



---

**GSA Executive Council Meeting Minutes**  
**February 16, 2021**  
**3:30-4:45pm**  
**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)
- Jordan Collignon (Internal Communications Officer)
- Quy Lam (Treasurer)
- Karla Seijas (Solidarity Officer)
- Larisa Gavrilova (Climate Diversity & Equity Officer)
- Betsabel Chicana (Legislative Affairs Officer)

**President Updates**

- Graduate Council discussed progress with writing the Graduate Student Rights and Responsibilities, which the GSA will be playing a role in writing this. In addition, work is being done on writing the Faculty Mentor Rights and Responsibilities. These documents are expected to closely parallel each other in terms of structure.
- Shayna is the chair of a committee in the Police Advisory Board tasked with reviewing and rewriting the board's bylaws. The way the current bylaws are structured makes it difficult for the board to function efficiently, and thus the committee's goal is to restructure the bylaws in a way that empowers the board enough to perform the way it was designed for.
- Council of Presidents gave an update on COVID-19 and current vaccination planning. Graduate student that are paid by the UC will be in California's Phase 1B for vaccinations. Furthermore, vaccinations will not be required for those students yet.
- CAPRA gave an update on how many graduate students will be enrolled. Due to constraints caused by the pandemic, enrollment numbers will not be rising very much.

The focus currently is to increase enrollment for undergraduate students and hire more faculty.

- The GSA currently receives about \$20 per graduate student per year. How much funding does the GSA plan to budget? Around \$12,000 each year is allocated, and at the rate which we are using, we could deplete our reserves in about three years.
- At the meeting with Chris, we talked about the current bus routes and their overall responsiveness.
- The Grad Slam event with Jane Binger was a great success! There were about 24 participants in total. A few students requested that the GSA record the event if they were unable to attend. The video is being edited and should be available next week.
- Election updates:
  - No one expressed interest in joining the Election Commission. We will need help with all the advertising.
  - A referendum will be added to the ballot this year. This will add a \$55 per semester fee to cover the expenses of the pool and new facilities as part of the 2020 project. At least 20% of the graduate student body must vote in the election and a majority must approve the referendum for it to pass.
- Charles Nies has accepted the invite to speak at the GSA's March 3rd meeting.
- First drafts of everyone's officer handbooks are due on March 1st.

## LAO Updates

- Betsabel is working together with the other legislative officers in the UC system as key drivers in the UCGPC's legislative tracking initiative.
- The UCGPC is tacking bills related to a wide array of issues affecting students. Each university is assigned a broad topic connecting some of these issues to investigate and report on initiatives being addressed by elected officials around the county. Members will be tracking the status of bills that are up for adoption in state or federal legislatures and who we can contact for information about each bill.
- Betsabel will be focusing on the progress of Basic Needs initiatives and is forming a team of graduate students at UC Merced to track Basic Needs legislation around the country. We should invite students from the General Membership to join. An email will be sent out soon.
- What is the timeline? Betsabel needs a team to be formed by March 5th. Documentation should be written up by March 17th for the initiatives that the team is assigned.
- The first Merced Town Hall meeting took place last week. There is a discussion about adding a Trader Joes to Merced! Vaccine distribution plan is not too clear as administering has slowed.

## Solidarity Officer Updates

- A request has been sent to Benny and Adam to solicit members of the DA to find interested Delegates in forming the committee to revise the Graduate Student Rights and Responsibilities.
- The Graduate Council requests a draft of the mentoring guidelines by April 1<sup>st</sup>. Need to send an email asking graduate students for input.
- We are aiming to have the GSA newsletter finished by mid-March. Consider adding the member recruitment request to the newsletter. How much time is needed to obtain all the material for the newsletter? Most of the work is for designing a template, the remainder is content. It shouldn't take long to obtain a first draft from everyone, but if we are requesting multiple revisions then we will need more time.

## ICO Updates

- A draft of the bylaws will be ready in about a couple weeks. We only have last minute proposals to consider adding on. The final step will be to proofread and resolve inconsistencies that were missed. When completed, the draft will be sent to the DA for review and the General Membership will have an opportunity to review and comment as well before the DA holds a vote in late March
- Should the EC review the bylaws? It would be recommended that the EC review the bylaws as well since the new draft will affect how the GSA functions.
- A supplementary document is being written which tracks any differences between the current and proposed bylaws. This is shorter than the bylaws themselves so those who do not want to read the entire bylaws can instead read this document to see only the changes in the wording being proposed.

## Treasurer Updates

- There were five applicants in this last travel award cycle. Two were ineligible since they were awarded in the last 12 months. One of the applicants applied this cycle for a conference in August, which is outside the timeline for this cycle. However, the registration fee must be paid by April which is within the current cycle. Should this student be given an exception?
- Most conferences are now being held virtually, and in most cases the only expense is the registration fee which can be refunded if the conference is cancelled. Should we

consider a change in the policy that would make it easier for the travel award to cover the registration fee if the conference itself is outside of the current travel award cycle?

- Usually, the travel award will also reimburse the cost of food. It would not make sense to do this if a meeting is held virtually. Reimbursement for food from a diner down the street from your house is not reasonable. Updates in policies regarding food reimbursement will require more thought given the conference setup.
- Sponsored events fund scoring is in progress.
- We really need to thin about our budget in the coming years. About \$22,000 is in reserve. \$2,000 is allocated each year for the EVP and LAO to take part in UCDC and UC Sacramento. Over the years this will have a moderate impact on our budget. Can we think of other ways to save funds?
- We should consider removing the monetary values from the spring awards. Perhaps offer a certificate or a plaque. How much would that cost? Talk with Cassie about this.

## IVP Updates

- The DA has been assigned the task of scoring the GSO and Sponsored Event Funding applications. There have already been two responses; the remainder of the scoring should be done by the next meeting.
- The DA has also approved the UCGPC proposal to become a non-profit organization and approved both new officer responsibilities previously approved by the EC.
- Trying to schedule a meeting with the GSO leaders across campus.
- Adam sent the DA a call to form a committee to revise the Graduate Student Rights and Responsibilities. Benny will also send Betsabel's legislative team recruitment request to the DA as well.

## EVP Updates

- Joined a meeting with UC President Drake on mental health vaccines, and equality of vaccine distribution.
- UCGPC is strongly asking for the campus policing report from UC Merced. We have no idea who has it. Shayna will connect Zunaira to the chair of the Police Advisory Board to see if anyone over there has the report.
- The UC system recently held a policing symposium
- Curtailment updates: There are reports that TAships are being cut at UCSB and we are trying to get more info from the representatives there. At UCM, there will be no

cutting of salaries for TAs, but the number of graduate students enrolled will remain roughly the same.

- Karen sent an email about the new bus route being implemented before February 9<sup>th</sup>. We haven't heard from TAPS on whether the changes suggested were implemented. **Update:** A modified Bobcat Express route took effect on February 5<sup>th</sup>.
- Zunaira is starting to form the GSA's Basic Needs committee. Be on the lookout for an email to schedule the first meeting.

## CDE Officer Updates

- Updates on Diversity Training: there will be two sessions happening. Asmeret has expressed interest in developing both sessions. The first will focus on an intro to Anti-Racist Pedagogy in the classroom; Asmeret will be taking a major role in leading this workshop. Asmeret will be working with Larisa in developing material for the second session.
- Larisa is putting together a working group to create a survey focused on mental health. A rough draft is expected by the end of March. We should send out an email to all graduate students to find those interesting in joining.

## Other Updates

- Taylor has a system for tracking committee appointments. If you are on a committee, please send Taylor information about your appointments.
- We have brought up a few working groups that would benefit from having those in the General Membership joining. It would be better to send one big announcement over email instead of sending them separately.
- Post email subjects to our Facebook page as well.
- The year is ending very soon, and with all the work being thrown at us we need to know when each task is due. Shayna is creating a timeline for each of the big tasks we have this semester. If there is a deadline we imposed, please let Shayna know so it can be added to the calendar.

Meeting adjourned at 4:53pm.

The second General Membership meeting will be on Wednesday, March 3rd from 4-5pm.

The next Executive Council meeting will be on Tuesday, March 2nd from 3:30-4:45pm.