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Student Caucus of Osgoode Hall Law School

# Minutes

25 July 2020 (12:00pm – 2:00pm)

## Zoom (Online) – SPECIAL MEETING

**Present:** Akshay Aurora (Chair), Chloé Duggal, Corey Fletcher, Rachael Glassman, Gaby Pellerin, Karin Kazakevich, Priyanka Sharma, Brittany Town, Nushrah Amod, Viktor Hohlov, Arielle Masur, Faiza Tariq, Tomislav Milos

*Note: The Caucus Executive suspended the usual rules of quorum and allowed for the meeting to take place online as well as in-person due to the COVID-19 pandemic. All members joining online or via phone were granted voting rights. This was the last meeting of the 2019 – 2020 Caucus. The 2020 – 2021 Caucus Executive has continued this suspension of the normal rules for the same reason.*

## **CALL TO ORDER (12:04 pm) (Akshay)**

Akshay: Dean Condon announced a working group consisting of 4 profs with Karin and student reps. Babcock, who deals with the finances and those related aspects will also be on

this working group. As background and for the sake of transparency, Karin and I are on this working group because we are the heads of student governments. The WG is an adjacent to the Priorities and Finances Committee and there is a lot of fiscal work that goes on in this capacity. This is directly associated with the mandate of the WG. As leaders of student government Karin and I sit ex officio on this group (Pri-Fi). Pri-Fi has access to a lot of privileged content that only Karin and I are privy to, but we still want to be transparent. Sorry for the lead up, I am just trying to be transparent.

When the student rep on the WG came up, we were basically told that there were to be two reps and it could be us or 2 other people. Although Karin and I are not representative of every interest or voice at Osgoode, as leaders of student government we are elected representative, but if we alienate these two spots, who would it actually go to. We can't do a BLSA member or a person of the disability collective because it alienates the interest of other persons at Oz. But at the same time, Karin and I made it abundantly clear to the deans that we do not represent all persons at Osgoode. This subcommittee comes from a background so that we can walk into a meeting with the perspectives of Osgoode that I hear from. This initiative is so that I hear from all who needs to be heard.

I understand that there is an imbalance – two students and 4 faculty members, but prof Hutchinson was not in favour of having more members from the working group but would love to hear from other members. I do want to speak to him about having a equality of membership of 4 students and 4 faculty – but this still won't represent the Osgoode community. This subcommittee allows me to see everyone's perspective in a way that challenges perspectives and brings up novel points. Even if we get more membership on the WG it will never be every equity seeking group against the faculty members. This is the background behind this subcommittee working group – it is a call out to everyone who would like to be heard so that they can voice concerns and recommendations and so that I can present these to the larger working group.

I also want to re-address the imbalance. There are two aspects. I currently sit on another WG that is 3 faculty to one student member and never once have found that my opinion is discounted. Actually, the opposite – they work harder to ensure that my voice is lifted up. This WG is only going to come up with recommendations with where the tuition cuts will impact and what cuts should be given to the budget. It is a list of recommendations and not a legislative development. Karin can attest to this. We also have professor Drake who is absolutely on our side and is more than supportive about having tuition reduction and she is extremely supportive

of the advocacy efforts of SC. I am not concerned with the 4/2 division of the working group. This is the background of the working group.

Pri raised these concerns and that everyone needs to be heard and that these are valid points. This is not the only solution and I want to hear from you. The working group is headed by Nushrah and she has the potential to bring in those diverse perspectives as we seek out those equity opinion

Brittany: Thank you for keeping us in the loop. In response to Pri's comments, I understand her perspectives. I don't think having a division of having faculty members is a bad thing or is an adversarial stance we should take initially. Assuming there would be conflict is going in with a negative perspective, and to go in assuming this would put us at a poor perspective that is not great. As a member of BLSA and OISA co-chair, my one concern is that operationalizing the subcommittee in the short term will be tricky. The presidents of equity seeking group are involved in so many things that It may be hard to meet as a subcommittee. Having a town hall and an open survey that anyone can fill out is a good way to solicit this input for students to generally provide perspective and we can codify these responses.

Akshay: *Agrees.* My vision behind this is having everyone at this table to have these conversations. I only wanted to do this in case there is a conflicts among equity seeking groups and we can resolve this at a meeting with everyone there. I am scared to have a town hall because it would be over zoom and that could be really problematic. But I do want the subcommittee to have possibly send out a form to solicit feedback and then we can codify responses. But if everyone could nominate one person from the equity seeking group, they could.

Nushrah: Britts idea of sending out the survey is a good idea as a way to consolidate the opinion and to give the info to Karin and Akshay so they know what the student voice is. We can pull out the prominent themes. I do like starting off with a google survey that everyone can contribute to people. I don't think that the persons from the equity seeking group need to have an executive position. It is a good way to get students involved

Akshay: Brittany what are your thoughts about non-exec members

Brittany: Ultimately by the sheer size of OISA, it will fall to me. Everyone on OISA is an ex) member.

Akshay: Perhaps we shall take all the written feedback and then send it out to get feedback once we do a google form survey.

Faiza: I was going to recommend the same thing as Nushrah. If the equity seeking group could put out a call to the broader Osgoode population and then come on as the representative for the equity group, but since not only exec members could do this, they could be a representative group. My problem with surveys is that I could miss the surveys because of the online nature. I have missed a few from the previous SC group and only got the tail end of it.

Akshay: I will ensure that the survey will come from my email and I will make sure that they have appropriate channels to address all concerns. Communications is key and we have had surveys in the past that have been missed. I will make sure this is seen.

Chloe: A concern with the logistics are the self-nominations by different equity seeking groups. Fielding different applications might be problematic for the equity seeking groups to manage especially with this different application process and all applications that they have. Perhaps that we should help with

I agree with having more student members, but I don't think we should put all of our eggs on this argument. It would mean that we initially come off adversarial and it would be truly remiss to take away the chance to have all of the equity seeking groups in every capacity represented. While we can advocate for more student reps, it should be done in tandem with making sure that they are represented.

Akshay: this is similar to the discussions I have had with Karin. But we are not going in adversarial. Even if we get 2 more, it would be a blood bath to select who is not represented on this WG already and should take on those 2 spots.

Faiza: There are people on the WG that are quite in the student's favour but this is about perception. People will think that there is a power imbalance just looking from the outside in. As for the 2 seats remaining for students, it doesn't have to be equity seeking groups, maybe even more L&L or SC members.

Akshay: This discussion doesn't preclude us from pushing for more students. The point is these 2 additional students will not be representative, but the subcommittee allows us to be more well represented.

Faiza: I think we should push for both. And the perception I believe is important.

Akshay: SC and L&L have been accused by some individuals of co-opting movements in a way that I don't agree with. Some individuals have suggested that we take on initiatives and concerns and push them, but it is our position as elected representatives to take on concerns of the student body and to champion them. There will be opposition to having more members of student government even though I believe we do represent students. We don't want to feed into the mentality that some individuals pose, of us coopting a movement.

Corey & Chloe: *Affirm Akshay's point*

Karin: I think the discussion of getting more committee members is hard to commit to, until we can see the vibe of the WG. Is it going to be combative and do we need to advocate for more people especially when we are only creating recommendations to the B of G? We may not even need more student members. I understand the student voice piece but its hard to push them on this. I hope that you guys have trust in Akshay and myself that we will be transparent and advocate when this is not the case or if we are being dismissed.

Also I see that there are 18 equity seeking groups. Is the idea to have all 18 or what is the logistics of this operation.

Rachael: I just ran a WG for SC. We had a survey first and we got over 60 responses and we were able to consolidate the points into a few areas that students had concerns. From the working group we had basically 0 extra feedback. I am glad we did it because the students had a voice, but I would rather put my trust in Akshay and Karin but if we want to have survey for student voice we can do this instead of a subcommittee. A working group doesn't seem like meaningful consultation and a survey is all we need. A WG is just extra time that people are putting in that doesn't have that much added benefit.

Akshay: I take your point, but perhaps we can do the survey and see the things that come out of it and if the chairs of the subcommittee feel they have sufficient themes, then they can make the call on whether they should call a meeting of the subcommittee. The WG is basically an idea to have a more formalized process to get the voices that need to be heard.

Tomi: I would like to re-iterate that you and Karin will be good mouth pieces of the SC. I do not believe that you should be called-out for coopting but are good representors of the student

body. I also echo the cynicisms that Rachael brought up but the survey will be really vital in engaging the and gathering a consensus.

Chloe: With respect to the logistical aspects, it was our idea to send out a general survey and then reach out to all members of the equity seeking group. I take Rachael's point but we must try to elevate all student perspectives. So ya 18 people from the working group. Hopefully we get a representative from every club, but this does not need to an executive member.

Akshay: I do not feel comfortable telling another equity group how to template who or how to nominate their representative on our subcommittee. I do understand that we are trying to make things easier but perhaps, but this would like stepping on their toes.

Maybe Nushrah could send out a survey asking about what your concerns are about tuition – even things like whether faculty should take a haircut (they have not done this in years). I really want to know what people are thinking. I will leave this to Nushrah – but once this is conducted, we can make a decision to see from this feedback what more info we need. Do we need to have sit down feedback, written feedback or what? I will leave this second stage to you. I will leave this in your prerogative, but I think the first stage is getting a lot of feedback. I think we can proceed with getting feedback but we should infrastructure

Nushrah: I need to be flexible in my second step. If the survey is not complete for all intersections. I will then reach out or not reach. This is time sensitive and we need to get some information.

Karin: LSSO has their own national survey. It is quite thorough, and we should pivot off this. Get the info first, see what we need and then go from there. I also like the town hall idea at least one town hall to even share answers from the surveys.

Nushrah: I can even send the answers from the survey and ask the equity seeking groups if there are anything that we are missing. This way students may not have to commit to the WG if there is no need. The info can then be sent out to the student body.

Akshay: I am ok with being flexible. I would not put myself on this WG subcommittee because I am on the main working group, but I do want you all to be transparent so that we can maybe put in our perspective. The reason being is that the general student body doesn't know how tuition works – so bring the feedback to caucus so we can put in the knowledge of what admin

can and can do. This way we can address some preliminary concerns using the info that the general student body may not have.

Corey: As Pri is not here, I did promise to ensure that her concerns and discussion points would be fully brought up on record. I understand that we addressed them all, but for transparency sake, I will also read her email.

*Corey reading comments made in advance of the meeting on behalf of Pri:* It was my understanding from informal discussions at SC and Faculty Council that students with disabilities, with childcare and elderly care responsibilities, and low-income students would be given a chance to apply and/or be part of the Osgoode working group. Most importantly, I think that students should be able to join the Osgoode working group chaired by Prof Hutchinson – not just the SC working group. I think having genuine student voice and representation beyond Karin and Akshay is crucial, since ultimately they will be able to have more power than the SC working group. So I am **voting against the SC motion** on the principle that SC should first advocate to have a better, and more transparent process by which students can join the actual working group – having only 2 students on it and be outnumbered by 5 professors/admin is very inadequate, especially in a discussion that affects students the most. Having been on multiple working groups/committees with professors and admin at Osgoode and UofT, I know from experience that each extra student allowed a seat at the table can really make a difference about decisions made. I would **recommend holding off on the SC motion** to advocate for that first, and once that is truly exhausted as an option, to reopen the possibility of an SC working group which again, I don't believe will wield useful power. Given the line of power regarding tuition, I believe the Osgoode working group itself is to assist Osgoode administration in its advocacy with the York Board of Governors. Having an SC working group to advocate/assist the Osgoode working group to advocate/assist the Osgoode administration to advocate to the BOG feels futile. If there are Terms of Reference created for this group, or some kind of guiding principle, please let us know

Karin and Akshay I appreciate it must be hard to have these conversations and advocate with Dean Condon but I think we need to seriously advocate and not let them control a discussion that Osgoode administration itself does not structurally have interest in pursuing. Please let us know how your discussions went and **how and when** was made about the composition of the Osgoode working group. Additionally, if you could ask Courtney or Dean Condon for the results of the vote (who voted how) and minutes at Faculty Council, I would appreciate it. I also k there are many other professors in support of this working group at Faculty Council and

wonder if they had been approached to join as well. It was a big deal that we were able to bring that motion to Faculty Council to get everyone to think about this issue in the first place – something done by last year's SC cohort.

As for a potential of this SC motion in the future, I think asking and assuming each equity group will be able to join this means asking for their labour when I am sure many are already busy with their own group's work. Even if we are able to get each equity group, that many students who may not be part of these groups and have specific concerns and competencies may be very valuable to the group will be left out of these conversations (i.e disability, childcare/eldercare, low-income, and Black, Indigenous, and those at intersections), so I think the group should be opened beyond what is currently proposed.

As for the SC meeting being public – is that advertised to Osgoode students yet with a zoom link? With already such short notice, I am afraid it will be hard for people to attend and I am sure that this issue and motion is of interest to Osgoode students – another reason I don't think we should be moving on this hastily without having genuine and proper consultations not just with SC members but the student body. If it has already been advertised, then please let me know – I may have just missed it! I would advocate if any students are able to attend (which I doubt they will given short notice that I myself cannot attend as an SC member).

Akshay: I think we addressed all of Pri's point. We are not walking in thinking that it will be adversarial, and I think sending out the survey address the representation point.

Karin: Do we need to re-word the working group?

Akshay: I don't think it harms us that there is a subcommittee in the case that we need it

Brittany: I want to re-iterate that the phased approach to subcommittee is a great way to do things. As per Pri's point we are advocate in tandem. Full steam ahead, advocate for both.

Rachael: this is putting a high burden on equity seeking group for people who have childcare and other burdens. It seems like a huge burden to place on people

Akshay: I take your point but I think the two step process address this and we can amend the motion to fit.



*Corey amended motion based on input to represent the attached amended motion and re-read motion.*

Corey: All in favour of passing the motion with the amended changes, as it currently stands?

In Favour: Akshay Aurora (Chair), Chloé Duggal, Corey Fletcher, Rachael Glassman, Gaby Pellerin, Karin Kazakevich, Brittany Town, Nushrah Amod, Viktor Hohlov, Arielle Masur, Faiza Tariq, Tomislav Milos

**Opposed:**

Priyanka Sharma

*The motion passes.*

**Motion: Motion to conclude the July 25<sup>th</sup> Student Caucus Meeting (Akshay/Corey) *CARRIED***



Osgoode Hall Law School of York University

Special Meeting of Student Caucus 25 July 2020

Notice of Motion

**Moved** by Akshay Aurora and seconded by Corey Fletcher, **that** Student Caucus:

Create a subcommittee ("**Committee**") to discuss tuition reduction under the auspices of Student Caucus. This Committee will act as an advisory group for the Tuition Reduction Working Group ("**Working Group**"), announced by Dean Condon on July 24, 2020. The membership of this Committee be comprised of one member of every interested equity seeking group at Osgoode and will be co-chaired by the Vice-Chair of Student Caucus and the Equity Officer. The mandate of this Committee shall be to canvass a diversity of equity seeking perspectives and the broader Osgoode community on the matter of tuition reduction. The Committee will then report these perspectives to the Working Group.

FINALIZED AMENDED MOTION READS:

Create a subcommittee ("**Committee**") to discuss tuition reduction under the auspices of Student Caucus. This Committee will act as an advisory group for the Tuition Reduction Working Group ("**Working Group**"), announced by Dean Condon on July 24, 2020. One member of every interested equity seeking group at Osgoode will be invited to join this committee, which will be co-chaired by the Vice-Chair of Student Caucus and the Equity Officer. The mandate of this Committee shall be to canvass a diversity of equity seeking perspectives and the broader Osgoode community on the matter of tuition reduction. When appropriate, the committee may meet, consolidate and discuss recommendations of the working group.