

Council Meeting – January 16, 2024 – 6:00pm MST
Microsoft Teams

Present:

Russell Rupok	Chair	Voting Member
Brittany Hollett	Vice-Chair	Voting Member
Kyra Johnston	Council Member	Voting Member
Rayees Kahan	Council Member	Voting Member
Jason Kauenhofen	Council Member	Voting Member
Lindsay McNena	Council Member	Voting Member
Skyler Todd	Council Member	Voting Member
Kelly DeCoste	Council Member	Voting Member
Deborah Exelby	Council Member	Voting Member
Meaghan Sullivan	Executive Director	Non-Voting

Regrets:

Agenda Item

- 1.0 Call to Order:**
R. Rupok called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m.
- 2.0 Acknowledgement of Traditional Indigenous Territories:**
R. Rupok gave the Acknowledgement of Traditional Indigenous Territories.
- 3.0 Conflict of Interest Check:**
R. Rupok inquired if any Council Members had any real or perceived conflict of interest. No conflicts were declared.
- 4.0 Approval of the Agenda:**

Motion:
To approve the agenda as presented.

K. DeCoste /R. Rupok
8-0-0
Motion Carries

The motion was approved by general consent.

- 5.0 Adotion of Previous Minutes:**
5.1 Regular Minutes of the Council from December 19, 2023.

Motion:
To approve the minutes as circulated.

J. Kauenhofen/R. Khan



**8-0-0
Motion Carries**

The motion was approved by general consent.

6.0 Required Approvals:

M. Sullivan explained to the Council that AUGSA does not have a corporate credit card, with expenses being charged to the Executive Director's personal card, requiring additional work each month when submitting her expense claims for approval. The work is not necessarily the concern, but rather reliance on her personal assets has been. In 2023, the conference venue charged the entire conference invoice against her personal credit card, which was not approved by her in advance. The agreement with the venue was AUGSA would pay via cheque or electronic transfer. While the issue was addressed swiftly, M. Sullivan stated that it reinforced the importance for AUGSA to have it's own credit card and not be reliant on her personal assets. If approved by Council, M. Sullivan explained to Council that the credit card statements would still require receipts, monthly reviews and dual approvals of expenditures for transparency and auditing purposes. M. Sullivan suggested the amount be enough to cover our largest annual expenditure, which is the research conference at \$25,000. Our Account Manager at TD Bank explained how the bank prefers secured visas for associations as there is no guarantors for the card. What this would mean is that AUGSA would have to open a savings account and place the amount of funds equivalent to the visa limit (\$25,000 savings - \$25,000 visa). Then the bank will place a hold on those funds as long as AUGSA has the card. AUGSA would receive interest on the savings account (currently 2.5%) for the time it has the account.

The Council agreed on the benefits of having its own card brings, including seperating itself from the Executive Director's personal assets. J. Kauenhofen asked M. Sullivan to inquire with the bank if the money can be put elsewhere as an opportunity to see if there are better ways to set aside these funds. M. Sullivan agreed to see what options are available, if any.

Motion:

To approve setting up a TD Credit Card with a limit of \$25,000, which requires moving \$25,000 in funds from the Associations operating account into a savings account that will be placed on hold as a security measure for the bank.

**B. Hollett/ J. Kauenhofen
8-0-0**

The motion was approved by general consent.

7.0 Items for Discussion:

7.1 Ends

No business was conducted in the current meeting.

7.2 Executive Limitations



M. Sullivan brought a concern forward raised by the University for AUGSA Council, seeking clarity on the motion for the fee increase to AUGSA membership at the April 11th Special General Meeting (SGM). At that SGM, AUGSA Council approved a fee increase to take effect on January 1st, 2024 from \$13/credit to \$14/credit. The Faculty of Business has recently inquired on the timeline in the change of fees, with some confusion and issues happening in that faculty around how to make the change due to the unique way the faculty registers and invoices students for their fees. The AU representative explained that the change-over date creates some additional work for the Faculty of Business to sort out given the unique way they charge students for their courses. The Council discussed that AUGSA provided sufficient notice of the fee change in April 2023, with several follow up check-ins to ensure everything was set for January 1st. D. Exelby stated that the change-over in fees needs to be the same for every faculty and equally fair to all students. J. Kauenhofen explained that making an exception for one faculty would be putting AUGSA in an ethical quandry. The Council agreed to let the Faculty of Business know the change-over in fees remains effective January 1st, 2024 and the new fee is for registrations that take place after that date.

7.3 Governance Process

The Council had set out at the onset of the year with 3 governance objectives: Creating Ends policies, creating a Financial policy, and undergoing formatting revisions to the Council Policy Manual around the February 2024 timeframe, which includes numbering and general gramatical concerns. Drafting changes is beginning now and there should be revisions for approval at the February or March Council meeting.

M. Sullivan confirmed with the Council that the requested training check-in with The Governance Coach, A. Bergen, is set for February 6th at 6PM to discuss the Policy Governance model. The session will be an opportunity to review pre-submitted questions and a general review of feedback provided in The Governance Coach monthly reports to date.

7.4 Board-Executive Director Relationship

M. Sullivan explained that the Executive Director annual report will be submitted to Council in February/March timeframe, which is around the same time the Council is scheduled to conduct an annual performance review of the Executive Director.

8.0 Ownership Linkage:

8.1 Council Member Reports

J. Kauenhofen gave an update that there has been no change at the Alberta Graduate Provincial Advocacy Council (abGPAC) in terms of lack of progress in student advocacy and representation at the provincial level. There have been deliverables set to get the association reincorporated; however, there is no official update from abGPAC on the timeline in terms of how long it will be to get the association operational again. At the very the least, J. Kauenhofen explained that AUGSA should expect a return of contributions and he will work on getting a more detailed update for AUGSA.

R. Rupok explained the the University is considering withdrawing from the Middle State Commission. R Rupok met with the Middle States Commission on Higher Education



(MSCHE) and noted that Athabasca University is an accredited institution and a member of the MSCHE. The Commission's most recent action on the institution's accreditation status on Nov. 16, 2023, was to place Athabasca University on probation. J. Kauenhofen suggested AUGSA do a survey to ask students "Does this matter to you?" in the event we should advocate for AU to remain as a member. L. McNena explained we do have some responsibility to consider it in a broader context, yet if we get too far into designations we run the risk of getting bogged down. We have also done a lot of surveys as of late. K. DeCoste noted the number of students impacted across the undergrad and grad level was approximately one hundred students total. B. Hollett noted that we could ask a one question micro-survey. M. Sullivan confirmed that a survey can be sent out in the next newsletter.

M. Sullivan explained that for the collective bargaining that the Council has been representing on, the Association should have a labour relations (LR) representative, and have academically employed members representing themselves in the bargaining process, not the AUGSA Council, as it is the members who should approve or ratify the employment agreement. This is an item that has fallen into a grey area under the Policy Governance model. At other GSAs in Alberta, the structure is they have the LR expert on staff who would coordinate and advise through this process, not the Executive Director or Council. M. Sullivan suggested AUGSA consider changing how the Association is going about the bargaining process. In 2017, when AUGSA bargained on behalf of this group, it was vetted past the provincial government because there were no academically employed members under the union agreement at that time who could represent. Now, there are ~25 members who can represent themselves and vote on the agreement. R. Rupok stated this could be considered for the next Council.

8.2 Update on CASA Exploration

L. McNena noted she will bring an update to the next meeting regarding gaining observer status at the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations (CASA) as an avenue to represent AUGSA members at the federal government level.

9.0 Monitoring Executive Director Performance:

9.1 Monitoring Report

M. Sullivan shared the Monitoring Report EL 1.10 – Fees. M. Sullivan explained that this report is timely given the change over in AUGSA fees came into effect on January 1st, 2024. The Association is fully compliant with this Executive Limitation Policy. Changes to fees in membership are set at the Council level. Given the collection of fees is done by the institution, and outside our control, M. Sullivan included back up information from the University stating confirmation they are prepared for collecting the change in fees effective January 1st.

Motion:

To approve the Monitoring Report 1.10 - Fees as presented.

J. Kauenhofen/D. Exelby
8-0-0

The motion was approved by general consent.



Regarding Monitoring Report EL 1.12 - Elections, M. Sullivan provided an update on the 2024 elections, scheduled to begin February 16th. The contract was signed for the Chief Returning Officer and the website company who manages the elections has confirm they are ready to host the online voting platform. The official notice went out to all members in accordance with policy. M. Sullivan asked Council to fill out the survey sent to them regarding Council Transition so the staff can work towards improving the onboarding process for the incoming Council.

While we don't yet have a multi-year strategic plan on paper to support the recently approved Ends policies in accordance with EL 1.04 - Planning, M. Sullivan shared that this year will include a focus on the Research Conference with project planning underway, the Food Assistance Program establishing itself this year, as well as implementing an Awards Management System to improve the management of the awards and bursaries portfolio.

J. Kauenhofen inquired on the Associations investments. M. Sullivan explained it is on the organizations radar to organize the investments portfolio, with some work already done looking into Financial Advisors used by other Associations; however, there are a lot of other higher priorities that need to be addressed first. M. Sullivan anticipates that the Investments EL Monitoring Report could be expected summer 2024. M. Sullivan has drafted a Monitoring Reporting Schedule, not yet ready to be shared, that aligns with some of these objectives but reiterated that we are a small team and progression on many of these items will take time. M. Sullivan added that 3 new staff members have been hired in the past week, with varying start dates. This includes the Manager, Governance & Administration, Cheif Returning Officer (CRO) for elections, and the 2024 Conference Coordinator.

10.0 Self-Evaluation & Governance Process

No further discussion.

11.0 Information Requested by the Board

D. Exelby inquired on behalf of graduate students that were seeking an update on the status of awards distributed at AUGSA this past year. M. Sullivan explained that only successful candidates are notified; however, she would connect with D. Exelby tomorrow with the results.

M. Sullivan gave a general overview of the December 2023 financial reports to Council, stating that while we are currently undergoing our annual financial audit with a new auditing firm, despite a drop in revenue due to enrollment trends, we anticipate a slight surplus this year that was primarily due to a lack of travel in the abGPAC advocacy portfolio.

12.0 In-Camera Session

No business was conducted in the current meeting.

13.0 Questions/Adjournment





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Motion:
To adjourn the meeting.

J. Kauenhofen/B. Hollett
8-0-0
Motion Carries

The meeting was adjourned by general consent.



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