooms that light up when it's locked? (On the inside)

- Bathroom in Falconer (maybe?) has it already

VI. Other Topics

A. Transition to new Financial Aid Model

Sol: Financial aid system changing next year to more progressive model. Those with more unmet need will receive more money. Two functional changes:

- First \$5000 of unmet need an interest free loan. Those with unmet need greater than \$5000 will receive direct bursaries
- Sibling subsidy for university students being removed

Financial aid calculator will be changed to reflect differences. There will be communications going out to students about this, recently approved by the student members on the committee.

Mehak: A student asked me about the school's policy on recording lectures. Apparently Accessibility Services can decide the student needs to have recorded lectures, but the Law School admin won't allow it and have a separate policy?

Sol: We have lost this battle many times... it partly relates to consent on the part of the professors, and the professors as a whole won't consent to it. Some will consent on ad hoc basis.

Osgoode provides recordings for lectures that they provide if Accessibility Services deems necessary. Happy to take to the admin, but every year we get same response (no). The law school does not want to move toward the Osgoode model, and they don't want to pay for it.

Shari: Also an infrastructure issue, difficulties with recording all lectures in place in building. They also don't want to discourage students from participating in class. Not necessarily true students would consent to being recorded, even if professors do

Mehak: Can we bring this up with the admin?

Sol: Can flag at one of our bi-monthly meetings. Also might be worth raising again at GAD. Again, I suspect it will go nowhere

Mehak: Can I help to discuss strategy before going into meeting?

Morgan: Yes, strategy important. Need to talk about this as a group to see if there is appetite to pursue it again.

Shari: Best argument that volunteer note-taking is horrible because people don't volunteer. This year is a case in point.

Sol: Paying note-takers was middle-ground to provide incentives for uptake of notetaker. This year, for some reason, it has been particularly bad

Catherine: Another notetaker issue - I signed up, but was rejected. Apparently the system was rejecting people on its own. I flagged the issue to Alexis, and she was able to do something on the backend to fix this issue for me, but I'm not sure if it affected others.

- Morgan also signed up as notetaker and was rejected despite the system saying there are still no note-takers for the class.

Mehak: We should still bring this up, if every year these issues come up the school should address it.

Sol: SLS should have a record in our minutes of our many discussions on this issue. We should look back at that - I will send you documents to review.

Meeting adjourned: 1:55 p.m.