

GSA Executive Council Meeting Minutes

March 17, 2020

3:30pm-4:30pm

Via Zoom

Minutes prepared by Jordan Collignon

Meeting moderated by Brandon and Ritwika

Members in Attendance

- Ritwika VPS (Co-President)
- Brandon Batzloff (Co-President)
- Cerena Lee (Internal Vice President)
- Alexandria Pabst (External Vice President)
- Jordan Collignon (Internal Communications Officer)
- Shayna Bennett (Treasurer)
- Maria Ramirez Loyola (Climate Diversity & Equity Officer)
- Ahmed Correa (International Affairs Officer)
- Mark Seelos (Solidarity Officer)
- Joseph Dube (Public Relations Officer)
- Phoebe Coy (Applied Mathematics Delegate)

Updates on COVID-19

- Marjorie recently sent an email earlier this week regarding TAs and GSAs during the pandemic. The transition of work, research, and other critical functions due to COVID-19 is impacting the infrastructure allowing the campus to function efficiently, and is affecting productivity all across the student, faculty, and staff body.
 - Research progress is being halted for many people. The IRB is adjusting protocols in order to ensure research can still be performed.
 - Many job interviews are being cancelled to ensure the health and safety of everyone on campus, including interviewees from off-campus.
 - All non-essential travel is being curtailed.
 - All conferences are being cancelled or postponed.
 - GradSlam has now become a fully virtual competition. Participants have been asked to record and upload a video of them giving their talk.
- The campus has not decided to close just yet, but they may consider doing so when there are at least five positive cases of COVID-19 in the county.
- The GSA could step in to maintain the morale of the graduate student body.
 - Members of the DA should check in with the students from their department.

- GSA members can consider planning online social events, such as a virtual happy-hour.
- Two graduate students in the CogSci department are gathering some ideas too.
- Services in health-related departments are being held virtually. The health center on campus requests you call ahead before going in person.
- TAPS is working with students on providing relief to students who will not be on campus, such as offering a refund on parking permits.

Potential Supply Drive + Other Ways to Help the Community

- It is possible that this pandemic will continue through the summer. During this period, it is important to remain stocked on essential supplies such as food. For many, this may be difficult to prolong. It was suggested the GSA perform a supply drive as a way to offer support. Basic Needs is working on a similar plan, so we may be able to collaborate with them.
- The Bobcat Pantry continue to post about the services they have available to students. The GSA should ensure that all graduate students know about these too.
- Emotional support: having themed online meetings
- Stress relief activities such as a meditation group could be held virtually.
- There is a possibility that despite being a critical infrastructure, transportation may be suspended to mitigate the spread of COVID-19, or strict sanitizing measures will be in place. Therefore, it will become necessary to consider carpooling with someone to make it easier to obtain supplies. In this time, being there for others is important.
 - The UC route (TheBus) is adjusting service starting March 30th (update was made public on March 26th).
 - Currently, CatTracks is still scheduled to operate on a normal schedule once the spring break concludes. However, that may change if the situation around COVID-19 becomes worse in Merced county.
- Would it be possible to work with Graduate Division on implementing these ideas? It will be difficult for either group to plan and perform these on their own.
- There are comments about student being faced with financial hardships during the pandemic, such as not being able to pay their power and gas bills, should they have to leave the city.
- The GSA should utilize its Facebook page to reach out to the graduate community, to ensure that the GSA is watching the situation closely and is offering to help in any way it can.

Solidarity Statement

- Marjorie recently sent an email to all students expressing support as many changes are implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is suggested that we use this to draft a similar letter to President Napolitano to reiterate the points mentioned.
- Faculty and students have shown support for the letter sent. ASUCM is fully supportive.

Chancellor Search Updates

- The search committee is conducting interviews with the final candidates.
- A new chancellor is expected to be in office before the fall semester.
- We should know the name of the winning candidate in the next 3-4 weeks.

Request for Letter of Support for the Gallo School

- The Gallo School of Management is planning to open. This is a collaboration with the Cognitive Science, Management of Complex Systems, and Masters of Management programs. More information about the school will be sent to the GSA and an online vote will be held to consider writing a letter of support.

Redrafting GSA Constitution and Bylaws

- As the GSA continues to evolve, existing rules have to be altered to for the GSA to function efficiently, especially when complications arise. As a result, the constitution and bylaws will get more complicated, which will make it more difficult for the GSA to expand and govern itself.
- Would like the GSA to vote on the idea of creating committee to redraft the GSA governing documents to make it more clear what the structure of the GSA is, how officers and delegates perform their duties, and how the general membership can be more involved with GSA activities.
- The redraft can be done through the summer, and final products can be voted on by the graduate student body in the fall.

Gender Bias Summit

- Was cancelled due to COVID-19.

Other Notes

- Free Speech Week was cancelled due to COVID-19.
- It was suggested that the GSA start drafting another newsletter early. GSA members can edit and comment on the draft of the newsletter.
- Since it came out in a campus announcement that a student on campus was being tested for COVID-19, a member of the community saw the message and posted it to social media. Since then, a concern was raised about part of the community using this information against other students. However, at this time the student is still awaiting test results; it has not been confirmed whether the student has the virus or not.

Meeting adjourned at 4:40.