

GSA General Meeting Minutes

January 30, 2020

4:00pm-5:00pm

SSM 230

Members in Attendance

- Brandon Batzloff (Co-President)
- Ritwika VPS (Co-President)
- Alexandria Pabst (External Vice President)
- Jordan Collignon (Internal Communications Officer)
- Shayna Bennett (Treasurer)
- Jonathan Anzules (Academic Affairs Officer)
- Joseph Dube (Public Relations Officer)
- Ahmed Correa (International Affairs Officer)
- Maria Ramirez Loyola (Climate Diversity & Equity Officer)
- Mark Seelos (Solidarity Officer)
- Shannon Proksch (Cognitive & Information Sciences Delegate)
- Phoebe Coy (Applied Mathematics Delegate)
- Albert Dibenedetto (Physics Delegate)

Presentation: Academic Counseling Services

- Maria Nishanian joined UC Merced in December 2019 as the new Academic Counselor.
- UC Merced becomes the 4th campus in the UC system to fill this position.
- The position advocates for graduate students and faculty to help resolve conflicts
- Her role is to work with graduate students one-on-one to assist with issues such as the following:
 - Time management skills
 - Study skills
 - Training
 - Best mentoring practices
 - Bringing appropriate issues to the right resources
- This position does not serve as a replacement for CAPS (Counseling and Psychological Services), since this position does not require a licensed counselor whereas the CAPS positions do.

- Would like to focus on building trust with the graduate student population over time
- Would like to have some form of training for employees to refer people to the right resources
- Students and faculty can drop-in anytime Monday through Friday from 9am to 4pm or set up an appointment through email, phone, or text. The office is located at the Student Services Building (SSB) in room 233.
- Would like to provide workshops to the deans and other upper-level faculty on campus as well.
- Would like to assist students that are dealing with issues related to funding security during their time in their program. This especially applies to graduate students pursuing a master's degree.
- Funding priority is primarily given to Ph.D students.
- Food issues on campus
- How clearly expectations are communicated in the program as well as between the students and their faculty advisors.
- Issues of safety
 - Safety, especially in the lab setting, is the responsibility of the PI
 - There have been accidents in the past because of a brief lack of oversight and training.
 - It is because of these situations that labs require students to be well-trained before working in them.
- The stressors affecting minority groups can be greater than the ones mentioned above.
- The Graduate Dean can work with the Associated Students to create trainings.
- Problems can be prevented if they are caught early enough, before any damage is done.
- Maria would like to know what resources are available on campus
 - The GSA can assist Maria in this search
- If the position has to refer students to resources outside the Counselor's office, they are usually on campus and not in the external community. Another office on campus would have better knowledge on what community resources are appropriate and can refer students to those outside resources.
- Would like to know how students go through the master's or Ph.D. program to know what other issues are more apparent among students in either program.
- It would be great if Maria can join future GSA meetings.

Equity, Diversity & Inclusion

- The Office of Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) is organizing an event known as Free Speech Week, set to occur between April 20-24.

- EDI would like to host an event that primarily focuses on graduate students. A preliminary date for this event is scheduled for April 23.
- EDI is writing a proposal for the event and would like to hear some ideas that are geared toward graduate student and the community.
- **A proposal has been made to ask the GSA to get involved in the planning process for the EDI events. The GSA Executive Council has voted to approve that the GSA work with EDI in the planning process.**
- EDI will put the proposal together, which is due in less than two weeks.

GSA Social Events

- The first event, Spring Back with Bagels, will be held on the GradPad on February 5th from 9:30-11:30am in The GradPad.
- Other events planned
 - A mid-semester pizza and game night
 - One before GSA elections. This is so potential GSA candidates can learn about officer roles and elections. Ask the Delegate Assembly for input from other departments.
- This the first GSA cohort in a while to do activities involving all graduate students.
- How running events can affect roles in the GSA
 - It was suggested that we make an event perpetual; to make a “signature” event for the GSA to host regularly.
 - There was a suggestion to have a timeline for events that the GSA can use to help connect more to the graduate community.
 - Since these events may involve GSA funds, the Treasurer has been working closely in the event planning process. This is something that can be included in the officer handbook, and possibly a future requirement to be added to the GSA constitution or Bylaws.
- The GSA election will be coming soon. It is suggested that we start making preparations.
 - Suggested to make the election process more formal.
 - More about the election process should be discussed at the next meeting.
 - The GSA should decide on a team to plan the election this year. The process of choosing an elections officer should take place at or before the next meeting.

Update on Chancellor’s Search Committee

- The Chancellor’s search committee consists of five faculty members as well as graduate and undergraduate students.

- The full process of selecting the next chancellor is expected to be completed by the end of the academic year.
- The process of the search committee is as follows:
 - Perform an initial review of the applicants
 - Submit reviews
 - Evaluate nominations
 - Advise the UC president on committee decision
- Some of the candidate criteria are
 - Push the university toward R1 status
 - Champion sustainable strategies for student success
 - Support diversity and inclusion
 - Build strong relationships with all groups
 - Maintain the financial stability of the university
 - Support facility development
 - Advocate for the UC system
- There will be a meeting in February regarding who will be the finalists in the search.
- The UC president will be voting on a finalist sometime later.
- The chancellor candidates may be coming to visit UC Merced at some point during the search process. The times at which these visits occur will not be made public.

Amendments to GSA Constitution & Bylaws

- There are six amendment proposals to be considered so far
 - One constitutional amendment
 - Five bylaws amendments
- Right now, only the DA can amend the Bylaws (this must take place in one of the DA meetings throughout the semester). A constitutional amendment is being considered to allow both the EC and DA to agree to any future amendments to the Bylaws.
- The constitution can only be amended by a vote from the general membership, but the GSA has to approve the amendment being placed on the ballot.

Funding Policies Discussion

- It seems as though the process of how funding is allocated to departments, and to students in those departments, is not very transparent. A list of unknowns that the GSA and others in attendance suggested that an investigation be done toward:
 - A mapping of what students on campus receive (funding, resources, etc.) across departments.

- How much funding each department receives. If the campus is growing, then so will the number of graduate students in each department. If funding in a department is fixed, then the number of students in that department will stagnate, but if department size increases only, this may lead to financial security issues of the students in that department.
- Why some departments have a 5-year funding guarantee for students in certain programs.
- Why the school of engineering offers 1-year funding guarantees to master's students. This number may vary, however.
- How funding in the summer works.
- How fluid is the "guarantee" in funding.

Items Voted on by the Executive Council (1 item)

- The Executive Council has voted to support the Office of Equity, Diversity & Inclusion by providing ideas on events to be considered for the proposal to host these events, happening on the week of April 20-24.

Items Tabled Due to Lack of Time

- Update on Delegate Assembly Schedule
- Updating Furniture in the GradPad
- Amendments Committee Update
- Items for Ritu and/or Brandon to discuss at the Council of Presidents meeting on February 20th.

The meeting ended at approximately 5pm.