

# GSA Executive Council Meeting

January 30, 2020

3:00pm-4:00pm

SSM 230

Meeting minutes by Jordan Collignon

Brandon and Ritu are presiding over this meeting.

## **Preliminary Update**

- Welcome our new EC officers: Jonathan, Mark, and Cerena.
- The DA schedule will be sent out soon. Albert volunteered to set this up when the IVP is not available.
- One of the international affairs officers has resigned their position; this office is now occupied by one student.

## **Changes in Meeting Structure**

- A couple officers met with the president to discuss how GSA meetings are operating and offered a few suggestions.
- As more members of the GSA are engaged and involved in campus affairs, the more things there are to discuss in the GSA meetings. However, each meeting is approximately 1 hour, and so it is difficult to fit everything into the agenda.
- One suggestion made was to create so-called “working committees” that would handle specific GSA functions.
  - This would allow more action of GSA officers outside of GSA meetings.
  - Discussions would take place outside regular GSA meetings for those involved in these committees, allowing a more focused, deeper conversation for the members interested.
  - Ideas and tasks would then be brought into GSA meetings for action by all officers.
- Idea for a new committee
  - A subset of the GSA that will work with the non-profit CAC on which Brandon serves on the Executive Board. This would allow the GSA to make connections outside UC Merced, particularly with other schools in the UC system.

- In the past, collaboration with other graduate students outside UC Merced was prohibited.
- In addition, participation of campus administration has staggered community engagement for quite a while now. This committee creates a link between UC Merced and the local community.
- By working with this non-profit, the GSA can improve its funding. This can mean more money for travel grants offered every three months.
- The committee will decide what the GSA and non-profit would be doing together; more specifically, how to have ties with the organization.
- Brandon and Ritu will write a proposal for this new committee and bring it to the next GSA meeting. A document will be started for every to make comments and suggest ideas.

### **Proposal to Stagger Meetings**

- A poll was sent out regarding a time change to the executive council meetings. A reason for this was since the EC meeting was right before the GM meeting, parts of the GM became an extension of the EC meetings when not every item in the EC agenda was discussed within the 1-hour timeframe.
  - 4 people voted to change the time, 2 people voted to keep the time as is, and 4 remained neutral. Since more officers voted to have the time changed, another poll was sent out to ask officers of the time at which they are free for the 1 hour EC meeting.
  - Executive officers: if you have not selected your availability in the poll that Ritu sent out, please do so as soon as possible.
- A proposal was made to have only one of the presidents to attend EC and GM meetings due to time constraints.

### **Mental Health Issues Follow-up**

- It has been proposed by CAPS staff to have training for people on campus that host office hours. In particular, to have them learn about where to refer students to the appropriate resources on campus. We will need a senior official to champion solutions to issues as they arise.
- It is known that every UC in the system has issues regarding access to mental health resources. These issues are amplified for graduate students.
- Mental health ties many issues together, as is the stressors of everyday life. Issues of food security, financial security, and others contribute to the stress.

- We can ask Diana Matos to push for mental health advocacy and for good mentoring practices
- There is also a push for state and federal funding to tackle mental health issues. This will be voted on later by the UCGPC.
- It would be great if there is a push for more faculty workshops, thus having more people advocate for mental health. A suggestion is to target new staff more often so it becomes part of the routine early on.
- Having a workshop geared for graduate students would be great as well, as one of the issues that many graduate students potentially face is a student/advisor relationship affecting work time or going sour. Hopefully this workshop would be hosted on the main campus.
- Staff could have a “tool kit” handy that helps students find the proper resources. Is there a way that the GSA can contribute to this?
- An idea: Someone should draft a letter to Diana
  - This will hopefully start a paper trail, to let her know that the GSA will be working closely on this issue.
  - Alex will start a draft of this letter.

### **EC Officer Guidebook**

- Since many officers enter the GSA with little knowledge of their position other from personal training, it is suggested that every EC officer of the GSA contribute to a guidebook describing their duties in detail.
- By having this guidebook handy, this will significantly minimize the time it takes for new officers to transition into their roles.
- For this to work, each officer should create a document describing the work that they perform in the GSA. These documents would then be compiled into a single guidebook for the entire GSA.

### **Response to AVC Mark Cunningham**

- Many comments have been added to the letter that the GSA plans to send to Mark Cunningham regarding housing for graduate students. Based on the comments received, it seems like the tone of the message has changed.
- The letter will be sent out soon. In particular, the GSA invites mark to have another meeting with GSA and graduate students about this housing project.

## UCGPC Systemwide Fee

- The idea here is instead of having the GSA pay the fee for the EVP from each UC to travel to meetings of the UCGPC, the UC system has all students pay a small fee instead.
- Currently, the EVP has to travel to UCGPC meetings several time per year; this is the main bulk of the cost incurred.
- There are a few options on how this fee could be administered. One of these options is to have students choose to opt-in or opt-out of paying the fee instead of forcing it on them.
- A recommendation for the fee is \$6 per quarter, which is about \$18 per year.
- The fees paid will go to the UCGPC, not the individual UCs.
- A finalized proposal will be written soon.

## Items not Discussed or Tabled for Later

- EC Officer Guidebook (main idea was discussed, but not enough time to go into more detail)
- Funding Policy for Social Sciences (discussed during the GM meeting?)
- Rock the Vote and census planning

The meeting ended about 5 minutes early at 3:55pm