



GSA Executive Council Meeting Minutes
April 13, 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)
- Ritwika VPS (International Affairs Officer)
- Larisa Gavrilova (Climate, Diversity, and Equity Officer)
- Karla Seijas (Solidarity Officer)
- Betsabel Chicana (Legislative Affairs Officer)

Officer Updates

Ritu

- Working on a draft for the letter regarding progress toward degree based on TA versus research expectations.
- Working on transition document for the next officer.
- Stuff for Basic Needs and Advocacy Committees. Will update Betsabel in the next couple days.
- Utility stipend form: So far, 45 grad students have signed on as well as 1 organization. We need to know if the form reached all the students. Regarding the content of the letter, may consider adding a statement saying statements made were true as of the date the letter was drafted.
- Outgoing/incoming officer series: Ritu would like to share information about each current and new officer on our social media. A Google Sheet has been created to

collect this info. If you are comfortable with being added to the GSA social media, please fill out the prompts in the sheet. Taylor had a form last semester that asked for similar information, could Ritu use this?

- Shayna brought up a suggestion about adding a page to our website highlighting our accomplishments. Everyone here has made significant accomplishments in the GSA, and it will help paint a picture of what the GSA as an organization is capable of.

Taylor

- Links to the old Google docs Ritu referred to have been added to the chat.
- Getting things ready for the next Academic Affairs Officer.

Shayna

- Election progress:
 - Candidacy is doing well overall. Only the Public Relations Officer position has no one running. There are a good mix of new and returning candidates this year.
 - Only 61 votes have been received so far out of the 700+ student enrolled. Please help get more students to vote! The recreation referendum requires at least 20% of the graduate student body to cast votes. If the 20% threshold is not attained for the referendum, the process will have to be redone.

Benny

- Will send a reminder to delegates to spread the word about the utility stipend form.
- Sent outgoing/incoming officer form to the DA.
- Carlos will be talking about the new GSR Union at next week's DA meeting.

Larisa

- Officer handbook was uploaded to Teams.
- Meeting again with the mental Health committee soon. Is there a way the GSA can help? The survey may need a couple revisions, so having another set of eyes will be helpful.
- Today is another meeting with the teaching institute course. There will be two more sessions this semester.

Karla

- Karla continues to work with five others on the Graduate Student Rights & responsibilities. The committee has finished writing a draft!

Zunaira

- Basic Needs committee updates:
 - The Law Clinic responded to Zunaira, will send a reply soon.
 - Met with Karen at TAPS. Work continues on the transportation survey. Zunaira and Shayna added questions about CatTracks. The survey is supposed to come out around the last week of April or early May.
- UCGPC indicated that additional funding is coming to UC campuses this fall as part of the American Rescue Plan. This appears to be the most recent stimulus package passed.
- International students could not receive stimulus money but can still receive funding from their own departments. For example, QSB students are being awarded around \$200 for travel and conferences. No restrictions on status have been imposed.
- A source of COVID relief funding comes from Graduate Division that is independent of government payouts. Charles mentioned something like this in the general meeting last week. Can we ask for more clarity about this funding source and ask who exactly is eligible?

Jordan

- UC Disability committee did not meet last month since it was spring break. The next meeting is scheduled for this Sunday. I hope to hear about the status of the subcommittees on Sunday and next steps.
- Working on officer handbook, still haven't been able to submit a new draft due to other tasks making it difficult to find breathing room.

Betsabel

- White papers completed. Meetings to discuss the results will be starting next week. We're trying to fit in about 20-30 minutes each.
- We will be meeting with three teams representing the offices of Adam Gray, Ana Caballero, and Jim Costa, respectively. Betsabel will update us at the next EC meeting.
- Got to meet with Chris. The Legislative Liaison at UC Merced left some time ago. This person was involved in organizing the annual Advocacy Days that brought students to Sacramento. This opens an opportunity for Betsabel to build connections in legislative affairs with GSA and Grad Div. Shayna mentioned there is a similar advocacy group that set up meetings with legislators as the trustees are looking to get funding for the UCs.

Start Planning Officer Transition

- With barely a month left before the end of our term, we need to discuss how to get the new officers acquainted with the work of the GSA. There are a few things we need to have before then.
- First, everyone should be able to educate the next officer about their position. This can be done by setting up individual one-on-one meetings.
- Second, everyone should have a draft of their office's handbook. Some people already have a draft, and others are aiming to have a draft done this weekend. There should be a draft of everyone's handbook available before the end of the term.
- Third, the new officers should be given the opportunity to shadow the current officers. They can get insight into how we operate and become familiar with the current tasks before taking our place.
- What kind of committees does the GSA currently have? The Basic Needs and Advocacy committees are expected to last for a while, while the Mental Health committee will last for a couple months until the survey results can be analyzed. Should students be recruited through the same recruitment process that Taylor used? Each of the committee organizers agreed with this idea.

Group Photo

- About eight of us are here in Merced; two are out of town. Can we schedule a time where we can all meet to have an organizational photo taken? We have a background for taking more professional photos; for those who are here now, let's get this done soon, then send the background to Larisa and Quy so they can take their picture. We have until May 14th to get this done. Betsabel and Jordan will coordinate. The photos can also be used for Ritu's outgoing/incoming officer series.
- Can we also do something together before the end of our term, such as eat at a restaurant? We can try to time it right so that we get the photo done on the same day.

Utility Stipend Letter

- The form to collect signatures in support of a utility stipend has been approved by the GSA and delegates were asked to send the form to their students. Other UC schools were able to receive some degree of support applying to all graduate students; UC Merced has not provided similar "blanket" support to graduate students yet. Once we reach a critical mass of verified signatures, the letter will be sent to Graduate Division.

- It was suggested that sending the letter as soon as possible is not a good idea. There is concern about whether the GSA will continue to support the utility stipend push once the current cohort retires. This support cannot be guaranteed unless the next cohort makes part of their agenda. If we choose to start moving forward with the letter before we retire, we need to explain why the push for a utility stipend is so important; members of the new cohort can install themselves in this effort. Whether we send it out now or later, we need to make sure that it aligns well with the next cohort.

Meeting adjourned at 4:48pm.

The final General Membership meeting will be on Wednesday, May 5th from 4-5pm.

The next Executive Council meeting will be on Tuesday, April 27th from 3:30-4:45pm.