

Meeting Minutes 9-8-15

All voting officers present except Soheil who had last minute proctoring – provided report of his activities for Jason to read during minutes

Any changes to agenda?

Community member (CM) -- Request for change – period of public comment after each agenda item

Charles Nies – not the way that academic governance works (not even allowed during Academic Senate meetings), GSA should do what it thinks makes the most sense.

CM -- Considering that this body has had problems and considering marginalization I think it would be wise to veer more on the side of democracy

Jason Davis – all council meetings have always been open, public always able to comment

Dean Zatz – One of the things that must be balanced is the desire to have commentary and getting through critical points of the agenda – have to balance amount of time

Community Member 2 (CM2) – Perhaps a rule of two or three minutes for public comment

Paul Carroll – motion to allow public comment at any thing but for only two or three minutes

Lauren Edwards – Should be able to get through everything we want to talk about

CM – I completely disagree

Lauren – The person should be able to finish what they are saying and then hear opinions

Jason – Interesting point is that Robert's Rules can silence these kinds of conversations, Paul made a motion and conversation should technically not continue

Paul – I withdraw the motion

CM2 – Point of clarification: Limit of how much of your meeting are you devoting to public comment? What if you have too much public comment?

Jason – Intent of agenda was to proceed through old business very quickly because all of those items had already been voted on, et cetera. Actions were taken because we needed to get started with the year. Given that these were unanimous, they shouldn't take that long to get through.

CM2 – more asking if GSA will set a general time limit for public comment allowed in general so students know what to expect.

Paul – What would you like

CM – 15 minutes

CM2 – No more than fifteen minutes

Paul – When would you like it?

CM2 -- Throughout

Jason – I interpreted your question as asking for a dedicated fifteen minute time slot.

CM2 – Right, it's necessary and that's why we asked to restrict it to 2-3 minutes per agenda item.

Jason – Any further discussion of the motion currently on floor (2-3 minutes of public comment for each agenda item, not 2-3 minutes per person)?

Paul – What would you like us to do so I can make a motion to do it?

CM – My concern with the 2-3 minutes is that we should do something more like five minutes with each person getting one minute or less, being succinct, that ensures that one person's voice doesn't dominate.

Paul – I move to amend my initial motion to Jasmine's rules, 5 minutes per agenda item, one minute or less per person.

Jason – The current motion on the table is no more than five minutes per agenda item.

Paul – motion

Katie – second

Motion passes as amended unanimously.

Jason – next order of business: GSA has come together over the summer. We had a retreat and part of that retreat was deciding on the executive agenda.

Charles – we should approve agenda

Danielle – motion to approve

Lauren – second

Unanimous to accept the agenda as is

Jason – Over the summer, we needed a way to act in good faith over the school year, but it's also very important that our actions are reviewed by the general student body, although these are not binding decisions until they are raised.

Paul – Motion to approve ex officio officer

Katie – second

Jason – Eddie leave the room. Any comments?

Erik – what is it for?

Jason – historical background on the GSA and its actions during previous years. Eddie served not only on last year's GSA but the year prior to that as well. He has lots of corporate knowledge.

CM – Is corporate knowledge most important thing?

Paul – He was somebody we could get?

CM – I also volunteered and I have experience as well

Jason – Eddie was the only one who reached out to me

CM – if GSA wants to regain its legitimacy among all students, there needs to be more involvement and recognition of people who aren't STEM and maybe aren't part of some problematic behaviors that went on in the past.

Jason – Current motion is to confirm Eddie as ex officio, but remains open for discussion.

Danielle – Public comment on old business?

Jason – Any item on the agenda

CM – It's pointless

Erik – Can we elect anybody as an ex officio member?

Jason – We can appoint an ex officio member, non voting, from the previous council

CM2 – Can you appoint two members with 0.50 each (essentially two people as one ex officio)?

Jason – Typically an officer corresponds to a single individual.

Charles – It doesn't specify one person, it uses the singular articles throughout the whole thing (an officer, a member, etc.).

CM2 – For the sake of increasing diversity, which has been a problem, would you consider having two 0.50 ex officio members?

Jason – Well, we currently have an international liaison officer who's not approved – she was voted on, but the bylaws don't accommodate it, which is why she is serving in a non-voting capacity. There's no reason why we couldn't have as many advisors as we wanted. Maryam is serving as an advisor on the behalf of the international community. I'm not opposed to allowing more advisors, but we can't call them ex officios and we're already in a bylaw gray zone. Current motion on the floor is to certify Eddie as ex officio.

Danielle – Could we add an advisor?

Jason – For sure, but that would have to be in a separate motion.

Four in favor. That is a majority, which is sufficient. Someone retrieve Eddie. Eddie, your appointment has been recertified.

Rest of the old business, we decided to form a constitutional bylaw committee. It was decided to form a committee of up to three non-GSA members and up to two GSA members. Motion to certify creation of this committee. Danielle motion. Lauren second. Discussion?

Charles – I know it's hard to really want to be involved, but I was wondering if Brian O'Bruba would serve as an advisor on this committee.

CM – I feel that, while staff is well versed and very knowledgeable, it would behoove GSA to also involve several faculty members. I just spoke to one of my mentors and he mentioned that we need to create a safe and welcoming climate for students in all academic disciplines. Also ask some faculty advisors from the different schools to be part of advising drafting the bylaws.

Jason – That's wonderful, I would 100% support this.

Charles – Other group really good at this is the Academic Senate.

Jason – Current motion is to certify our decision to form a committee. We had to make a decision prior to our first meeting since the committee rally was last week. Motion unanimously passes. Next agenda item – travel awards committee. Our travel awards process is no longer in compliance with guidelines and Erik proposed the formation of such a travel awards committee.

Lauren – I think I put three (non-GSA) on at the committee rally.

Jason – motion to propose a committee

Danielle – motion

Maryam – second

CM2 – on the non-GSA members, are you looking for people representing the different schools?

Jason – Ultimately the committee decision would be up to Erik and Lauren, I would certainly hope that the volunteers represent the different groups.

CM – We don't always know how different disciplines operate, so we might not always understand the value of research coming from different disciplines unless we have the perspective of people from each discipline.

Charles – Undergraduates have a fellowship they give out, and they make sure that equal dollar amounts are given to each school. At a minimum I would amend your criteria to make sure there is equal representation.

Danielle – move to amend

Paul – Second motion to amend

CM2 – Seeing as the deadline was yesterday, could we make sure we have enough applicants from the different schools?

CM – I didn't even remember it was yesterday

Jason – Can we reopen committee appointments if they're not filled?

Lauren – I know there are several committees that I don't have enough people for and some that I have a lot.

Jason – Good faith agreement from Lauren that she would reopen these committee appointments. Should we put this in formal language or should we accept this good faith agreement?

Unanimous vote to amend travel committee to include one student from each school

Now voting on the original motion – the creation of such a travel committee.

CM – Public comment?

Jason – Yes

CM – Even within the schools, particularly in SSHA, there are different kinds of research. While you are forming this committee I would recommend that you have a period where that group takes public comment because people who do paleo archaeology are very different from my research but it doesn't mean that theirs is better than ours.

Jason – Would you like a formal amendment to the motion or a good faith agreement from Erik to allow such public comment?

CM – Good faith would be fine, just ensuring that that is part of the process because in academia we tend to get into hierarchical thinking about what is worth more and the reality is that all the research students do here is valuable.

Charles – Whatever process you set up, people shouldn't feel like their research is on trial.

Jason – Those responsibilities would fall upon Erik here

Charles – You should touch base with people who've handled this sort of thing before to make sure that the process feels fair

Paul – Well currently Erik is the non voting chair, so ultimately it would fall upon whatever people make up the committee. You gotta be on that committee if you have a strong opinion, it seems like.

Jason – Responsibility to make sure it's fair and unbiased would fall upon Erik.

CM – Prior to the committee making any binding decisions, you should take public comment.

Paul – Correct me if I'm wrong but this committee would come up with guidelines and GSA would still have to vote on them.

Jason – Ultimately yes because it would still have to come out of our budget even though the bylaws do specify that Erik has strong control over our budget.

Paul – So if the committee did choose an arbitrary method of awarding, it would also come before GSA and could be voted down there. I think we kind of have oversight built in.

CM – You have to be very careful though. It's very easy for people to get hegemony. Right now for instance the humanities are very unvalued in academia (literature, history, and cultural anthropology). You read about it in the chronicle of higher education all the time. You have to be cognizant of this fact and that's why I'm asking for public comment. Certain fields are valued over others and we have to be careful about that.

Eddie – In the past we've always allotted travel funds to almost all the applicants, this is the first time that we've had too many applicants. We've never defined before how to choose who's eligible or who's not or how to rank them. I think having a general body, a committee like this, is good, but even the three members themselves could be biased toward choosing certain members of the general public. Zatz could be a great person to go to.

Lauren – This committee is just to set up the guidelines for how to distribute the funding according to rules. They won't have power in choosing who gets the award, but maybe how to downselect from 50 to 4.

CM – That's why you have to be very careful to be as fair equitable and above board as possible.

Jason – Very important we continue along

Vote on the motion? Again a unanimous decision.

Moving on the institution of the GradPal program and the financial support of shuttle service. I think the GradPal program has received an excellent response from the community.

Maryam – this was the first year we've even had an international liason. Starting from scratch. International office is a totally different island. They do great, but we need a connection to the rest of the school. GradPal talks to students in the current student body and tries to connect them to the incoming international students. We assigned every person who asked for a GradPal to a current student. People who did contact were all very happy with what happened. Considering we did this right on the spot and pretty late in the summer, I think it was pretty successful and would be good to continue. Next thing that is a very big issue is the shuttle from the airport – so many of them have no idea where Merced is or how far it is from SFO. We're hoping to have some kind of shuttle service so we can announce that we'll have a

shuttle on such and such dates so you can get a ride to Merced, if not you're on your own, et cetera. Unfortunately because it started pretty late people had already bought their tickets, we still did our best but I think we have a lot of room for improvement for next year.

Jason – Motion to recertify?

Danielle – Motion

Katie – Second

CM2 – Want to thank them because this work is very important and needed.

CM3 – Last year we did some work to support the students but ultimately it didn't work because we didn't have the money, et cetera. This is a very hard time for the international students.

CM – Also need to be cognizant of international students in the humanities, some of whom are coming from very impoverished countries (a professor in Bangladesh, for instance). They might not have a lot of money and they're giving up their whole lives to come here.

Jason – Interest of moving along, discussion on the motion in the particular?

Motion unanimous

Jason – Last remaining old business agenda item. Currently when we engage financial transactions we go to GSS and they go to OSL, which then processes their reimbursement. No reason why GSS can't just execute those transactions directly, they can't do anything we don't tell them to it just cuts out the middle man and allows us to process reimbursements more quickly and effectively. Point is, extra organization in middle of our reimbursements. GSS has volunteered to be our financial person. Motion to grant access to our FAU to GSS?

Paul – Motion

Lauren – Second

CM2 – Could you upload kind of an account of the money and transactions, sort of a monthly balance?

CM – Debits and credits

Erik – Two possible ways of looking at this – the updated categories or each value that goes by?

CM2 – Simplest possible.

CM – At the meeting when you read your report, you could specify so people know, if there was an event what was the event, what was the money spent on , et cetera.

Jason – This should be done, and I will use whatever capacity I have (to the extent we're allowed to reveal) to ensure this is uploaded.

Charles –So there's a huge difference between what is spent according to your budget and what's in your ledgers. Because what money is spent in your ledgers does not define what your budget is. Ledgers are always catching up to your budget.

Erik – Sort of estimate how much money will be coming in for something, then update the ledgers as the money does come in.

Jason – Motion at hand – allow GSS access to FAU?

Motion passes unanimously.

Objections to allowing our union member to speak first?

Erin – My name is Erin, I'm the newly elected unit chair for the TA union. We are having the opposite problem of GSA – we have a lot of people involved from SSHA, but not a lot from engineering and natural sciences. We'd like for those to be involved. If you have any questions, email me after! We have monthly meetings and we are open to try to help any of the TAs out.

Paul – When's the monthly meeting?

Erin – Not a set time, they're announced either through the Facebook page or through emails.

Paul – I know some people who might be interested.

Jason – But you're SSHA, you're not STEM!

Paul – Guy I know is in Physics

Erin – I don't have the exact date but I'll email you as soon as I know.

Jason – Now for our other visitor

Toni Gomez – Hi, I work for you at UCSA as the graduate and professional advocacy. We hosted our congress in August at the Irvine Marriott. Our elections were also conducted at that meeting. Danielle was elected as the graduate chair! Our new vice chair is a graduate student from Santa Barbara, for instance. First time graduate

students have held so many executive committee roles. In the past, UCSA graduate students have adopted a new campaign. This past year we were working on our campaigns and it came to our attention that all grad issues are interconnected and overlapping. Hard to parse out housing from well-being, etc. Better to pursue an agenda of sorts – five general topics (this list is available at bit.ly/UCSAGradagenda). Food security, equal access to student services on campuses? Graduate students actually have very limited access to food pantries because their stipends may disqualify them. General consensus was if you're willing to humble yourself and go to a food pantry you should get food, no questions asked. Also healthy graduate student and advisor relationships – how GSAs can provide mediation, what pathways are available on different campuses to bring people together, restorative justice in graduate education (sit down with a mutual arbitrator, etc.). Affordable graduate student housing – multidimensional, we're seeing students who are homeless, who are living in their cars or in trees; we're telling these stories and bringing these narratives to the forefront. Are graduate student stipends keeping up with the rate and cost of housing around campuses? Can we negotiate better housing? Campus climate diversity – diverse graduate student identities; we talked about how campus climate efforts usually focus on undergrads, some campuses don't have a multicultural center or safe spaces for LGBTQ grads. How can we make a better climate for graduate students? We're accepting comments, feedback, and ideas for how to make these things happen. Our next meeting is at UC Davis this weekend – our meetings are open to the public. We'll be meeting at UC Merced in June. Campus climate survey – measures things like happiness, sleep, nonmedical indicators of depression, et cetera. We're excited to see this survey be used across all campuses. Any questions for me?

CM2 – Thanks for the information. I have a request for GSA – perhaps we can create a web page and a Facebook page to show how the UC Merced community differs from the broad graduate community overall.

Jason – Could you post updates to the GSA FB page?

CM – GSA and UCSA should create a place where grad students with problems could communicate issues with confidentiality.

Erin – Okay you have my email, that's as much confidentiality as we have right now – we can also possibly use dropbox.

CM4 – I'm a first year graduate student. As a low income, first generation college student, my question is, what kind of community things exist for graduate students of color, to incorporate them into the UCSA initiatives? Anything for graduate students of color specifically?

Lauren – Zatz is starting up an advisory council for her on diversity, looking for 8-10 graduate students – she's going to send out an application for additional students.

CM4 – Is that a part of GSA?

Lauren – That is a grad div operation. She wants to learn about what issues are present on the campus so she can help address them.

Paul – Isn't there a Chancellor's committee on diversity? That might be something you could think about getting on to.

Lauren – They're also working on an application process, so I'll send out an announcement.

CM4 – Among GSA, do you guys ever have -- ?

Jason – I'm trying to develop a platform on things GSA could do to support the situation. We're part of the student community and obligated to do what we can, in whatever capacity we can, to support the student community. My own personal passion is low income, and there are wonderful new resources available. If you are in financial distress, there is short-term money available to help resolve such conflicts. There's a lot of really positive momentum going on.

CM – We're also talking about starting a food bank for the graduate community. It's embarrassing when your students see you in a vulnerable position, and I've been in that position when there's nothing left in the cabinet while my husband is out of work, and it's very hard for a lot of students to admit that they need help.

Charles – One of the options would be to explore doing a separate distribution of the existing food pantry just for graduate students – having a separate food pantry itself is fairly complicated, what is an interim solution? Try to minimize the number of people they have to talk to to get that money.

Jason – Nearing end of the scheduled time.

CM3 – As far as I know, UCs are supporting some money per year per campus, and at UC Merced I'm not sure how much money we are utilizing to support the students from the pantry. Is there money that is going back to the UCOP or are we using the money in a good way?

Charles – Jasmine's been a part of writing the proposal we submitted. There was a hiccup in their final approval of our process because we do have transportation related issues, so we mentioned a van, and I don't think they were actually anticipating that a campus might want to buy a vehicle even though there are no restrictions on the money. So we have huge transportation needs, but the van was the only thing they didn't accept.

Jason – Excellent questions. Other GSA officers have obligations? Given we need to end in thirteen minutes, I entertain a motion to table the officer reports to the end if time or read directly into minutes.

Katie – Motion

Lauren – second

Vote passes unanimously. Next motion to entertain – move a proposal to appoint *community member (CM)*, further noted as *Jasmine* as advisor to the GSA – access to internal emails as a non-voting member – to the very first item on our next agenda.

Danielle moved

Erik second

Paul – Do you want that?

Jasmine – I would love – the only thing I care about is being an advocate for my fellow students.

Jason – Any further discussion on the matter?

CM3 – What is the advisor position?

Jason – No bylaw technical definition of it – much in the same way that we have an international liason, we would treat the position in the same way.

Jasmine – I’m somebody who is completely, 100% dedicated to students who are marginalized, whether they be students of color, LBGTQIA, or women who are in fields that are traditionally more male.

Motion passes unanimously.

In the remaining five minutes, there’s the very important business of the travel. To make a very long story short, the travel award procedure we have is no longer going to work for people submitting fall travel awards. We understand that there’ll be significant pushback and perhaps entire rejection. Intent of suspending fall travel awards is to free up money, in part to fund the summer travel awards.

Erik – Concern I have about the suspension is that we typically allocate a lot of money toward the travel grants.

Jasmine – Issue of UCOP, correct Jason?

Jason – Essentially, procedures have changed so that our current process no longer works.

Jasmine – Any way that we can communicate with the office of the president of the UC system? I would feel terrible if we have students on a really tight budget who traveled, anticipating they'd get money back and then not getting anything back. IT can break people, it really can.

Jason – At no point have GSA travel awards ever been guaranteed, but that changed this summer when we received triple the amount of the awards we can usually fund. If we change the procedure to a rolling deadline, we've changed the process in the middle of it and that's not really fair either. There is no correct solution. The opportunity is that suspending fall awards frees up money to fund the awards from this summer.

Charles -- Historically you don't award students before they go on the trip?

Jason – Right, this is processed by reimbursement not fellowship.

Charles – right, but you can let people know in advance before they go on the trip that they're going to get the money.

Jason – Right, and this is something I hope the travel award committee would decide upon. My personal opinion that the most fair thing to do is suspend fall travel awards, use that money for summer awards, and go into spring fresh.

Paul – Some people may be traveling in the fall now, anticipating that they would apply for the GSA travel reimbursement. Suspending the fall now to award to the summer is kind of a bit unfair to anyone who is traveling in the fall. I would rather randomly assign what we have available to people.

Jason – But the point is the current process doesn't work so they wouldn't get that money anyway.

Jasmine – We have a lot of anthropologists who go to an important conference in November. If they can't get reimbursed in the spring, it's going to be really hard on them. And humanities people don't have the funding opportunities that other people do so they count on this.

Erin – Other UCs have processes, they all award them before the person travels. I'll help if you'd like to connect them and use their processes as a guideline.

Jason – We can reopen the travel awards at the earliest time at which we have a procedure in place from Erik's travel award committee.

Lauren – motion

Danielle – second

Erik – We have \$20,000 in our budget, so that’s a lot of money. Even though we’re trying to revise our systems, for the time being, we do have enough money to cover people.

Maryam – What happens to the people for summer?

Jason – that’ll be in the following motion

4 yes, 1 abstaining. Suspension of fall travel awards until committee produces guidelines. There is the issue of the 12 travel awards from the summer. Historically GSA has never rejected a travel award. Last year’s budget was for 6-7 proposals, which would lead 5-6 proposals unfunded from the summer. We either need to select or fund them all.

Jasmine – Any way to ask for more money from somewhere?

Jason – I’ve asked grad div

Jasmine – what about asking Janet Napolitano directly?

Katie – Erik, how much would it cost to fund all the summer travel awards?

Erik -- \$4,500

Katie – motion to fund them all

Danielle – second

Unanimous vote to fund all the summer travel awards