

# GSA Executive Council Meeting Minutes

August 10, 2020

2:00pm-3:30pm

Zoom

Meeting moderated by Shayna Bennett

Minutes prepared by Jordan Collignon

## **Members in Attendance**

- Shayna Bennett (President)
- Taylor Fugere (Academic Affairs Officer)
- Jordan Collignon (Internal Communications Officer)
- Ritwika VPS (International Affairs Officer)
- Larisa Gavrilova (Climate, Diversity & Equity Officer)
- Becky Mirza (International Student Advisor, Office of International Affairs)
- Lacey Long-Vejar (Student Visa Specialist, Office of International Affairs)

## **Announcements + Grad Council**

- Meetings of the Grad Council occur on Mondays 1:30-3:00, but Shayna cannot attend due to class. If you are interested in serving as the Presidential Appointee to Grad Council, please let Shayna know.
- Discussed placing the logos on the ballot for the election and having people vote on which of the final logos they prefer.

## **Final Vote on Solidarity Letter**

- Larisa made some changes to the letter that acknowledged the actions that UC Merced is taking, listed the organizations we intend on working with to accomplish our goals and included three additional points to Graduate students.
- We discussed potentially changing the introductory sentence or cutting the first paragraph to refocus the letter to be more about actions UC Merced and GSA are taking. We should not be trying to provide sympathy, but to offer change.
- A vote to approve the letter with the edits discussed was held and passed unanimously
  - 5 yeas, 0 nays, 0 abstentions

## Updates for DA

- Another Delegate Assembly position was filled recently for Environmental Systems. This brings the number of vacant seats in the DA down to 7. It is unlikely that any more seats will be filled before the nomination period opens next week.
- The DA chair will be scheduling a meeting next week and vote on anything that the EC approves today.
- It was suggested that no changes are needed, and a vote was held to approve the two proposals. The vote to approve the responsibilities passed unanimously. These will be considered for DA approval.

## Update on Elections

- Shayna, Jordan, and Angela are on the election commission. The DA voted on Jordan to be the election commissioner.
- We will start advertising about open positions either today or tomorrow. Angela has drafted messages about the election to send through email and social media.
- The nomination period begins next Wednesday. It is not clear yet how nominations will be received (by email or by form), but would like to communicate with Tawana about this more since she will be handling the influx of nominations.
- The section on the GSA website about elections was reset this morning for the fall cycle. Each nomination acceptance will be recorded on these pages.

## Vote on Constitutional Amendments

- Three constitutional amendments were proposed:
- Amendment 1 is the creation of the Legislative Affairs Officer.
  - This has already been approved in the last meeting.
- Amendment 2 updates the minimum frequency of Delegate Assembly meetings from bimonthly to monthly.
  - This will match the current minimum frequency of Executive Council meetings.
  - A vote was held to approve amendment 2, and passes unanimously.
    - 5 yeas, 0 nays, 0 abstentions

- Amendment 3 updates leadership of the Delegate Assembly.
  - Currently the Delegate Assembly is chaired by the Internal Vice President. This amendment changes the chair to be a Delegate appointed by the entire Delegate Assembly. The Internal Vice President still supervises DA meetings but can only take formal action when there is a split vote, in which case the IVP can cast a tie-breaking vote.
  - It was suggested that the two additions be in reverse order to first introduce the delegate assembly as being chaired by a DA member, then introduce the IVP's role in the DA. These changes were made.
  - A vote was held to approve Amendment 3 with these changes and passes unanimously.
    - 5 yeas, 0 nays, 0 abstentions

### **Vote on Climate Officer Updates**

- We talked about adding responsibilities to the Climate officer that would focus issues of racism, while trying not to single out specific groups.
- Two changes were made:
  - Added point D: To work with existing campus-wide and system-wide committees to address systemic racism and develop initiatives and resources supporting underrepresented students. This is similar to point C but focuses on gathering resources devoted to addressing systemic racism.
  - Modified point G: To promote awareness of climate, diversity, and equity issues pertaining to graduate and professional students of every demographic to the university community.
- A concern was raised about point C. UC Merced Social Justice Programs does not address graduate student concerns.
- A vote was held to approve the officer bylaws before addressing point C. This vote passed unanimously.
  - 5 yeas, 0 nays, 0 abstentions

## International Student Concerns/Updates

- Becky and Lacey are staff members from the Office of International Affairs at UC Merced. One of their main responsibilities is to facilitate the student visa process, ensuring that international students complete the right paperwork needed to study at UC Merced.
- OIA had a hard time connecting to students pre-COVID. Students are constantly bombarded with resources and emails, many of which may not apply to them. What other students need may also be a good portion of what international students may need.
- COVID halted the airport shuttle pickup program, and Grad Pal had been discontinued. In the past students were not communicating with their Grad Pals, but now communication is needed more than ever. Around 30 new international students will be coming in this semester. Let's put out a call to returning approximately 250 international students to assist incoming students. Ritu can spread the word through informal channels. We should work with OIA on finding students interested in keeping Grad Pal open. Send an email to all returning international students and compile a list of those interested in becoming a Grad Pal.
- OIA would like to keep the Global Lounge events happening but will have to be done virtually. This event is very popular among the international student population.
- GSA is proposing two hangouts event similar to Global Lounge. There is one for international students and one for 1<sup>st</sup> year students. Carlisha is working on the events schedule for the semester to set up times and dates. Currently we have both of these events scheduled biweekly.
- It was recommended that GSA and OIA work together to set up a panel on diversity. Becky has a PowerPoint with more information. Taylor will reach out to Becky to get this idea started.
- The GSA met with administration last semester to address housing issues and basic needs access for international students. It was pointed out that a housing guide catered directly towards UC Merced graduate students does not exist. Many students instead read the UCM Classifieds on Facebook, the off-campus housing site (<https://och.ucmerced.edu>), or other apartment managed websites. Many students already have connections while others manage to secure housing on their own.
- The most recent copy of the international student arrival guide was sent out prior to the meeting. This should also include strategies for international students to secure housing, food, and other items to help students become more self-sufficient and well-rounded while living in Merced.

## Items Voted On

- The revised version of the Solidarity letter passes the Executive Council.
  - 5 yeas, 0 nays, 0 abstentions
- All three proposals to amend the GSA Constitution unanimously passed the Executive Council.
  - Amendment 1: Add the Legislative Affairs officer
    - 5 yeas, 0 nays, 0 abstentions
  - Amendment 2: Have DA meetings be monthly
    - 5 yeas, 0 nays, 0 abstentions
  - Amendment 3: Have the DA chair be a delegate elected by the current DA
    - 5 yeas, 0 nays, 0 abstentions
- Proposal for revising of the responsibilities of the Climate Diversity & Equity officer passes the Executive Council.
  - 5 yeas, 0 nays, 0 abstentions

Meeting adjourned at 3:36pm.