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**GSA Executive Council Meeting Minutes**  
**March 30, 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)
- Taylor Fugere (Academic Affairs Officer)
- Jordan Collignon (Internal Communications Officer)
- Quy Lam (Treasurer)
- Ritwika VPS (International Affairs Officer)
- Larisa Gavrilova (Climate, Diversity, and Equity Officer)
- Karla Seijas (Solidarity Officer)
- Betsabel Chicana (Legislative Affairs Officer)

**Officer Updates**

Shayna

- Updates on the election: This is the last week for nominations to be submitted and accepted. There are three nomination acceptances for EC positions, which is very low. Those positions are for President, Climate Diversity & Equity, and Academic Affairs. There are nominations for Internal Communications, External Vice President, and Treasurer, but no acceptances for these positions yet. There are also nine nominations submitted for DA positions. Please try to nominate others you may know before Friday. Another email will be sent out soon to remind students to nominate each other.

Zunaira

- The UCGPC is having its next meeting this Saturday.

- Met with Karen Groth and Chris Kello again recently to talk about the bus system. TAPS is the process of developing a survey to help them plan bus routes for the Fall semester. Zunaira and Shayna are proposing suggestions to the survey before it is finalized.

#### Quy

- Results of the GSO and Sponsored Events Funding application cycle have been sent. There have been three awardees in both categories.

#### Benny

- No major updates.

#### Larisa

- Hosted the first Diversity Training event with Asmeret yesterday.
- The Mental Health Workgroup has been formed, composed of four people. The workgroup has already met twice and is currently designing a mental health survey to eventually send to all students. Cinnamon has advised that the workgroup wait until June before publicizing the survey, since there are a couple other surveys coming between now and June.

#### Taylor

- No major updates.

#### Karla

- The Graduate Student Rights & Responsibilities Workgroup met twice, and is meeting again tomorrow. The plan is to finish the document by the end of April and send to Grad Council by May for approval.
- Chris had also suggested that the GSA be involved in discussing the content of the final document.

#### Betsabel

- I've been working on gathering info on legislative bills.
  - Main focus has been on state bills, particularly in basic needs, mental health, and affordable housing.
  - I was able to set up a meeting with the team of Jim Costa. It was suggested that I consider bills at the federal level in order to prepare for the meeting. I'm trying to include info on affordable housing, student loan forgiveness and loan relief; COVID-19 should not affect loans students already have.

- With the help of my team, we managed to get most of the work done ahead of time. We also prepared a detailed report of our findings that we can present to Jim Costa. I believe what we have done is very impressive and we are very proud of this work.
- Continuing to reach out to others about committee opportunities. Also leading the next session of the teaching workshop today.

### Jordan

- I recently created an archive containing documents from previous GSA cohorts between 2006 and 2014. All the documents are archived by year and can be found in the GSA Box account. If you want to see what GSAs from prior years have been working on, you can check out the folder in Box.
- IT recently sent out their quarterly update which contained information about Box storage space. For a while now, Box has stopped offering “unlimited” storage options and has imposed caps on the storage space that all of UC Merced can utilize. Over 500 TB of storage is used up, and the university will soon be hitting its cap. IT will soon be contacting account owners using lots of Box storage to consider other options. Be prepared to be contacted if you fall under this category. Since the GSA account has less than 3 GB of storage used, it is very unlikely that the GSA will be affected.

### Ritu

- Recently sent the updated later for Dishanka to the EC for feedback.
- Investigating sources of aid. Looking at whether undocumented students are provided aid through the university.
- Working on proposal to codify satisfactory progress to degree based on total time for TAships.
- Working on legislative tasks with Betsabel.
- Bringing up the idea in the Basic Needs Committee to talk about tenant rights workshops.
- Anti-Asian violence has been escalating in several parts of the country; this is unacceptable. What can we do to show support to the Asian community? One officer suggested a website that can provide free workshops to address this issue. While it is in good intention to present the expectation of students in an ideal university, it is even more important to present evidence that such expectations are being met. If the GSA would like to propose an idea to show support, this discussion should continue over email and ideas should be presented at a future meeting.

## Resolution to Support the Unionization of Student Researchers

- Anh and Carlos have joined us to talk about a resolution for the GSA to support the formation of Student Researchers United (SRU), a proposed sister organization of the UAW 2865 that will serve as the Union for GSRs. Before this, GSRs did not fall under the classification of an Academic Student Employee (ASE), meaning that did not have the privileges of union membership. The new proposal to form SRU is going to provide the opportunity to give GSRs union membership. UAW 2865 has been on a campaign across the UC system to get support from individual students. So far, about 38% of all GSRs/fellows have signed on to this effort.
- The GSA and the Union are aligned in many ways; in particular, helping and supporting graduate students are their top priority. This resolution will essentially ally the GSA GSA with the UAW and SRU to support the right for student researchers to unionize, and place GSRs on the same level as TAs for union rights. The SRU aims to include research fellows as members, but the UC may push back by saying they are not employed by the university. Efforts will be made to ensure research fellows will be included as SRU members.
- Before the SRU can be formed, a majority of GSRs/fellows across the UC system will need to have signed authorization cards. Given the current rate of progress, the SRU will be able to apply for certification by late summer. Once that happens, each school will be allowed to immediately nominate two GSRs from each campus to come together and synthesize bargaining demands and head to the bargaining table. The aim to have the entire team together by the fall semester. If SRU is formed successfully, the UAW and SRU will be able to bargain together. If timeline works out, they could also be at the same bargaining table. Once the UC has agreed to the initial contract, it will be locked in for all union members.
- A vote was held to approve the resolution for the GSA to support the right of student researchers to unionize and pass on messaging consistent with the SRU's efforts. The resolution passed unanimously.
  - 10 yeas, 0 nays, 0 abstentions

## Continuation of Discussion on Travel Awards

- In the last discussion, we reached an impasse on how to proceed with granting exceptions and/or extensions for travel awardees who couldn't use their award. Three choices were considered: extend the deadline for when the travel award can be used by 12 months, waive the 12-month waiting period for applying for a new award, or both.

- After a review, students who were awarded in the February 2020 cycle are now able to apply again, so it's too late to warrant an extension. At the December 2020 cycle and later, all conferences have been moved to a virtual setting, thus travel awards could still be used for registration and conference accommodations. As such, no additional action is warranted for awardees in this timeframe. This leaves the five awardees in the May and August 2020 cycles, when conferences were still undergoing transition to virtual settings are being postponed/cancelled.
- The EC deliberated on two options to proceed with action for these five awardees:
  - Allow awardees to defer the use of their travel award until Summer 2022.
  - Allow awardees to defer the use of their travel award until Summer 2022 AND allow them to reapply during the 2021-2022 academic year. This aims to preserve the possibility that a student can have two travel awards over two years (or one travel award per year) to maintain the spirit of our travel award policy affected during the pandemic.
- No decision was made on these cases since there still confusion among a few EC members regarding how the exceptions will work. It was suggested instead that, given the number of students to consider for an extension, it was feasible to approach the problem on a case-by-case basis and meet individually with each awardee.
- Regarding the one awardee from the five who received the award in May 2020, the EC has agreed that the GSA should grant an extension. Quy will contact this student and will set up an inquiry with the other four.

## **Votes Held**

- The EC voted unanimously to approve the resolution to support the right for student researchers to unionize. (10 yeas, 0 nays, 0 abstentions).

Meeting adjourned at 4:50pm.

The third General Membership meeting will be on Wednesday, April 7th from 4-5pm.

The next Executive Council meeting will be on Tuesday, April 13th from 3:30-4:45pm.