



GSA General Membership Meeting Minutes
April 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)
- 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

- N/A

Speakers in Attendance

- Jazmine Kenny (Student Health Advisory Committee Graduate Representative)
- Jason Loo (Basic Needs Coordinator)
- Anyasleydi Ramos Sandoval (Basic Needs Coordinator)
- Elizabeth Rodriguez Cruz (Food Distribution Coordinator)
- Charles Nies (Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs)

Announcements (4:03pm)

- We will have a speaker to talk briefly about UCSHIP and who you can talk to regarding any questions you may have.
- We will also have a couple speakers to talk about different Basic Needs resources available at the university and how you can sign up.
- Charles Nies will be talking about housing plans for next semester and will give us an update on funding the university received during the pandemic and how students can receive these funds.

- We will also update everyone on the timeline of the GSA election, and present information about the recreation and athletics fee referendum that students will be voting on this week.

Student Health Advisory Committee (Jazmine) (4:04pm)

- Jazmine serves as the graduate student representative of the Student Health Advisory Committee which serves as the primary source of information about UCSHIP.
- The committee meets with UCOP to talk about campus community health concerns and access to medical, dental, and vision providers that UCSHIP covers.
- Students can submit UCSHIP grievances to the committee and can direct students to the appropriate resources. Can ask about enrollment, when and how to waive UCSHIP if you have insurance. For TAs and GSRs, insurance is part of the package. Whether students are automatically enrolled depends on your department.
- There is currently an effort to remove co-pays through telehealth and mental health services for students covered under UCSHIP.
- If you are enrolled in UCSHIP and you have dependents, you can enroll your dependents through UCSHIP as well.
- More information about UCSHIP can be found here: <https://health.ucmerced.edu/insurance>. It includes the enrollment times and how you can waive UCSHIP if you have a different insurance provider.
- If you have any questions, please reach out to Jazmine (jkenny3@ucmerced.edu).

Spring 2021 Election and Recreation Referendum (4:12pm)

- The final wording has been received. The details are as follows:
 - The new fee would impose an additional \$55 per Fall and Spring semester for all students and \$25 per Summer semester, starting in Fall 2021. This fee will increase every three years (first increase in 2024) by either 3% or a value equal to Fresno's Consumer Price Index.
 - The purpose of this new fee is to support the maintenance of the new recreation facilities constructed as part of the 2020 project, including the tennis and basketball courts, and the new swimming pool. This fee will also support a study for installing sports lighting at the tennis and basketball courts.
 - If the referendum passes, the new fee will go into effect starting Fall 2021, and each student will be charged an additional \$55 to their campus-based fees.

Students will then be allowed to use these new facilities without having to pay for an additional membership.

- If the referendum does not pass, students will not be charged an additional \$55 per semester. However, students will be required to pay for a membership to access the new facilities. The estimated membership fee is \$100 for a semester.

Elections (4:13pm)

- Some nominees were not notified about their nomination in time before the deadline. Therefore, the elections commission has updated their timeline.
 - **April 7th** – Nomination acceptance ends
 - **April 8th** – Voting begins
 - **April 15th** – Voting ends
 - **April 16th** – Results announced
- The elections page is continuously being updated as new candidates are accepting their nominations (<https://gsa.ucmerced.edu/gsa-elections>)
- What will be on the ballot? There are seats for the Executive Council and Delegate Assembly. There are two proposals for additional offices to be added to the ranks of the Executive Council. The referendum that was discussed earlier will also be on the ballot. **We need to have at least 20% of the student body vote on the referendum. Please help get the word to others and ask them to cast their vote!**

Basic Needs (Jason, Anysleydi, Elizabeth) (4:16pm)

- Basic Needs resources are included here: <https://basicneeds.ucmerced.edu/>
 - The Bobcat Pantry is held every other week on campus. They are doing a contactless distribution drive-thru during the pandemic. Users should fill out a form in advance so that the organizers can prepare a supply bag in time. It was stated that about 35% of students who came to the Bobcat Pantry are graduate students. The service is available to anyone with a valid CatCard
 - The USDA Food Distribution is held on the third Friday of each month; the next one is on the 16th! This is open to all students with a valid CatCard. Unfortunately, the distribution will not accept student volunteers to assist.
 - The Pop-up People's Pantry is every Saturday from 1-2:30pm. The People's Fridge is open 24/7 at the same location. Both are open to the community.

- One-hour financial coaching sessions can be set up with Charah Coleman, the Financial Wellness Coordinator. These can be set up in regular intervals.
- CalFresh is open to all student who satisfy the eligibility requirements (<https://basicneeds.ucmerced.edu/calfresh-outreach/student-eligibility>)
- It has been noted the graduate students have a difficult time satisfying the eligibility requirements. CalFresh outreach would like to work with the graduate student population to help get students signed up. Students can request a one-on-one consultation to help through the application process.
- Elizabeth would like to connect with the GSA Basic Needs committee to help spread the word and collaborate on other related topics.
- FAQs: <https://basicneeds.ucmerced.edu/calfresh-outreach/faqs>
- Any questions can be sent to CalFreshoutreach@ucmerced.edu
- If you want to collaborate with the Basic Needs department, participation in these programs tends to increase during the breaks when there are students who choose not to leave Merced.
- How to access the Bobcat Pantry for students who use the bus? The Bobcat Pantry allows individuals to pick up food on behalf of students who have filled out the form in advance. The person picking up the supplies just needs to show proof, such as the student ID of everyone they are helping.
- If it's not possible to get the supplies to the student or if a student cannot reach the distribution site, a \$25 gift card can be substituted. This is an estimate for the value of each supply bag.
- Charles indicated that the University of California sent out a Basic Needs plan in November 2020. (<https://regents.universityofcalifornia.edu/regmeet/nov20/s1attach.pdf>)

Housing and Stimulus Payments (Charles Nies) (4:32pm)

- A letter will be sent to all incoming graduate students with information about off campus housing resources. Contact Martin Reed for any questions.
- The housing office has indicated has noted that there is transitional housing available on campus. Priority will be given to international students as most need more time to secure housing. There are approximately 24 two-bedroom apartments on campus for graduate students. These are estimated to be about \$1,000 per month.
- Outside of the main campus there is construction being done on the new Merced hub by Yosemite Ann McKee. This complex will be for grad students in fall 2022 and is

estimated to have about 300 beds. This place will be just across from the Merced station which aims to have about 800 beds.

- How will the Merced Hub affect the housing market in Merced? It was noted that less than 1% of housing in Merced is vacant. Because there is little space, realtors and landlords may take advantage of students by raising prices. It is also not clear whether the university will have a limit on the number of units available in the Merced Hub.
- What will be the price of rent in the Merced Hub? An estimate is not yet known, nor is it certain that the pricing structure will be like that of the Merced Station.
- There is still significant concern about how much of a student's income goes to rent alone. The university has stated that any rent over 50% of income is unacceptable. It was pointed out 50% is still way too high; anyone who has to pay 30% or more of their income toward rent is considered "rent burdened."
- Charles noted that one of the reasons for creating new student housing is to take pressure off the community apartments in the city. Many of these living spaces are single family homes. If students frequently occupy most community units, it makes it difficult for others to find housing. Therefore, having dedicated student housing should make it easier for the rest of the community to find housing of their own.
- Charles indicated that the university has received nine forms of stimulus money directed toward higher education. Three of these sources are tied with the CARES Act: funding toward institutions in general, funding for direct student support, and funding for multicultural serving institutions. All three of these funding sources had to be used or dispersed by the end of Summer 2020. At that time, students needed to prove they were Title IV eligible; this required students to fill out the FAFSA. Unfortunately, this excluded undocumented and international students from eligibility.
- There were two other sources of funding in December for students who demonstrated need. A FAFSA was not required, but students still needed to be Title IV eligible, thus undocumented and international students were not eligible for this funding either. In response, the university pooled together some resources to help provide awards to undocumented and international students. A FAFSA was not required; students had to fill out an affidavit instead. Graduate students should coordinate with Eric Cannon from Graduate Division for more information on eligibility.
- In the near future, a bill will be presented that will focus on students who have the most need, which includes foster youth and students with dependents. They will be placed into tiers based on their status and level of need.
- Charles indicated the university was recently approved to receive one more source of funding. It is not yet known when the university will be receiving that money. However, the deadline to spend this money is the end of the 22-23 academic year.

- Regarding campus reopening, California announced that it plans to “re-open” on June 15th. It was pointed out that the California plans to drop the tier system on this day, which could clear the way for the campus to reopen. The campus will be returning to primarily in person instruction this fall, with some limitations in capacity for lectures. Discussion groups will all be held in person.
- It was noted that this transition will not be mandated for the upcoming summer semester. Classes in Summer 2021 will still mostly be held online.

Meeting adjourned at 4:58 pm.

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