



GSA General Membership Meeting Minutes
October 7, 2020
4:00pm-5:00pm
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)
- Quy Lam (Treasurer)
- Carlisha Hall (Public Relations Officer)
- Ritwika VPS (International Affairs Officer)
- Larisa Gavrilova (Climate, Diversity & Equity Officer)
- Karla Seijas (Solidarity Officer)

Members of Delegate Assembly in Attendance

- Adam Binswanger (Applied Math)
- Ben Falandays (Cognitive Science)
- Maryam Khazaei (Electrical Engineering & Computer Science)
- Yulissa Perez Rojas (Environmental Systems)
- Hugo Lopez Chavolla (Interdisciplinary Humanities)
- Anuvetha Govindarajan (Physics)
- Shaina Sta Cruz (Public Health)
- Jay Colond (Sociology)

Speakers in Attendance

- Danielle Bermudez (Title IX Graduate Student Rep)
- Chris Kello (Interim Dean of Graduate Studies)
- Charles Nies (Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs)
- Maria Nishanian (Graduate Academic Counselor)



Introductions from the GSA President and Executive Council Officers

- One-by-one each officer introduces themselves by name, program, and officer position.

Introductions from the Chair of the Delegate Assembly and Delegate Assembly Members

- Adam serves as the current Delegate Assembly chair.
- The Delegate Assembly represents the needs of the students in their respective graduate programs. With your feedback and collaboration with campus staff and faculty, the Delegate Assembly can draft actions in response to issues facing students and the graduate programs.
- Your DA program representative is a good person and someone you can contact regarding many issues.
- Historically the direction of the GSA was steered by the Executive Council. One of the goals of the Delegate Assembly is to take the lead on their own agenda without having to rely on the Executive Council.
- One-by-one Delegates introduce themselves and the graduate groups they represent.

GSA Announcements

- Events
 - The GSA will be hosting International Student Hangouts during the semester. Ritu will be hosting Wednesday's event.
 - There are also cardio and strength training sessions offered by an instructor from Recreation & Athletics.
 - Trivia Night will be happening on Thursday from 5-6pm.
 - If you have a suggestion on what events we should host, or if you like to be a host for an upcoming event, please let Carlisha know.
- Call for Legislation Affairs Officer
 - The GSA has recently passes a constitutional amendment introducing a new officer position in the Executive Council.
 - The application deadline is on Friday, October 9th.



- UC Mandated Flu Shot
 - This semester, the UC has added the Influenza vaccine on the list of required vaccines for students.
 - Proof of vaccination must be submitted by November 1st. Students may be prevented from registering for spring classes if they are unable to provide information about being vaccinated.
- GSA Official Agenda
 - We received a question about whether the GSA will be discussing what their agenda will be this year. The GSA will be publishing its agendas within a few weeks. Since we just completed an election cycle our discussion on the main goals this year must include the current officers and incorporate their ideas as well. The agenda must be approved by members of the EC before publishing.

Introductions from Chris Kello and Maria Nishanian

- Dr. Kello has been a part of UC Merced since 2008. He has primarily served as both Interim Dean and Associate Dean of Graduate Studies multiple times since joining UC Merced. Students are strongly urged to bring forth any concerns to both Chris and the GSA, who will be maintaining a line of communication with each other.
- Maria Nishanian joined Graduate Division in December as the first Graduate Academic Counselor at UC Merced. She helps students with ways on maintaining a healthy work-life balance, advise them on their rights as students, and offers study tips as well.

Updates on Title IX Policy (Danielle Bermudez)

- Danielle serves as the graduate student representative on the Title IX Advisory board and today will be giving an update on the changes to the Title IX policies
- The University of California system has made several changes to the Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment (SVSH) policies in August. These changes are in conjunction with new federal guidelines released by the Department of Education over the summer which affects how institutions handle sexual harassment.
- Certain cases are expected to have a hearing component in the investigation process. For these hearings each side can appoint an advisor who must adhere to certain conduct regulations.



- At this moment students can offer feedback about these policy changes up until January 2021. It is encouraged that the President and External Vice President offer feedback when enough information is known. Any student who would like to give their feedback on these policy changes should email Danielle, Zunaira, and Shayna. Student can also reach out to their Delegate Assembly representatives.
- Information on the updated Title IX policies are outlined on the UCOP website: <https://www.ucop.edu/title-ix/resources/>

General Public Comments

- Our next speaker is in a meeting until 4:45 so the floor is open to questions and comments from the general body.
- There is a search committee forming for the goal of selecting a new Vice Chancellor for Finance and Administration. The GSA was asked to find 2-3 student representatives to serve on this committee. Any student who is interested should contact Taylor as soon as possible (within the next 2-3 days) since meetings start in early October.
- The GSA will start planning the agenda for its next general meeting. Students that wish to request an item be placed on the agenda and/or have a topic they would like to address to the GSA should either email the GSA, email any officer, or submit an agenda request form on the GSA website.
- The pool on campus open Tuesday, October 6th for recreational use. Reservations must be made in advance in order to use the pool during regular hours and all users must adhere to policies in place to prevent the spread of COVID, even if they are cleared to enter.
- Merced County has met the criteria to be moved up to the “red” tier, according to the state’s public health department on the coronavirus response. This means the county will start to see less restrictions, which will allow a subset of non-essential businesses to reopen up to some capacity. County press release: <https://www.co.merced.ca.us/DocumentCenter/View/25771/Press-Release---Merced-County-Moves-to-Less-Restrictive-Category-10062020?bidId=>
- There is still concern about why students are being charged fees for services that they cannot access because of the pandemic.
- What events would you like to see? A suggestion was to hold events involving contests. The GSA is hosting a Trivia night on Thursday.



Updates on Campus-Based Fees and Spring Instruction (Charles Nies)

- Many programs and services are still being offered during the pandemic. A lot of money has been spent toward the process of not only transiting to virtual services, but also their maintenance.
- The counseling center (CAPS) continues to offer regular services, support groups and workshops. This includes a support group exclusive to graduate students. Around 23% of visits to the counseling center are by graduate students. It is clear that one-on-one counseling is not CAPS's only avenue of support.
- The recreation fields are open, but the types of activities allowed are limited. The tennis courts are open for regular use again. The basketball courts however will not allow group play yet. Basically, acceptable activities are those that involve no physical contact with one another or any activity that can be done solo.
- How much of allocated funds are considered vital? It was pointed out that continuing students may receive a credit based on how fees are utilized. The GSA runs a travel grant program operating solely of campus-based fees. Students will not be able to use these awards for physical travel, but they can use funds to participate in their conferences. Hopefully the GSA won't have to give back fractions of funding from the travel grant program.
- Can we utilize resources from other UC's? Any UC student will be able to access basic needs resources from any UC school. A UC Merced student for example can access basic needs resources at UC Davis and any other school in the system.

Meeting adjourned at 5:07pm.