



GSA General Membership Meeting Minutes
February 3, 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)
- Zunaira Iqbal (External Vice President)
- Taylor Fugere (Academic Affairs Officer)
- Jordan Collignon (Internal Communications Officer)
- Ritwika VPS (International Affairs Officer)
- Karla Seijas (Solidarity Officer)

Members of Delegate Assembly in Attendance

- Adam Binswanger (Applied Math)
- Angela Macedo Andrade (Materials and Biomaterials Science & Engineering)

Speakers in Attendance

- Jorge Arroyo (Undergraduate Research Opportunities Center)
- Maria Ramirez Loyola (Office of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion)

Welcome from the GSA President (4:02pm)

- Executive Council officers gave introductions
- All General Membership meetings will be held on the first Wednesday of each month at 4pm.

Updates from the Delegate Assembly Chair (4:07pm)

- The Delegate Assembly is striving to work more independently from the Executive Council.

- Members of the Delegate Assembly are working closely with their departments to ensure the needs of their students are being addressed.
- The Delegate Assembly is primarily working on three tasks this semester:
 - Creating a Basic Needs task force led by Zunaira
 - Communication information: who specifically to contact regarding different issues such as financial assistance, graduation forms, etc.
 - Programs for diversity and inclusion.

GSA Social Events Calendar (4:07pm)

- The GSA in partnership with Graduate Division will be offering a significant collection of events for the graduate population this semester.
- **International Student Hangout:** last Tuesday of each month
- **First Year Student Hangout:** first Tuesday of each month
- **Trivia Night:** every other Thursday
- **Virtual Game Night:** first Thursday of each month
- **Origami Lessons:** third Thursday of each month
- **Jane Binger: Ten Tips for Creating a Grad Slam Presentation:** February 10th at 1pm.
- **Anti-racism in the classroom:** Larisa and Taylor will host an additional session on evidence-based teaching practices on May 3rd and 4th.

Mentorship Opportunity at UROC: Jorge (4:17pm)

- The Undergraduate Research Opportunities Center is looking for six graduate students to serve as research mentors to undergraduate students during the summer. Around 114 scholars were in the program last year. Students this year will be split up among the six mentors.
- This will be a paid position involving 20 hours of work per week. Mentors will be working virtually, but students will have on-site opportunities. Here's a link to the job listing: <https://aprecruit.ucmerced.edu/JPF01066>. The hiring process is expected to be completed before the month of April.
- Mentors will be helping students with graduate school “prep” work such as assisting with graduate school application materials, offer feedback on statements, research abstracts, and how to communicate their research. The aim is to give students a taste of what it’s like to be a graduate student.

- There will be opportunities to develop new content for the program such as hosting workshops. UROC is always looking for new ideas each year.

GSA Election is Coming Up (4:25pm)

- The GSA is recruiting graduate students to join its own Election Commission in order to host the Spring 2021 general election. Members of the Election Commission will be managing all the tasks required for the election and will refrain from running in the election themselves.
- The duties of the Election Commission are as follows:
 1. Advertise vacant positions in the GSA Executive Council and Delegate Assembly
 2. Work with a third party to solicit nominations for open positions
 3. Create an electronic ballot the general membership will use to cast their votes
 4. To ensure a fair and unbiased elections process
 5. To certify and announce the results of the election
- Students who would like to join the Election Commission should send a statement of interest to the GSA by noon on February 10th.

Campus Experience Survey Workgroup: Maria (4:27pm)

- A strategic planning workgroup is being formed. Members of the UC Merced community can self-nominate to have a position on the workgroup. Nominations are due by Friday February 5th.
- The timeline for the workgroup is flexible depending on the needs of the participants. Currently the workgroup is in the process of establishing its membership. Members can choose to serve in the spring, summer, or fall based on their availability.
- How many positions are available? There is a seat for a grad student, a seat for senate/non-senate faculty, and a seat for members of the Chancellor's Advisory Council and the Grad Dean's Advisory Council on Diversity.

Budget and Funding (4:33pm)

- The winter travel award cycle has now closed and awardees will be notified tomorrow. The spring travel award cycle began earlier this week; applications are now open until May 1st. For more information about the travel award application process, please contact the GSA Treasurer.

- Note that most conferences are being held virtually. The GSA travel award will cover the registration fees for virtual conferences up to the amount allowed in GSA application.

GSA Agenda Update (4:36pm)

Last semester, the GSA released its agenda for the academic year. In this meeting, we would like to provide an update on our progress toward accomplishing these goals. The GSA previously listed five sets of goals to accomplish this year.

1. Improve functionality and sustainability of the GSA

- Officers are in the middle of writing handbooks for future cohorts.
- Two new officer positions are being proposed to join the ranks of the Executive Council. The Delegate Assembly will vote to approve the officer's responsibilities and the General membership will have the opportunity to approve the creation of the offices themselves. One of these officer positions seeks to improve the visibility of the GSA and graduate student clubs by assisting with their design needs.
- To streamline the elections process, a handbook for the Election Commission has been written.
- A new set of bylaws are being drafted, and amendments to the GSA Constitution are being considered. Changes will be voted on during the general election.
- The role of the Internal Vice President is being modified to start building a relationship between the GSA and graduate student clubs. Changes to the responsibilities have been reviewed and approved by the Executive Council. The Delegate Assembly will be voting on the responsibilities soon.
- A new officer to represent undocumented students has been approved by the Executive Council. The General Membership will have an opportunity to review the officer position and consider approval.

2. Promote greater involvement in the GSA and the campus at large

- The GSA recently published its calendar of social events for the semester aimed at bringing graduate students together during the pandemic. One event is geared toward first-year graduate students, offered on the first Tuesday of each month.
- Taylor greatly improved the committee application process and implemented advertising strategies since the fall semester.

3. Offer a wide range of social events

- The GSA is also working with Graduate Division to partner to ASIP for free coffee events to help graduate student become more involved with their community and support local businesses.
- Larisa and Taylor have been working with CETL to foster a community of Teaching Assistants and are leading a workshop in evidence-based teaching practices.

4. Equity Diversity, and Inclusion

- A seventh workshop on evidence-based teaching practices will be held at the beginning of May that will focus on anti-racist pedagogy in the classroom.
- Students who serve on committees related to equity, diversity, and inclusion, such as the Graduate Dean's Advisory Council on Diversity, will receive a stipend for their service.
- Ritu is building a foundational relationship between the GSA and Services for Undocumented Students.

5. Restart conversations with admin about Basic Needs

- Zunaira is working with TAPS to improve the bus routes for graduate students.

General Questions and Comments (4:45pm)

- Will the undocumented affairs officer be a connection at the system level? This will be a major milestone for the office. Through the relationship with Services for Undocumented Students, this is a goal to realize true. The UC Regents had an item focused on the undocumented student population. Our hope is that the new officer position can provide further information on issues coming from upper levels in the UC system.
- Larisa and Taylor host a series of workshops based on books of teaching for faculty aimed at improving classroom climate, increase student motivation, and pedagogical research to improve teaching strategies. There are a total of seven workshops in the series. Students who attend at least five of the workshops will receive a certificate.

Meeting adjourned at 4:53 pm.

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