

GSA Executive Council Meeting Minutes

June 15, 2020

2:00pm-3:30pm

Zoom

Minutes prepared by Jordan Collignon

Meeting moderated by Shayna Bennett

Members in Attendance

- Shayna Bennett (President)
- Farhana Sharmin (Internal Vice President)
- Taylor Fugere (Academic Affairs Officer)
- Jordan Collignon (Internal Communications Officer)
- Carlisha Hall (Public Relations Officer)
- Larisa Gavrilova (Climate, Diversity & Equity Officer)
- Alexandria Pabst (Ex-Officio)

President's Update from Last Meeting

Method for Upcoming Elections

- There were concerns about how the election was handled last year. Officer candidates and the vote for the student rec fee referenda items were combined into one ballot and distributed by OSI. As a consequence, the election process could be biased by administration. It was also pointed out that there may have been an ethical issue with RFC being on the elections committee whose referenda was also on the ballot.
- Need to emphasize that the GSA is independent body and thus operating over its own election would be ideal, but it should be clear how to operate the election to reduce bias and remove conflict of interest. The GSA is not generally bound by external policy to have OSI handle the GSA election, thus the GSA can hold and operate its own election.
- A suggestion was made to form a committee that would run the election and count the votes. These should be a group of students outside of the GSA not seeking election to count the votes. Qualtrics surveys can keep track of votes. A more complex way of reducing voting bias needs to be discussed.
- A motion was given to propose a plan to host the GSA special election for the fall semester. This motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

Division of Unfilled Officers until After Election

- In the last meeting, it was decided that Alex continue to handle the duties of the executive vice president in an ex-officio position. This still leaves the duties of the Treasurer and Solidarity Officer unclaimed.
- Shayna was Treasurer last year and already has the paperwork needed to continue the work done for this office, and so will claim the duties of the Treasurer until after the election in the fall.
- The Solidarity Officer is the person in charge of handling academic grievances but does keep records of these grievances. This officer can refer individuals to the appropriate resources that by law can handle them directly. Moreover, the officer attends the meetings held by the UAW 2865, and reports to the GSA on what was discussed in these meetings.
- Currently, none of us in the current cohort know how grievances are reported. This is something to ask the previous officer about.
- To our knowledge, this position will not involve a lot of time commitment. It was suggested that some officers alternate through these tasks weekly.

Police Advisory Board Meeting

- The next meeting of PAB is tomorrow at 11am and is looking for another student to join. The board typically meets once per month. Can the GSA send a representative? We can also ask Ahmed who was on the board last year. It was also suggested that the GSA ask DA members if they are interested.
- Another suggestion was to pair up with PABs from other campuses. It was pointed out that different UC campuses have different views of the UCPD.
- Taylor said she will be on the board tomorrow unless anyone else volunteers.

Incoming Student Panel

- Students were selected from the current EC and DA to participate in a webinar on June 24th hosted by Grad Div. Selection deadline is on Tuesday, and five students were recommended.

Discuss Letter in Solidarity

- A draft of the letter was sent to officers last week. How many actionable items can we add to this letter? How radical should the letter be? Can we show that we will be doing something for each of the points addressed?
- A letter from the Black Student Union circulated listing important actionable items. It will also be helpful to reach out to other GSOs for ideas and ask what will be most useful. Another letter for the history department also had some good points. Waiting on UCPD stance may be good. We want as much information as possible before coming to a decision. Other campuses are calling to demilitarize the UCPD, but there are still varying views on this. Should be hesitant on this until after the Police Advisory Board meeting. It was recommended that the GSA support what is outlined in the history department letter and that we address the demilitarization of UCPD.
- The possibility of having student work groups was discussed. For the workgroups that currently exist, are students receiving stipends? These include the Chancellor's Advisory Committees and the Queer Ally program, but students are not paid for participating. Other systemwide committees such as Title IX and Basic Needs also don't offer stipends. Could the GSA create workgroups and offer stipends for participants?
- It is unclear if the GDACD will be continuing next year with Marjorie switching roles. Will reach out to Chris to talk about ways to better support black students. One suggestion was to ask to incorporate more works by authors of color into academic disciplines.
- Adding to this, an idea was suggested that the GSA host a book club over the summer. We can work with the UC Merced library to improve access to anti-racist works and authors of color. Can work with different associations to find good recommendations.
- Have departments take a look at systematic racism and take time to address racism within their own discipline. The applied math department recently wrote a statement in solidarity. The School of Engineering is planning to send out useful readings and videos, and host webinars. Another suggestion was for the GSA to host webinars on how identity and racial norms are seen differently between the U.S. and other countries.
- Another suggestion was made to have a position in the GSA to handle racial issues. Will need to think about how this will be different from the Climate office and update the constitution and bylaws.
- The following items are to be considered in the GSA solidarity letter. Other ideas can be discussed with other GSOs as well.
 - Supporting the letter by the history department.
 - Calling for paid work groups

- Use of works authored by people of color
- Summer book club
- Times to talk with international students
- Adding new officer position in the GSA to handle racial issues
- A motion was made to support the letter and points above. This passed unanimously.

Progress from Last Meeting and other GSA Business

Undocumented Officer Proposal

- This item was postponed until the meeting on June 29th.

International Student Visas + DACA

- An executive order took effect on June 1st, placing restrictions on certain foreign nationals affiliated with the People’s Republic of China. This order could potentially restrict or even suspend all Chinese STEM graduate students on an F- or J- visa from entering the United States. UCOP hasn’t come up with a strategy to handle this; frustration is expressed by UCOP and other campuses.
- It was suggested that we sent out a statement supporting the students affected by this order, and to have affected students send a letter to the federal government each explaining how this will significantly impact them.
- DACA: Currently, no federal police can come to the UC campus without a warrant. A meeting with Undocumented Student Services is being held this week amid DACA protections possibly being repealed. A Supreme Court decision on this is imminent. UCOP has a plan for DACA students, hopes that there is a “phase out” plan rather than an immediate repeal of protections.

Others

- UC Merced is hosting the UndocuStudent conference in July.
- The UC Regents is putting together a workgroup on entrepreneurship and wants someone to join.

Website Updates

- Website migration is done. Work needed to be done on this part of the process was minimal since form items applied only to creation of new websites rather than content migration.

- File system reorganized after two days of dealing with misplaced, duplicate, disorganized, and/or outdated documents laying all over the server. This system is now more human readable.
- Officer bios are up, would like feedback from officers if anything needs to be changed here.
- Jordan will send out emails by the end of the week on what ideas and suggestions can be implemented on the GSA website. He is looking at ways to get students to know more about what the GSA does, and lessen the mystery of the work involved in student government. The GSA website is a great medium for this.

Items Voted On (2 items)

- Proposal to develop a plan to host the GSA special election in the fall semester.
 - **Passed:** 6 in favor / 0 against / 0 abstained
- Proposal to move forward with another draft of the solidarity letter using the points mentioned.
 - **Passed:** 6 in favor / 0 against / 0 abstained

Meeting adjourned at 3:33pm.