

# GSA General Membership Meeting Minutes

April 2, 2020

4:00pm-5:00pm

Via Zoom

Minutes prepared by Jordan Collignon

Meeting moderated by Brandon and Ritwika

## **Officers in Attendance**

- Brandon Batzloff (Co-President)
- Ritwika VPS (Co-President)
- Cerena Lee (Internal Vice President)
- Alexandria Pabst (External Vice President)
- Jordan Collignon (Internal Communications Officer)
- Shayna Bennett (Treasurer)
- Mark Seelos (Solidarity Officer)
- Maria Ramirez Loyola (Climate Diversity & Equity Officer)
- Ahmed Correa (International Affairs Officer)
- Phoebe Coy (Applied Mathematics Delegate)
- Albert DiBenedetto (Physics Delegate)
- Shannon Proksch (Cognitive & Information Sciences Delegate)
- Houa Vang (Sociology Delegate)
- Marjorie Zatz (Dean of Graduate Studies)
- Maria Nishanian (Graduate Academic Counselor)
- Charles Nies (Vice Chancellor)
- Chris Kello (Interim Dean of Graduate Studies)

## **Updates on Chancellor Search**

- Nothing new since the last meeting

## **Election Overview**

- The period to nominate students to GSA positions is in progress right now and is expected to run until Friday April 3<sup>rd</sup>.
- The nomination acceptance period will be taking place two weeks later starting on April 13<sup>th</sup>.

- Currently, there are 4 nomination acceptances for Executive Council positions, and 2 acceptances for Delegate Assembly positions. If there are not enough accepted nominations, the period to accept nominations may be extended. This has happened in the past with positions in the Delegate Assembly. Multiple graduate departments don't have delegates in the GSA. This may be due to our own list of graduate departments not being updated regularly or a breakdown of communication between the departments and the GSA.
- On referenda proposals
  - The Basic Needs referenda was recently withdrawn. It is likely that it will be re-proposed next year. Moreover, it was confirmed that a referendum process can occur every year instead of every three years.
  - The Student Fee Referendum Committee is considering a proposal from the recreation department to include an additional \$50 student fee, which will be used for funding UC Merced sports teams and the new facilities being created as part of the 2020 project. The GSA should send an email to let graduate students know about this fee increase. It is also unclear whether the proposal will be placed on the GSA ballot for the upcoming election. **The GSA has voted to hold an offline discussion about this fee increase and whether or not to support it.**
- Given the COVID-19 situation it is possible that newly elected officers may have to drop of office soon after the transition takes place next month. Suggestion on how to proceed were requested. One suggestion was to allow the next highest voted individual to take the responsibilities of the office in the event that the currently seated officers steps down. It is important that other suggestions be planned in accordance to the GSA governing documents.

## Online Events

- A Zoom party was organized last weekend for Applied Math graduate students, and the department's weekly coffee hour was also held over Zoom. Perhaps the GSA can do something like this too.
- In the last GSA meeting, there was a suggestion to hold a trivia night. Setting up teams for a competition would be a plus. How would the GSA go about setting this up?
- Could the GSA organize online board games? Could this be done through Zoom too?
- A few tips for organizing activities over Zoom:
  - Disable private chats.
  - Put people on hold, or in a "waiting" room.
  - Have people preregister or RSVP.
  - Don't publicly broadcast the link to the session. Make sure only the people you want to find the link will be able to find it.

- There are GSA members who are interested in organizing these activities. We would also like general body members to get involved as well.
- Having a procedure set up for planning online activities can be something for future GSA cohorts to reference.

### **Roll Call Vote on Writing a Letter of Support for the Gallo School**

- This was an item discussed in the last meeting.
- The DA has already voted in favor of writing a letter of support.
- **A vote by the EC was held, and a majority voted in favor in writing a letter of support.**
- One of the Delegates will draft this letter next week.

### **Public Comment**

- No comments were made

### **Responses to Questions and Concerns for the Administration**

- Marjorie Zatz has accepted the position of Vice Chancellor of Research. She will remain the Dean of Graduate Studies until the end of June. Chris Kello has become the interim Dean and will be taking Marjorie's place at the end of June.
- Nearly all services on campus once held in person have been transferred to an online platform.
- The food distribution held on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Friday of each month will still be held. The location has been changed to the MCOE) parking lot across from Merced College, which is close to the former location (Tri-College Center).
- A series of remarks made about COVID-19 these past couple weeks are creating an atmosphere of xenophobia, particularly against Asian-Americans. This kind of behavior is unacceptable and should be strongly discouraged.
- Healing Circle events will be held on Mondays.
- "Zoombombing" may become a problem. A suggestion was made to have an additional participant act as a monitor in case this occurs again, especially in classes and large groups. A question came up asking if TAs will be held responsible for damages if a student is a victim of Zoombombing, not at the fault of the TA.
- Many graduate students are not coping well with the emergency situation.
  - Research project are being forced to suspend.
  - It was pointed out previously that important tasks require for graduation that must be delayed should not be counted towards the time to degree.

- Graduate students might be pressured to work in a lab after graduation.
- For international and undocumented students
  - There is a fear that the COVID-19 pandemic will make it harder to people to maintain their immigration status. It was pointed out that this will have little to no effect and can be resolved without much hassle.
  - What happens when a student accepts public or state funding?
  - An undocumented graduate student handbook was released today.
- A meeting with senior education leadership was talking about a way for people to do TAs and internships at community colleges.
- UC Merced also has donor-based resources and funds that would rather be used over state and federal funds to help students during this pandemic.

### **Mutual Aid Project**

- It was suggested that the GSA step in to help the community in any way that it can. Below were some suggestions:
  - Partnering with businesses to supply food in a way that volunteers can stay safe and healthy.
  - Create a pool of donations
  - Work with homeless shelters
  - Have a group of volunteers who would do grocery runs
  - Writing letters to the community
- It was also pointed out that since most graduate students have a lot on their plate already, even during the pandemic, it would be difficult to make time to organize something on their own. Joining a project that already exists will be less of a burden on students' schedules.

### **Items Voted on (2 items)**

- The GSA has voted to hold a discussion about the \$50 recreation fee to support UC Merced sports teams and the new recreational facilities. A vote on whether to support this increase will be done in a later meeting.
- The GSA Executive Council voted in favor of writing a letter of support for the Gallo school. The Delegate Assembly has already approved this, so the GSA is fully on board.

Meeting adjourned at 5:03pm.