



**GSA Executive Council Meeting Minutes**  
**November 9, 2020**  
**5:00pm-6:00pm**  
**Zoom**

This meeting is moderated by GSA President Shayna Bennett. Minutes of the meeting have been prepared by GSA Internal Communications Officer Jordan Collignon.

**Members of Executive Council in Attendance**

- Shayna Bennett (President)
- Benny Nguyen (Internal Vice President)
- Zunaira Iqbal (External Vice President)
- Taylor Fugere (Academic Affairs Officer)
- Jordan Collignon (Internal Communications Officer)
- Ritwika VPS (International Affairs Officer)
- Larisa Gavrilova (Climate, Diversity & Equity Officer)
- Karla Seijas (Solidarity Officer)
- Betsabel Chicana (Legislative Affairs Officer)

**IVP Updates (Benny)**

- The GSA passed a set of amendments changing the role of the Internal Vice President in the Delegate Assembly. One important task will be to establish the Delegate Assembly as an independent body of the GSA. However, without the Internal Vice President presiding over the Delegate Assembly, this officer will be given a new role to fill.
- There is discussion on having the GSA redirecting the IVP office to focus more on community building. One avenue being considered is first creating relationships with graduate student organizations (GSOs) at UC Merced and have the IVP be a direct point of contact between the GSA and all GSOs. Benny reached out to some of the GSOs and many of them said they would be happy to work with us.
- A draft of what the IVP role would look like in the bylaws was presented to officers before the meeting and feedback was requested. There was a comment about whether the GSA would be able to represent the interests of GSOs at the university level. It was

suggested that the IVP would serve as a resource for GSOs and advise students on how to register a new club as a GSO.

- There are two sections of the bylaws referring to the IVP's role in GSA elections that seem redundant. Part a lists the role of the IVP as overseeing the elections of the DA, while part e says that the IVP should coordinate election duties with the election officer.
- The GSA will consider a second round of edits before voting, likely to be done at a December meeting.
- One of the roles of the DA is to score GSO funding applications. The Treasurer is responsible for collecting the applications and handing them to the DA to score. The treasurer then considers how to divide up the available funding amongst the GSOs based on their scores. It was suggested that the IVP also take a more direct role in distributing awards from the Sponsored Events Fund and GSO Fund to improve transparency of the application process among both governing bodies of the GSA.

## **EVP Updates (Zunaira)**

- Zunaira attended the November UCGPC meeting last week and has information about what other campuses are doing to promote diversity and inclusion. UC Riverside is working on putting together a diversity training for students. They also had a 15-minute anti-blackness training. Since a lot of funding was not utilized due to COVID, some of it was redirected to the Diversity Training to bring in additional speakers. Diversity training is one of our goals this year, it's important to learn how to offer this at UC Merced. Zunaira can reach out to UC Riverside to learn more about the structure of their diversity training.
- UC San Francisco is pushing for COVID relief funding since it was announced that UC SHIP will no longer cover COVID tests.
- Zunaira also met with the chair of the council on student fees and will be reaching out to SFAC for additional updates.
- A state assemblywoman at this meeting mentioned that president Drake will be meeting with the UCGPC on November 20th. They hope to lead discussions about policing, UC Path issues, curtailment, basic needs, and other known issues students face. Has anyone talked with the Council of Presidents about UCGPC's goals?
- There is also a push to extend the time that students can waive the non-resident supplemental tuition fee. Students are not eligible for a fee waiver until after they advance to candidacy. Once that happens, the fee is waived for three years. Because of COVID restrictions crippling research progress across UC Merced, students will be

taking longer to graduate and thus will risk pushing beyond the three years allowed to waive this fee. International students in particular will be experiencing greater financial hardships. Extending the three-year timeframe is necessary for many of these students to be able to finish their research during this unprecedented time.

- Many of the services that student fees go to are either less active or not active at all. For example, all students pay a fixed fee for transportation and parking services to keep bus service to campus active. Now, the fee has not changed and there is almost no bus service to campus. The GSA wants to know how these student fees are being spent right now, given that the services that this money funds are being curtailed due to COVID.
- Charles Nies has been following student fees closely and is the best person to ask. Quy also has a seat on SFAC as the Treasurer, so she can obtain more info.
- The GSA can still get traction on the transportation issue. Chris is closely following TAPS updates and has some information that can help make the bus system more useful for graduate students. What we can start doing now is draft a letter urging the campus to focus on addressing transportation issues for students. Zunaira would like to start a workgroup that will write this draft. Betsabel, Shayna and Jordan would like to be a part of this workgroup.

### **Updates from the Graduate Council (Shayna)**

- Shayna is unable to make the scheduled times of the Graduate Council meetings since this time conflicts with class. As an alternative, she has scheduled one-on-one meetings with the chair of Graduate Council. The most recent meeting took place last week.
- The chair expressed the possibility of endorsing our letter on ECEC services. We should approach administration from the angle of asking for advice on how to proceed.
- A major concern right now is that graduate students don't have support when taking on service work such as joining a committee. The chair is interested in working with the GSA to draft a document detailing best practices with serving on committees and getting Chris and the rest of Graduate Council to endorse this.
- Department had to consider how graduate student will be funded. Due to funding constraints, graduate student enrollment this year will be much less than expected, with programs only accepting 1 or 2 new students.
- There is also a discussion this year to review the Graduate Council Bylaws. One important item on the table is including more graduate students, such as having one student from each of the three schools serve on the Graduate Council. Add in

something where graduate students can have a chance to speak. Could Delegates serve as reps on Graduate Council? What about the Delegate Assembly chair?

- The Graduate Council also raised concerns about the role of the Graduate Academic Counselor position. More info about this will be discussed at the next Graduate Council meeting.
- A plan for employee curtailment across the UCs has been selected by president Drake. People are placed in different brackets based on their income. Anyone who makes less than \$59,000 per year will not be affected by curtailment. It is unknown how people in the other brackets will be affected, but they will be required to work less hours.

## **ECEC Letter + GSA Newsletter**

- The email we sent out two weeks ago got many lengthy responses and these are being considered for drafting this letter.
- The rest of the GSA received a draft of this letter through collaboration with Christopher Caskey. The beginning and body are written well. Suggestions brought up in this meeting we toward strengthening the closing paragraph. We may be coming from a position to requesting that administration do better rather than demanding. This issue is something parents were not aware of and are outraged that it's happening to being with. Perhaps we can add snippets of testimonials to the last paragraph?
- Once this letter is finished, the GSA may consider writing an additional paragraph to support the letter and then endorse it. We could also have a collection of signatures from people the support this letter. It was recommended that we focus only on the people that we had a conversation with to offer signatures instead of starting a petition.
- GSA Newsletter: Please send your drafts in soon. A couple of people have uploaded to Teams while a few others emailed. The committee handling the newsletter will send you all comments this week before we do a second round of editing. Any new drafts should be sent to Shayna, Jordan, and Benny, or you can upload them to Teams yourself.

## **Larisa's Update**

- The Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion recently held an open house. One upcoming workshop is on anti-racist pedagogy which will be of interest to graduate students and aid in their professional development. She will discuss more about this at the Grad Dean's Advisory Council.

- The mission of this workshop aligns with our goals this year, so we should consider reaching out to EDI. We don't believe we need permission from Graduate Division to start something here.

Meeting adjourned at 6:14pm.

Next Executive Council meeting is scheduled for Monday, November 23rd, 5-6pm.