GSA Executive Council Meeting Minutes

October 31st, 2019

SSM 117

Minutes prepared by Jordan

Meeting moderated by Brandon

In attendance:

- Brandon (Co-President)
- Ritu (Co-President)
- Jordan (Internal Communications Officer)
- Alexandria (External Vice President)
- Shayna (Treasurer)
- Jacky (Quantitative & Systems Biology Delegate)
- Phoebe (Applied Math Delegate)
- Ahmed (International Affairs Officer)
- Feng (International Affairs Officer)
- Maria (Climate, Diversity & Equity Officer)
- Albert (Physics Delegate)
- Taylor (Management of Complex Systems Delegate)

1:10 – 2:00 Open Session

Status on GSO Sponsored Events Funding Applications

- List of GSO sponsored events funding applications have been submitted to the Delegate Assembly. One issue is that multiple applications did not list a monetary amount when describing their budget.
- It was recommended that there be a clear set of instructions for the application process when applying for funding.
- Sending a thank-you gift to Tawana. Reached out to Cassie to find out what is okay according to policy to send.

Voter Registration Summit at UCSD

- A couple goals of the meeting was to increase student engagement in the voting process and to raise awareness of voting by mail in California.
- To address issues that prevent people from being able to vote. One of which was that polling locations may not be listed on the official website.

- Suggestion to open up a town hall meeting for students to express their issues with voting. Another suggestion was to conduct a survey about the same things.
- Approval will be needed to start conducting a survey. There was a suggestion to reach out to CAPS.
- Meeting with CAPS first before making a survey would be more helpful
- Meeting with the UCSA/UCGPC: There was a discussion about introducing a systemwide fee to increase the budget. It is not clear what this fee is, nor the reason for making one as it seems their budget is pretty good already.
- Mandatory reporting for TA's is not in the union contract, which gives the impression that TAs are not required to be mandatory reporters. However, federal law says otherwise because TA's are in a position of power over students. It is suggested that in cases where mandatory reporting is required for certain employees, that TA's should follow suit. Even though the contract doesn't require it, the UC may still hold TA workers liable if they do not report.

GSA Website Suggestions

- The president and ICO are communicating with the communications specialist at Grad Division regarding the transition of the current GSA website to the new Yosemite responsive formatting that most of the UC Merced website is using. It was suggested that all the major updates to the website be made before the transition begins.
- The president forwarded the email conversation on the website to the GSA usergroup.
- Many links in the current GSA website are broken or have not been changed with previous updates.
- More information about student housing
- Links to information for undocumented students, including Undocu-Ally training.
- There should be a page for learning about bias or diversity related info, events, and training programs, as it seems these programs are going away slowly.
- Should have page with guidelines for filling out the application for the GSA travel award

Tuition

- Had a meeting with Marjorie
- It was recommended that grad students are not included in the tuition increases since this can lead to funding issues for those on a TA-ships or GSRs.

Committee Updates

- Currently, the GSA does not have a seat on the Advisory Council on Campus Climate, Culture, and Inclusion (is this the right group?). This year, this committee can hold two positions--one GSA member and one ASUCM member--and would commit to the position between 1-2 years. The Climate, Diversity, and Equity Officer is willing to serve as the GSA representative in this council.

- TAPS Advisory Committee: Why should GSA members specifically be on this committee? What about other grad students?
- Whoever is in charge may have a reason for why committees want student in specific positions. The GSA can try and reach out to this person for more information.

International Student Issues and International Week

- Had a meeting with Lacy regarding the conditions that international students have.
- Met with a student having issues in own program.
- It seems that support systems for international students vary by degree programs.
- It must also be made clear that the members of the Delegate Assembly are important resources for each grad program, and that students having issues in their program should reach out to their program representative.
- The roles of the Solidarity Officer could also include assisting students with these issues.
- Introduce activities for International Week, starting on November 18th. Will reach out to international student organizations and coordinate with them prior to the event.
- These organizations should also add their events to CatLife.
- Currently, there is no detailed plan for what international students will be doing for international week.

About Vacant Officer Positions

- Two executive council officer positions have been vacated recently: Internal Vice President and Academic Affairs Officer.
- The GSA is introducing the executive council position of Solidarity Officer. In addition to the two vacated positions, we are deciding how we should fill these positions.
- One suggestion made was to have another election. The voter turnout in the special election was close to 30 students. After extending the voting deadline the turnout was close to 60 students, still under 10% of the graduate student population.
- The president has the power to appoint a new officer.
- It was also suggested that the Executive Council and the Delegate Assembly be able to vote on and approve officer candidates. This could be done through an update in the bylaws.
- We still need the Internal Vice President to preside over the Delegate Assembly meetings.
- We need a method for appointing officers that is transparent. A suggestion made was to reach out personally to those who would be good fits. We could then send them an application if they are interested.
- Should the president still appoint an officer when voter turnout is too low? Many students don't get these GSA elections in their emails for some reason.
- **A proposal was made to establish an open column for the application process, to get people interested in serving on the GSA, and to have the appointed people to be**

voted on and approved by both the Executive Council and The Delegate Assembly. This proposal was seconded and passed unanimously.

- The last Delegate Assembly Meeting for the semester is coming up soon. Approval of officer candidates must be made at this meeting.

Changes to Travel Awards

- Some info in the application is unnecessary, such as student ID and phone number. The only important detail about email is that it must be a UC Merced email address.
- Suggest to change the abstract requirement from entering text into the form, to instead attaching a PDF of the abstract. Reason for this is to provide proof that an abstract was submitted for a conference. Moreover, sorting through the applications is difficult because the column for the abstract is enormous compared to all other columns. An entire page on the screen can be taken up by one submission just because the abstract column is too big.
- Suggestion to include the conference name as a required field.
- Suggestion to attach proof of acceptance to the conference as part of the application.
- Suggestion to ensure that one application be submitted per person, not one per conference, to ensure that everyone has a fair chance of being selected.
- Suggestion that funding recipients must wait one year before applying again.
- Suggestion to update image on website for where conference falls in each of the four funding cycles.
- Selected students should have 10 days after the conference to submit their documents for reimbursement.
- Would like to write a script that will automatically select 2 students from each department without having to do each step manually. This script could be passed on to future GSA Treasurers.

The Executive Council meeting adjourned at about 2:13pm.