

GSA Delegate Assembly Meeting Minutes

December 7, 2020

6:00-7:00pm

Zoom

Members in Attendance

- Adam Binswanger (Applied Mathematics, DA Chair)
- Jay Colond (Sociology)
- Melissa Baker (Political Science)
- Yumary Vasquez (Quantitative and Systems Biology)
- Maryam Khazaei (Computer Science)
- Yulissa Rojas (Environmental Systems)
- Benny Nguyen (IVP)

Guest Speakers in Attendance

- Zunaira Iqbal (EVP)

Opening Remarks

- Reviewed agenda

Call to Join a Basic Needs Task Force w/ Zunaira

- Call for anyone to join a Basic Needs Task Force / Workgroup! If interested, please contact Zunaira Iqbal (ziqbal2@ucmerced.edu)
 - A goal of the GSA Agenda is to address basic needs: housing, food security, transportation, & mental health.
 - Spring 2021 Goal: Draft a letter describing issues (particularly regarding Transportation; currently in conversation w/ TAPS)
 - Hoping to garner support from Academic Senate, Graduate Division, undergraduates, etc.
 - Support from Grad Div. + Dean Chris Kello will hopefully push these concerns to the attention of higher administration and propel change.

Department Updates

- Political Science
 - Many were in support of the ECEC letter.
- QSB
 - Asked about when the call for applications for GSO funding will go out.
 - Benny will follow-up with Treasurer, Quy about the status of the call for applications.

- It was tentatively decided that the GSO funding application will open at the start of next semester and an initial announcement will be sent before the end of this semester. Again, Benny will follow-up w/ Quy.
- Environmental Systems
 - Department is trying to develop concentrations/emphases
 - Sent out a survey about what concentrations students would be interested in
 - Benefits of concentrations: Helps you market yourself in the “real-world”

Diversity Training

- Next semester there will be Diversity Training events
- Adam will get into contact w/ Larisa, who has some resources, and move from there.
 - Anyone who is interested in participating or helping is welcome to do so!

DA Scheduling Difficulty

- Adam & Shayna discussed ideas for getting increasing Delegate involvement as scheduling and organizing with such a large group is difficult
 - Result from that conversation: Creating focused subcommittees & workgroups in the Spring
 - These groups would focus on specific issues such as Basic Needs

By-Laws Updating

- The By-Laws committee have a mostly final draft of the updated by-laws
- The EC and DA by-laws are still in one document, however, the relevance and scope of each by-law is perhaps more clear.
- Cannot change the by-laws until an election cycle, so the edits will not be in effect until next year.

BSP Closure

- State of events: With the closing of the BSP, there were concerns about the ability to do research, and therefore make progress from students who work in, and depend on the equipment in the BSP.
- Adam spoke w/ Melissa, CCB delegate: CCB is looking for extra funding for affected students to offset any funding issues related to this closure.
- Brainstorm how we can help affected students:
 - General Goal: Provide security to affected students through communication and support
 - Potential Future Action:
 - A meeting w/ Grad Chairs for these departments to express concern and get information about how affect students are being supported
 - Draft a letter or statement that the needs and progress of affected students need to be addressed
 - Immediate Action:

- Adam will talk to delegates of affected departments to understand the current state of affairs.
- Related conversations about the purpose of the DA:
 - Delegates should be the first source contact for any concern for students within their department
 - Delegates will advocate to, search for, and work with whatever GSA, administrative, or otherwise persons and resources to address those concerns

Voting to approve Call for Applications for the Public Relations Officer

- 3 / 3 Delegates approved the Call for Applications for the Public Relations Officer
 - Only delegates who were present but did not complete the survey voted.
- In combination w/ the survey respondents, there is a total of...
 - **9 yeas, 0 nays, 0 abstains**
 - This is a majority of delegates, and so the Call for Applications will move forward.

Continued, General Conversation about the Goal of the DA

- Gather information about department milestones and procedures (e.g. forms for graduation!) and compare between departments
 - Can assess what has been effective in some departments and what has been an obstacle to progression
 - A general issue across departments is transparency, and the DA is in a unique position to have cross-talk about explicit and implicit expectations or norms ; Could lead to needed standardization or centralization of procedures/expectations/information.
 - Potentially forming a Communication Taskforce
 - This streamlining will also offload work from Grad Division, allowing them to support us in other ways.

Conversation on How to develop Department Community

- Maryam asked the DA about how to cultivate community in her department so that students feel comfortable bringing concerns.
- Poli Sci:
 - Small department, so everyone are friends. Delegate sends messages to a groupchat. Suggested sending out anonymized surveys to field concerns
- Sociology: Also a small department, and also uses a survey to field concerns.
- CIS:
 - Has a Graduate Student Group (GSG) who is concerned w/ department community and climate; Perhaps starting such a group within your own department. Professors are also part of the Climate Taskforce.
 - This GSG has their own website w/ a standing form to send anonymized concerns.

Meeting adjourned at 6:43pm

The next Delegate Assembly Meeting will be next semester. Please look out for a when2meet scheduling email from the Chair, Adam!