



GSA General Membership Meeting Minutes
December 2, 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)
- Ritwika VPS (International Affairs Officer)
- Karla Seijas (Solidarity Officer)
- Betsabel Chicana (Legislative Affairs Officer)

Members of Delegate Assembly in Attendance

- Adam Binswanger (Applied Math)

Speakers in Attendance

- Laurel Eichler (CAPS Staff Psychologist)
- Onochie Akah (SFAC Chair)
- Valara Villanueva (CARE Office Programming Coordinator)

Updates from the GSA President

- Tomorrow (December 3rd) is our last trivia night event for the fall semester. We hope everyone here can join us!
- Officers, there is a one-hour strategic planning meeting happening once our general meeting is over. Students have not been involved in the campus's strategic planning process before. This meeting will allow you to give input for how the campus can grow over the next 10 years. Meet with leaders on campus to think and discuss community-based goals. More information can be found at <https://strategicplan.ucmerced.edu>.

- Last month we were working with concerned student parents about the privatization of the Early Childhood Education Center. Before the break, we endorsed a letter drawing attention to this issue and demand transparency of this process. We would like to host a town hall by the end of the semester so those affected will be able to learn more about why the university is transitioning services to a third-party provider.
- The GSA is also involved in drafting the graduate student rights and responsibilities and will be completing this soon. Next semester, work will begin on drafting a faculty mentor rights and responsibilities, which will provide a framework for mentors and others that work with graduate students on how to manage expectations and their relationship with each other.
- We are also restarting conversations about basic needs issues and transportation with campus administration. Originally a couple GSA officers were going to meet with TAPS today but this meeting was moved to a later date.

About the Legislative Affairs Officer (Betsabel)

- One of the tasks of the Legislative Affairs Officer is to bring graduate student issues to local, state, and national bodies. During her term as LAO, Betsabel is trying to connect with the local government in Merced.
- In Merced, city council meetings are held biweekly and are streamed through Facebook. The [city's website](#) archives the minutes for each of its official meetings, thus making it fairly easy to learn about the work that city officials are doing and ways the Merced community can get involved.
- She is also working with the EVP to learn about opportunities to get involved in the community over a broader region.

CARE Office Resources (Valara)

- Valara works as the program coordinator at the [CARE office](#), standing for Campus Advocacy, Resources and Education. The office is able to advocate and give voice to others on issues surrounding domestic violence, sexual violence, racial violence affecting both men and women.
- All services are being held remotely. Anyone affiliated with the university is eligible for CARE office services and can contact Lynna Cano, the advocate on campus, by phone or by email (ucmcare@ucmerced.edu) to schedule an appointment. The advocate offers free and confidential help, including accompanying someone to medical exams.

- CARE office programming is open to all students, faculty, and staff, including graduate students. What programming does the CARE office have:
 - All incoming undergraduate students are mandated to take violence intervention and prevention training
 - Activities and workshops to engage folks on different topics
 - Social medial challenges
 - Game nights, often quizzes using Kahoot with pop-culture questions.
 - Book clubs with works highlighting people of color. Used to be held twice per week in the summer but is now held once a week on Fridays.
 - A lot of gift cards are given away!
- The CARE office is a confidential resource and does not fall under the rules for responsible employees unlike other departments. Other confidential resources include Valley Crisis Center, CAPS, and the Office of the Ombuds. More formal reporting offices include UCPD and Title IX.
- Follow UCMCARE on social media ([Facebook](#), [Twitter](#)). The office will be doing outreach in January and would be happy to work with the GSA to ensure graduate students to participate in CARE programming.

CAPS Resources (Laurel)

- Laurel is a staff psychologist at the Counseling at Psychological Services (CAPS) center at UC Merced.
- All services in CAPS are being held remotely, whether over the phone or through Zoom. Once the campus is given an opportunity to reopen, CAPS staff will be located in the new student health center.
- Open hours are Monday-Friday from 8am-4pm. After hours, inquiries are directed to ProtoCall for emergency clinical services so that it's still possible for anyone to get in contact with licensed physicians 24 hours a day.
- The psychological services center works with students CAPS is also in the process of hiring student trainees to continue providing therapeutic services.
- What kind of services does CAPS provide:
 - Individual and group services by appointment
 - Drop-in services are offered at set times during the week

- Crisis services are available for students who may feel like they are at risk of harm from others or to themselves, ways to give them appropriate support
- Fixed group sessions where any student can sign up. CAPS also schedules skill building and [support groups](#) for all students. For graduate students, there is a graduate student support group and an international student support group. Staff hear a lot from students about struggles of being isolated and a strong need to make connections, and these groups allow an opportunity for students to voice their concerns.
- Everyone at UC Merced also has access to [TAO \(Therapy Assistance Online\)](#) to supplement to CAPS services and also a free subscription to the [Calm app](#).
- [LiveHealth](#) is used for access to counseling services outside of CAPS via telehealth.
- CAPS is working on a new training program for interns and practicum students and is in the process of hiring new clinicians so that the office is able to accommodate more people for weekly services.
- In addition to the grad student and international student support groups, are there any other groups you would recommend to graduate students? All support groups are open to all students, including graduate students. It was mentioned that graduate students may feel uncomfortable if they find some of their former students participating with them.
- What about students thinking about imposter syndrome? This is one of the most common concerns that students bring up at CAPS. The support groups are a good way for students to get advice from their peers for dealing with imposter syndrome.

Student Fee Advisory Committee (Onochie)

- The Student Fee Advisory Committee (SFAC) is comprised of a majority of students from the graduate and undergraduate levels with the rest of the membership being faculty and staff. Onochie has served as Vice-Chair of SFAC last year. SFAC focuses on making recommendations for how the campus can allocate funding obtained through student fees, monitoring student services, and ensuring that department campus are using student fees appropriately.
- Members of SFAC receive some benefits including stipends which help refund the cost of the student services fee and building a professional network with other students and administration from other campuses.

- SFAC meetings are held every Tuesday from 12-1pm and are open to everyone affiliated with UC Merced. Online meetings require you to sign into your university account.
- Voting members of SFAC are eligible for the fee stipend. Anyone can join SFAC meetings or join as a shadow to gain experience but will not be paid.
- How does one become a voting member? When there is an open spot on SFAC, one can fill out an online form or get in touch with one of the voting members. A spot usually opens up when someone has graduated or decides to leave on their own.

Meeting adjourned at 4:58 pm.

The meeting schedule for Spring 2021 will be finalized within the next few weeks.