

**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 on October 2, 2018 at 12:30pm EST

Members in attendance:

Solomon McKenzie, SLS President  
Morgan Watkins, VP Student Affairs and Governance  
Zachary Biech, 3L Representative  
Benjamin Bouwman, 3L Representative  
Alison Durran, 3L Representative  
Robert Nanni, 2L Representative  
Sarah Kanko, 2L Representative  
Renuka Koilpillai, 1L Representative  
Alex Severance, 1L Representative  
Kristy Wong, 1L Representative  
Daniel Poliwoda, Equity Officer  
Shamus Slaunwhite, Communications Director

Call to order 12:30pm

**I. Organization**

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

**II. Procedural**

**A. Approval of the Minutes**

Motion to approve September 26, 2018 meeting minutes by Solomon McKenzie, seconded by Alex Severance. Yes: Solomon McKenzie, Benjamin Bouwman, Alison Durran, Robert Nanni, Sarah Kanko, Renuka Koilpillai, Alex Severance, Kristy Wong. Motion Passes.

**III. Faculty Council (FC)**

Morgan: In advance of FC, let's discuss the Law Society of Ontario (LSO) Licensing student survey results and specific feedback we want to raise at FC.

Sol: At FC I will also give a short speech about SLS' goals for the year and go over the LSO survey. Based on the results, we will say that no one wants the 4th option (Law Practice Program (LPP)), and then we will submit comments on the other three options. [See LSO Licencing discussion below].

#### **A. LSO Licensing Survey**

Morgan: Sol will go over the survey results that he's put together. In short - on the ranked ballot most people ranked options 1 and 3 the highest. Only one person ranked option 4 (LPP) as their first choice, with the overwhelming majority ranking it last. In our consultation report to the LSO, we don't have to take a position between options, but we should quote feedback from the survey. Note that we will do a separate submission from the Law Students' Society of Ontario (LSSO).

Sol: At FC, there will be a general discussion about these options where we can all contribute our own impute, so we should try to crystalize a few things we will bring up.

Zach: Where generally do people stand on the issue?

Kristy: I think that as U of T students, we don't always have to worry as much about articling. I am very against some of the options that increase cost by a substantial amount.

Ben: It's interesting to compare the LSO's proposed options to the American model which does not require a practical skills test or articling for licencing. Every LSO option has some sort of practical element added on. Why would we have to be taught more clinical experience? We should all have the ability to put our skills into practice when we graduate. The LSO proposals seem like they take the problem of not having practical experience and downloads the cost of it onto the students.

Sol: Skills-based programming at professional schools are not always effective and the Dean has said that the school will not be taking on this responsibility.

Sarah: It's really valuable to learn how to function in the legal system as a practicing lawyer, while being supervised by an experienced lawyer. Courses cannot teach everything about the practical side of practicing law.

Ben: I think my question is why can't you be a lawyer without having that practical experience first?

Ali: Is there any evidence from the U.S. that there is more malpractice among first-year associates?

Alex: I don't know for sure but my sense is that if there is, it's not enough for there to be a change.

Sol: LSO also say that they are concerned with equity issues in the articling process, but none of the options seem to address that.

Alex: What are the firms' justifications for articling?

Zach: Where I worked this summer, the reason why they brought in students was to integrate them into the firm so that they will stay and contribute in the long run. Maybe we need a more streamlined way of doing this.

Sarah: Are there stats on whether or not there is a difference in abilities of students who have worked at a firm over the summer compared to those who didn't?

Zach: There are bigger issues at play; this debate doesn't address the inequities, the crisis the industry is in, and the delta between what we learn and the skills we need.

Morgan: It sounds like the main takeaways are: (1) no LPP, (2) concerns about the content and usefulness of a skills-based exam, (3) we take issue with any increase in cost being downloaded to students, and (4) none of the options really address the issues outlined by the LSO as underlying the proposals for change.

**Takeaway: SLS members to raise these issues during the LSO discussion at FC tomorrow.**

#### **B. Sol's SLS Speech at FC**

Sol: in terms of SLS projects for the year, does anyone have thoughts as to what you would like me to say? I will mention the new members of StAG and Social, the discussion about implementing a new law school application pathway for Black students, smooth implementation of intersession, and work on implementing the new financial aid model as well as the final recommendations by the Gender, Accessibility, and Diversity (GAD) and Mental Health & Wellness Dean's committees last year.

Zach: Do you want me talk about what Catherine and I spoke about at the retreat?

Sol: Yes sure can you help me craft a statement about it?

Zach: Sure, at this stage we can use general language.

### **IV. Policy**

#### **A. Dean's Committees**

##### **- Mandate Letters & Upcoming Meetings**

Sol: Have people gotten their mandate letter yet for their Dean's committee?

Sarah: No

Sol: Ok, **Takeaway:** can one person from each committee email their committee chair to request copies of the mandate letter. No one's overarching mandate has changed, but it's still important to have it, so that we know exactly what to focus on.

**Takeaway:** someone from each committee chaired by Sara Faherty to email her to schedule a first meeting (if you have not received any dates from her).

- Curriculum Committee update on Intersession

Zach: Our committee met yesterday, and we were basically prepping for today's town hall meeting. Brendan brought up most of our concerns. One of the things we talk about is getting note takers for the intersession. There were two ideas: (1) the admin would get students well ahead of time to do it, or (2) profs could provide their lecture notes. Rachael went over 1L concerns like if there would be an increase in tuition, which there won't be, but the plan is to still vote on it on October 24th.

Kristy: Some people are wondering about how it would be graded.

Zach: It's probably not going to be credit/no credit. I assume that there could be some papers which would be due a few weeks after.

Sol: This will have a demonstrable impact on student's mental health because this is a new more intense period where upper years are usually just coming back into the swing of things.

Ali: Yes, how will accommodations work?

Morgan: The admin has said that for the first two years, they will be very flexible with individual requests from students regarding personal accommodation needs. E.g., deferred exams. They will include in the emails and messaging about accommodations their intention to be flexible around deferred exams and intersession - with the bottom line that students should talk to them about their individual situations.

Zach: The curriculum committee also discussed that issue generally. The admin confirmed there would be flexibility. Also, regarding degree requirements, intersession will function like any other requirement; if you don't sign up, the admin will sign you up. So there is no worry that you will not get in or that some students will be able to avoid doing it.

## V. Student Concerns

### A. OCIs

Morgan: Kristy asked Yukimi if her resilience panel could be around the time of OCIs; she said no as they are aiming for it to be in January

Ali: I talked to the host of the “No-Cl” event last year (current 3L), who said they would do the event again, but would want to do it before OCIs (they got the impression that students weren’t interested in being out during the days of OCIs), and that they would ask a 2L to host it.

Robert (**Takeaway**): I know someone who is not doing OCIs, and can ask if they would be willing to do it.

Sol: Yes, if you could do that, we would support them in putting it together.

Dan: I think it’s important that we do something regarding equity concerns during the recruitment process. I’m not sure about the best way to approach it. Maybe we could ask students If they have been affected by inappropriate interviewer behaviour, track their experiences, and whether this is recurring.

Sol: Theoretically, there is an invisible reporting mechanism that the CDO collects data from the National Association for Law Placement (NALP), but the problem is that the law school and recruiters are not that diverse, so the information is often very identifying.

Zach: I had a conversation with a 2L today, who is very concerned about (i) wearing their wedding ring to interviews and (ii) feeling like they have to take one of these jobs even if they have an unpleasant recruitment experience.

Sol: Are there any preemptive pieces with tips that we could circulate?

Roberts: Maybe we could have upper years contribute.

Sol: Yes, a discussion thread.

Zach: Do we have time to put something like that together?

Sol: Normally we would rely on a 3L thread.

Sarah: There might be a document posted on the Career Development Office’s (CDO’s) website on how to respond to uncomfortable questions.

Morgan (**Takeaway**): We can make a post stating that (1) CDO can help you work through concerns you have in advance of interviews, and strategies to respond to inappropriate

questions, (2) call-out for 3Ls who are willing to offer advice from their experience, (3) review the University of Toronto Law Career Network (UTLC) Private Practice Interview Guide and NALP Best Practices Guide for info on topics employers are not supposed to discuss in interviews.

Sol: Can someone post about it?

Morgan: I can draft.

Dan: Maybe this message should come from a 3L.

**Takeaway: Morgan to draft; Ben to post.**

Sol: Let's also look around the website to see if there is anything else that can be helpful.

## **VI. Building Business**

### **A. Follow Ups**

Morgan: First update on student spaces - in response to demand for more furniture in the atrium, the admin indicated that they will look into adding more tables and chairs. No more sofas. Apparently the faculty has a strict furniture budget which we are over. Admin also indicated they will also look into art, cabinets, and bulletin boards to improve the aesthetic in the downstairs student lounge.

Second update on vending machines - there is a tendering process for vending machines on U of T wide campus, and the law school is one of the proposed locations. I am not sure how long it will take. Admin indicated it could be a while.

Catherine can give an update on the tampon dispensers in women's washrooms and the bike rack issues next week. (**Takeaway**)

Sol: The Athletic Association will be storing some of their equipment in the SLS Office. We will include in the SLS office policy a policy on clubs and association using the space. Athletic Association will be an exception.

### **B. New Business**

Nothing raised.

## **VII. Other Topics**

**A. 1Ls**

Sol: Anything notable happening with the 1Ls?

1Ls: Nothing significant to raise.

Meeting adjourned: 1:53 p.m.