

UWSA Board Meeting – OPEN
August 5, 2020 – 5:30 p.m.
Virtual Meeting due to COVID -19 Pandemic

Board in Attendance:

Acting Chair: Taylor Daigneault

Secretary of the Board: Hasini Abeysekera

Accessibility Director: Sarah Anderson

Business and Economics Director: Harsimrat S. Malhotra

Graduate Students' Co-Director: Alexandra K.Nychuk

International Students' Co-Director: Elsa Owusu

Menno Simons College Director: Alizeh Faran

Urban Inner-City Campus Director: Dagen Perrot

Board Absent:

Arts Director: Wesley Fallis

Community Liaison: Celina Clements

Graduate Students' Co-Director: Nadia M. Chaharsoughi

International Students' Co-Director: Onyinye Francisca Idigbe

2SLGBTQ* Director: Jacob K. Antman

Racialized Students' Director: Ella Taylor

Board on Administrative Leave:

Vice -President Student Affairs: Melanie William

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Staff in Attendance:

Karolya Vargscarr: Chief Operating Officer

Jennifer Black: General Manager

Guests in Attendance:

Brenden Gali

Bedel Shafe'a

1. Call to Order

The regular bi-weekly meeting of the University of Winnipeg Students' Association Board of Directors (UWSA BOD) was held on Wednesday August 5, 2020 at 5:30pm via a virtual meeting due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Taylor Daigneault will be taking over duties as Chair of the Board for this meeting as currently the Chair position remains vacant. The Chair called the meeting to order at 5:59 p.m. Following the confirmation of quorum, and a round of introductions.

2. Approval of the Order of Business

Ali N. moves to add "President and VPEA resignation" to the agenda under 3.a.

Motion carries

Dagen P. moves to approve the agenda as amended



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Motion carries

3. Special Business

a. CFS – MB Campaigns

Brenden G. provided a presentation on the Canadian Federation of Students - Manitoba, the presentation began before the meeting was called into order as the house was awaiting for quorum. The presentation began with an introduction about himself and the organization. The bulk of the presentation included highlights of this academic year's campaigns.

b. President and VPEA resignation

J. Black stated that at 5:28 p.m. she received resignation letters from Jibril H. & Breanna B. J. Black read the letters aloud for the record. Hereafter they are transcribed in full.

Submitted from Jibiril Hussein to K. Vargscarr and J. Black

August 5, 2020 at 5:28 p.m.

Members of the Board, Staff and Students,

I am writing this letter today to speak about my experience as an Executive Director at the University of Winnipeg Students' Association (UWSA) since starting at the beginning of May. These are solely my personal experiences and the Board and staff should take



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this moment to reflect on the past couple of months as well. I would like to start by thanking everyone who voted for and supported our vision for the future. Since being elected in March with the highest voter turnout in 17 years, it has been an honour to have been able to work alongside each and every one of you. The change that was made in less than 5 weeks and the people that we have met through these efforts has taught me more than I could have ever realized.

During our time at the UWSA, we have sat through long 12 hour days at City Hall to save the U-Pass, worked with administration on the implementation of a new Flex parking pass for students, removed the fees graduate students pay to get their transcripts when they apply to grad school at the University of Winnipeg, and began examining the role of police and contract security within our UWSA spaces. As well, we began exploring the potential implementation of an anti-racism subcommittee, hiring an Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Officer, and studying ways to renovate the Hive to ensure that we can utilize the space to its full potential.

The UWSA prides itself on standing up for **all** BIPOC students, staff and community members. However, I believe that this is not the case and this institution sadly perpetuates the same pervasive racism and prejudice they claim to actively be against. The workplace environment is the most toxic environment that I have ever experienced, and it fails to encourage healthy dialogue among students with a variety of viewpoints.

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Recently, this has manifested in the questioning of my racial identity while answering questions at a June Board meeting and by the lack of condemnation by the Board on the violent threats being made against UWSA Executive Directors online. The acting Chair failed to restrict claims in regard to the questioning of my racial identity and no members of the Board stood up to say the comments were inappropriate. I will not stand by an organization and be in an environment that does not make me feel safe.

These past couple months have been incredibly traumatizing and the lack of care and empathy by staff and some members of the Board has been quite concerning. I would like to thank those Board members who have reached out and voiced their concerns in meetings. As someone that is diagnosed with epilepsy that can potentially be triggered by high levels of anxiety and stress, I am making the decision to resign from my position as President of this organization effectively immediately. This decision was made out of an abundance of caution for my mental and physical health, to recover from the trauma and out of concern for the safety of my family and friends due to direct violent threats by many students on and off campus.

I challenge the UWSA to right its wrongs and ensure that it is truly a space that is safe for all students, regardless of how they identify or their political affiliations. I hope that the UWSA can work with each individual who has felt they have been victimized or hurt by the UWSA. I would also like to encourage the Board of Directors to reassess the role



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of the General Manager being in charge of Board affairs, the continual conflict of the Chief Operating Officer and to make the change that is needed.

Respectfully, it is not within the purview of the UWSA Board to question the race of a member of the BIPOC community and for a member to claim that *“you are using your blackness as a shield”*. It is also not within the purview of the UWSA Board to invalidate my identity and my lived experiences with racism and bigotry. As I mentioned previously, this is an opportunity for all of us to do better and I am in no way suggesting that I am perfect either. This is also an opportunity for myself to do better. I would like to add that this is not an attempt to not be held accountable on policies and decisions made, as I have participated fully in all measures to be held accountable to this point.

To those who are part of the BIPOC community or larger social justice movements/ organizations that have participated in these online threats and harassment, please consider your role in perpetuating the same ideals you fight against and reflect on the harm that can also be done in the process. We all have a role to play and we are on the same team fighting the same fight.

In closing, I leave the Board with this quote, *“Justice is about individualization and not mass application”*. I know that you will continue to effect change that you all personally have been fighting for, and I wish you the best in your personal endeavours. I will

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continue to learn, engage in respectful dialogue and do better in terms of my actions. I will also continue fighting for what I believe is right, for the change I want to see in our communities and for students, but I will do so in an environment that truly cares for my well-being, keeps me safe, puts people before organizational reputation and does not question my racial identity.

All the best,

Jibril Hussein

Submitted from Breanna Belisle to K. Vargscarr and J. Black

August 5, 2020 at 5:28 p.m.

2020/08/05

Members of the Board, Students, and Staff,

I would like to start by thanking each and every person who voted for, and supported me, in my position with the University of Winnipeg Students' Association (UWSA). This experience was one of great personal growth. During my time with the UWSA we have advocated for the U-Pass, ensured graduate students had a student association they could turn to, and began to consider the role of police and contract security within UWSA space. The people I have met through these endeavours taught me more than they could've realized, and for that, I thank you.



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The UWSA aims to be an institution which stands alongside *all* students, though this cannot be further from the day to day reality. The workplace itself is toxic, failing to encourage dialogue among any number of viewpoints. Most recently, this has manifested in barring the UWSA Executives, as students, from meetings when items such as the budget were being discussed.

I also stand alongside my colleague, Jibril Hussein, who has voiced his disappointment concerning the continued perpetuation of pervasive racism and prejudice within the UWSA. I cannot sit idly by as my colleague is afraid to go to work. This should never be the case. Personally, I can speak to the UWSA being a workplace which is inherently traumatic. For this reason, to focus on my mental health, and begin to recover, at this time, I will be announcing my resignation effective immediately.

I challenge the UWSA to rectify its wrongs, and ensure all at the UWSA are treated equally, regardless of how they identify or their political affiliations. Students at UWinnipeg deserve better than a students' association which is not willing to represent *all* students.

In this instance, I see the quest of justice to be a process of individualization, and not one of mass application. I sincerely hope the UWSA can work with each individual who feels they have been victimized by the UWSA. Additionally, I would encourage the Board

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of Directors to make substantive change- in my experience this would mean to both rethink the positionality and continual conflict of the Chief Operating Officer, as well as do more than simply apologize. Be better and make your workplace one where all can go to work and feel both safe, respected and understood.

As I close, I would like to note the prior views are solely my own and note my experiences. This is not an attempt to avoid being held accountable, as I have participated fully in all measures to be held accountable to this point. I will continue to learn, grow, and be a better version of myself.

I wish everyone I have encountered the best, as they continue on their path in life, or with their academic studies.

Take care,

Breanna Belisle

The Chair steered the meeting into a discussion and allowed members to add comments.

Ali N. also stated for the record that the above two individuals who resigned had requested to join today's meeting. We communicated to them that the



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board would discuss their participation as the first item of business and then communicate the decision to them immediately but then we received these letters.

Dagen P. moves to accept the resignation of Jibril Hussein and Breanna

Belisle.

Motion carries

4. Consent Agenda

a) Reports

i. Director's Reports

Dagen P. – has been reaching out to students about registration and secured some tech support from the University for the laptops project.

Sarah A. – has been connecting with students about Accessibility Services, accommodations, and inclusions. Is connecting with the students with disabilities mailing list to try to keep communications open.

Alizeh F. – connecting with faculty, staff, and MSCSA trying to figure out what the year will look like, figuring out student needs.

Ali N. – continuing work with graduate students, participating in a panel on the Indigenous Summer Student Program and attended the Catalyst meeting.

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Elsa O. – working on the ISA social media with Francisca, keeping in touch with IRSS and attending meetings with international students over-seas and in country.

Ali N. moves to approve the reports

Motion Carries

b) Minutes

- i. Mental Health Resource Committee 200724 OPEN
- ii. BOD 200724 OPEN

Sarah A. moves to approve the minutes omnibus

Motion Carries

5. Communications

a. Roll Call Schedule Update – For Information

J. Black pointed to the schedule included for information in the board package. More updates to come.

CLOSED SESSION

7. Consent Agenda

Elsa O. moves to enter closed session with an invitation to attending staff.

Motion Carries



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a. Minutes

i. BOD 200724 CLOSED

8. New Business

- a. Catalyst Consulting Proposals
- b. Executive Participation in Meetings
- c. Further Action regarding the 2020-2021 Executive Slate

Meeting lost quorum at 7:44 p.m.

9. Other Business

10. Adjournment