**VUSAC Meeting Minutes**

January 6 at 5:30 PM in the Goldring Student Center

MINUTES

**In Attendance**

**VUSAC**

**Judiciary**

PRESIDENTS: Stuart Norton and Rahul Christoffersen

VP STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS: Hannah Brennen

VP EXTERNAL: Stephen Warner

**Assessor Members**

CHAIR: Saambavi Mano

CHIEF RETURNING OFFICER: Taylor Cenac

SECRETARY: Artimes Ghahremani

COMMUNICATIONS: Shailee Koranne

FINANCE:

**Commissioners & Councillors**

SCARLET AND GOLD: Zahavah Kay

SUSTAINABILITY : Jamil Fiorino-Habib

COMMUTER: Co-Chair Karen Indraatmadja/ Commissionner Isaac Khouzam

ARTS AND CULTURE : Olivia Klasios

EQUITY : Co-Chair Zoe Kwan / Commissionner Yasmine Hassan

**COUNCILLORS**

Tyler Biswurm

Alexa Breininger

Milliene Xu

Melinda Hector

Peter Huycke

Hamboluhle Moyo

Sharon Tan

Jayde Jones

**GUESTS**

CLC Emily Gilbert

UTSU Garnet Lollar

**REGRETS**

ACADEMIC AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT : Nina Christianson

VP INTERNAL: Golda Greenspoon

Land Recognition: *Artimes*

Motion: Alexa moves to approve the minutes from last meeting. Hannah seconds. Motion passes.

* Favour: ALL
* Abstained:
* Opposed:

Motion: Isaac moves to approve the agenda as it stands. Sharon seconds. Motion passes.

* Favour: ALL
* Abstained:
* Opposed:

*\*Jamil adds one minute for a sustainability update*

*\*Zahavah adds one minute for a highball update*

*\*Emily adds two minutes for don applications*

*\*Yasmine adds one minute for an equity update*

*\*Garnet adds one minute for the UTSU*

**EX-OFFICIO REPORTS AND UPDATES**

*CLC - Emily*

Emily says that don applications are now out. Residence applications are now out but commuter don application will be available on Monday. Emily has a few posters, for those interested. Applications can be found in the Dean’s Office or on the Victoria College website. There will be two information sessions, where you can learn about the application process. They will be on January 11 at 12:10 in VC115 and on January 17 at 9:10 in Wymilwood Lounge. Applications are due on February 3 to Shiny in person or by email.

The Dean’s Office is also hosting an event by Rent Smart, regarding off campus accommodation. There will be an information session in the Cat’s Eye on January 18. This will be useful in terms of knowing your rights as a tenant.

**UTSU – Garnet**

Stephanie and Garnet’s office hours this semester will be on Monday and Tuesday from 12-2 in the atrium. Last term, few people attended their office hours, which is why they were moved up. Garnet says that there is not much people think they could or want to ask, and this is something to consider.

**ASSESSOR MEMBER REPORTS AND UPDATES**

*CRO – Election Reform Committee*

Taylor says as discussed last meeting, she wants an election reform committee to look at changes to make in terms of elections that would benefit candidates, encourage applications and voter turnout. When last discussed, many were interested. She has a form to be filled out to be contacted for scheduling to meet. They will be going over changes that should be made. Any questions can be directed to Taylor.

*Chair – Constitutional Review Committee Update and Draft Constitution and Council Policies*

Saambavi says in the final agenda there was a link to a drafted version of the new constitution. She asks that you take a look over the next two weeks, and there will be a more detailed discussion next meeting. They will be looking into making this the official constitution moving forward. The main changes are explained in the comments of the document – including what was left out. Mainly, they have removed co-presidents as a system, both because the portfolio didn’t really work, and for efficiency. Saambavi said it came from the removal of the VPSO position on the judiciary, and they think the finance position could benefit from having a vote, as they have a big portfolio and responsibility.

Edit: Saambavi said it came from the fact that the finance position has a big portfolio and a unique responsibility, and they could benefit from having a judiciary vote. The finance will now be elected, as a VP Finance. They have also changed the terminology – they have removed the judiciary, now called the executive. Commissioners are the same, they get the same rights. There is a new section for councillors. What is now known as ‘assessors’ will be called staff. These are the major changes.

Stuart adds that they also looked at fleshing out the commissions. There are 6 commissioners who have different commissions, but the work is spaced out differently. There is no cohesive structure that places work on a single individual. There will be a generic structure for all commissioners to follow. All other divisions across campus do this. It will make work more balanced.

Hannah says co-presidency as an idea came up because the president at the time felt the job was too much to do, even as a part time student. If this were to come up again, what would be done to help that from not happening? Saambavi responds that interaction with the Dean’s Office has been given to VPE. A lot of the issues for the presidents’ portfolio have come from that. There are now fewer committees as well, so this alleviates stress.

Hannah asks if it is worth considering that the councillor structure be constitutionalized, so that council doesn’t have to figure this out every year. Tyler says it would be a good idea to formalize, and asks how long the process is for ratification. Saambavi says it can be done at any meeting.

Garnet asks why finance was changed to an elected position. Saambavi said it came from the removal of the VPSO position on the judiciary, and they think the finance position could benefit from having a vote, as they have a big portfolio and responsibility. Hannah asks what happens if the finance is not someone who wants to run – finance is a role that makes sense to hire because of the skill set necessary. It is a harder position to learn and be good at. Stephen replies that it is a valid concern, but in the same vein, we elect people who can make the same argument for specialized work (eg; S&G for event planning). There isn’t an issue with the election. Saambavi adds that there are VP finances across U of T that function. Stuart adds that based on feedback from previous finance chairs, it is tricky when their only obligation is to the judiciary, v. accountability to VCU. This is a more direct connection. They should report directly back to the students. Saambavi adds that the chair and the secretary are only accountable to the judiciary – but there may be conflict between what campus groups want v. what the judiciary.

Zahavah asks for elaboration on merging the VPSO and S&G positions. Saambavi says the rationale was that S&G already interacts with clubs, and has a good idea of space booking. Plus, this takes away from it being a ‘party commission’, makes it more about community. As a follow up, Zahavah says that it would add more work, and whether there would be a commission. Saambavi says that is in order.

Stephen asks if Saambavi can outline what the process on the changes would be. Saambavi says that it should happen within the next few weeks, if things come up that require it to be rewritten, it must be pushed forward. She would prefer the ratification takes place before election prep. Also, we can ratify as is and then make changes after electoral reform.

Garnet is concerned by the comment that there might be a conflict between what the judiciary wants and what the student body wants. In a similar vein, the thought that a finance chair could be elected with a platform is concerning. There are sections in place that prohibit this, but it breeds concern. Saambavi says that the judiciary should be responding to the student body, but constitutionally we cannot rely on this. Rahul responds that when the finance chair is drafting the budget, there is collaboration with the judiciary and with council members. The steering committee is made up of judiciary and council – so the finance chair can’t allocate money alone. This also means that the chair’s most frequent interaction is with the judiciary. It is not a question of how much the judiciary represents students, but that if elected, they are not just hearing one side.

Taylor says this doesn’t cover the major problem that someone is elected with a platform that we know won’t work, but voters might not – while those with practical and good experience don’t get elected. Zahavah responds that those elected would be better because the Finance Chair will be at town hall, making direct responses in front of everyone. This will be a good idea to create accountability to the entire VCU, being voted in as representation instead of being chosen by small group.

*Jayde moves to extend by 5 minutes. Melinda seconds. Motion passes unanimously.*

Hannah hears tension between accountability to the VCU and the Judiciary. If the finance chair comes in on a platform that doesn’t work, they will come in and the judiciary who comprises budget steering says no. We must spread the money evenly. The FC will go through with this, but then they have broken their accountability to the VCU.

Garnet says the FC doing things like listening to the student body and going to town hall can be made a part of a hired person’s portfolio. After being hired. Rahul says in terms of town hall, they are referring to elections, not like AGM. Garnet was thinking about AGM and Caucus.

Jayde considers the possibility of a combination – a list of candidates that people would be comfortable with, then elected from candidate pool. This strikes a balance between accountability and qualification.

Hambo says thinking about elections, it works in a way, but the people that vote don’t attend town hall. The person could still get voted in, even if they are not responsible or planned out.

*Zahavah moves to extend by 5 minutes. Peter seconds. Motion passes unanimously.*

Stuart says that regardless of whether the FC is hired or voted in – their ‘platform’ would never happen because they are audited by the bursar’s office. Shailee responds that if there are concerns about what the person running is going to promote or run on, we can set boundaries on the election rules. Every candidate has to attend info sessions with the CRO. This is an easier solution. Shailee also says that picking candidates and then voting wouldn’t fly, because then it is not really voting. Hannah responds that what happened this year is not normally what happens. We should not be letting this over colour the way it goes in the future. Worries about accountability to the VCU remain whether the chair is elected or hired. The judiciary and everyone on the hiring committee is still hiring the best candidate. Hannah doesn’t think election is the best idea. Hiring out of favouritism is a different issue. Jayde clarifies that the hiring committee would hire candidates, then VCU could choose.

Stephen says that regarding candidates for election not fulfilling their promises, this is not a concern. As it stands, people run who make impossible promises. The reality is these promises are not kept. He also adds that with VUSAC being the one to pick finance, it is arrogant to suggest that VUSAC are the only people who can decide who is fit for the position. The voters pick many of the people in this room. Election gives them a vote, and the power to do what they are doing. Those same concerns can be raised against any elected member.

Isaac says that we do get people running saying things they can’t and don’t do, is it encouraging accountability? It seems to be in the name of accountability but doesn’t change anything meaningful. The finance position is more about qualifications. A commissioner says what they want to do, not what they have the technical ability to do.

Emily says the concern is skill set, and the finance chair must have the skills to hit the ground running right away. If they are creating a platform and being elected, some might be good at that but not at other things.

Stuart responds to Hannah that the drafting is not just in response to the resignation, VUSAC used to have a finance commissioner, then changed. He was told that this was an accountability measure- if elected, they don’t have impartial interests of students in mind. There has since been a hired position, but it would make sense to go back. Also, every other division across St George have elected members. It is not unprecedented, just something to consider. Hannah responds that is not what she meant, she just wanted to make people aware of what is best for council. She is not saying this is a reaction, but that we are considering VUSAC in general.

Hambo responds to Stephen, that election is not the issue, but the transition from hiring to election is different. Someone being hired depends on qualification.

Rahul responds that having a hiring committee that is aware of all the background and technical skills the applicants have is more effective, but as someone who sat on hiring committees, there is a lot that happens – they have their own set of problems, politics, nepotism, and their vision for council. Yes, in an elected position, they may be elected by people less informed of their qualifications, but there is something to be said for the idea that we “know better” and if none of us were on VUSAC, all we know is what we see on media. He has much more faith in a decision made by 500 people rather than 5.

Melinda wonders what would happen if no one runs. Saambavi responds that when not elected, people run again in the fall. In that time the president would take over that role. But that would be up to next year’s council. This occurred with commuter and equity this year.

Emily asks if there would be a possibility to require qualifications to run – eg; area of study or amount of time for role. Saambavi says we don’t have that in hiring, so she is wary of doing this now.

Milliene says some voters might not be as educated about the specifics. The hiring committee looks at a lot of different factors, whereas a lot of people listen to a speech and are unaware of what isn’t being said. She also asks about hiring committees. Rahul responds that 7 people look through resumes, and interview with questions. They do this for every applicant and then deliberate until consensus. There are no present qualifications – it is a combo of interview, resume, and experience. The hiring committee may see things others don’t, but it is subjective and personally driven. Also, a small group can have biases and motive. Saambavi says that hiring committees have agendas, so their decisions aren't exactly as a result of any sort of objectivity on the matter.

Yasmine says those who are educated often come to town hall and voice their concerns.

**COMMISSION REPORTS AND UPDATES**

*Academic and Professional – Alumni Dinner*

In Nina’s absence, Saambavi reminds everyone that the alumni dinner will be on January 18. Promotions will start next week, and council is asked to help spread the word.

*Scarlet and Gold – Highball*

Zahavah says that as of this afternoon, Highball has been booked for March 10. She will reveal the venue next meeting. The capacity is much bigger than ever before.

*Sustainability – Climate Justice Week*

Jamil says that at the end of the month, there will be climate justice week. There will be many events and he asks council to encourage people to come.

*Equity – Event Updates*

Yasmine says there will be an Art Battle on January 19th, advertising will be out next week.

Also, she and Shailee have been talking about an event for Aleppo. The event is still pending, but it will be on February 9th from 2-8, some kind of campaign and food event during the day, then a doc screening in the evening. They are hoping this will be led by a representative from the Middle Eastern Students Union. It will be held in the Cat’s Eye.

**JUDICIARY REPORTS AND UPDATES**

*Presidents – Rahul and Stuart*

**Budget and Finance Updates**

Stuart says last year in the referendum, they increased the VUSAC incidental fee by $2, and adjusted the fee to the consumer price index. They are now playing catch-up, on par with what they would have been in 2012. Just so everyone knows, there will be a vote for student fees next year, choosing the increase – max of 4%. This is tied to the cost of living.

On the topic of finance, due to resignation of the previous chair, given that it is January and the term goes to April, they are not looking at hiring a new chair, as that would be wasting time and finance is a large job. The judiciary has decided constitutionally to pass responsibilities of cheque reqs, bursar meeting, audits, etc. to councillor Peter. Last year, he was the finance councillor, and they have transitional documents, and people to help. Peter will also still be a councillor, will have a vote. They must respond and move forward, this is in their best interest to not sit on lump of student fees. Peter says he will try his best and make everyone proud. Everyone claps.

**Initiative Updates**

Stuart says over the break was constitutional review. There have been productive changes that we will see, in a format that is concrete and not reactionary. They are also splitting the constitution. There will now be a policies document on how to do your job, that is not binding. The constitution will be by-laws, explicit statements.

As for the alcohol policy, Bill and Kelley were unable to meet with him. All information from last semester still applies. They are hoping to meet this month.

They have also talked about TRC and Indigeneity at Vic, and are hoping to meet with President Robins again. If you have any questions or concerns you want them to bring forward, pass them on to Stuart or Rahul.

The SGRT’s mental health subcommittee will be meeting again, and starting up their survey.

**2 on 1 Meetings**

Rahul says they will be holding 2 on 1 meetings with everyone on council, like at the beginning of the year. They will be going over goals for the semester. A doodle poll will go out shortly.

**Executive Meeting**

Rahul says they will be sending out another doodle poll for the executive meeting – which will consist of judiciary and commissioners. There will be an opportunity to talk about the direction council will take, and to see what kind of support commissioners need, feedback on their portfolios.

Motion: Peter moves to adjourn the meeting. Milliene seconds. Motion passes.

Meeting is adjourned.

* Favour: All
* Abstained:
* Opposed:
	+ Absent: Hannah