

GSA General Assembly Meeting Minutes
September 13, 2023
11:30 am - 1:30 pm
Hybrid

This meeting was moderated by GSA President Destina Bermejo. Minutes of the meeting have been prepared by GSA Internal Communications Officer Morgan Lavenstein Bendall.

Members of the Executive Council in Attendance

- Destina Bermejo (President)
- Kotono Babaguchi (External Vice President)
- Sarah Malone (Internal Vice President) **ABSENT**
- Adam Binswanger (Treasurer)
- Claudia Johnson Madrigal (Academic Affairs Officer)
- Morgan Lavenstein Bendall (Internal Communications Officer)
- Mykael Pineda (Candidate for Public Relations/Community Outreach Officer)
- Genevieve Egbunno (International Affairs Officer)
- Jullanar Williams (Climate, Diversity, and Equity Officer)
- Arabi Seshappan (Solidarity Officer)
- Mohit Saraswat (Candidate for Legislative Affairs Officer)
- Elsie A. Cortes (Social Media and Graphic Design Officer)
- Jai Mica Vaca (Undocumented Affairs Officer)

Members of the Delegate Assembly in Attendance

- Jordan Collignon (Applied Mathematics)
- Kunle Adewole (Chemistry and Chemical Biology)
- Rachel Casper (Cognitive and Information Science) Zoom
- Zachary Malone (Environmental Systems) **ABSENT**
- Emily Cobbs (Interdisciplinary Humanities)
- Ariell Smith (Materials and Biomaterials Science and Engineering)
- Sameen Yunus (Physics) Zoom
- Armin Hojjaty (Psychological Sciences) **ABSENT**

Members of the General Assembly

- Priosmita Biswas
- Diksha Sharama
- Jocelyn Ornelas Munoz

Guest Speaker

- Hayley Montoya (Office of Student Involvement)

Purpose of the Meeting

The purpose of this meeting is to have our monthly general assembly meeting. We had a guest speaker, Hayley Montoya, explain how graduate clubs can register to become official clubs on campus.

Meeting began at 11:30 am

Introduction

- Everyone stated their name, department, year, etc.
- Next meeting we want to have an agenda where all Executive Council puts an update they would want to discuss.

How to Register Graduate Clubs at UC Merced (Speaker Hayley Montoya from the Office of Student Involvement)

- Currently, only 9 graduate organizations are registered as clubs.
- You can always reach out to Hayley (hmontoya2@ucmerced.edu) if you have any questions
- Requirements for starting a club on campus
 - Need to have at least 4 officers (President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasure)
 - Need to have an on-campus faculty advisor
 - Responsibilities of the advisor depends on what the club wants the role of the advisor to do
 - Need to have a constitution, by-laws, and diversity and climate statement
- Catlife
 - Registration page here: <https://clubsorganizations.ucmerced.edu/how-create-club>
 - Need to log in using Student IDs
 - All grads should be able to access CatLife (If you can't contact Hayley)
 - The registration page will have all the requirements listed that must be done to become an official club
 - There are some in-person training like event and financial planning requirements.
 - These need to be completed by the end of fall semester (or the semester you apply in)
 - If you can't attend the in-person training, you may watch the recordings. There will be a quiz at the end to make sure that you watched the recording.
 - The primary contact should be the president of the organization.
 - You can add an image and logo for your club

- All documents (constitution, by-laws, and diversity and climate statement) will be uploaded to apply
 - If you have positions in the club that are not listed, you should add them as a committee chair.
 - The club can only be associated with the university using “[club name] at UCM”, not “UCM[club name]”
 - You are expected to take care of the reserved rooms for meetings.
- Why become a register club?
 - This is the only way to get funding from the GSA and other funding sources on-campus.
 - Student Affairs and OSI have funds that may be used for clubs aside from GSA
- What is the deadline to apply as a club?
 - Deadline is October 1st
 - Please email Hayley or the Office of Student Involvement now if you cannot meet the deadline.
 - Registration technically never closes but will start reviewing clubs on October 1st.
- How do you re-register a club?
 - Updating a club will be in the same place as registering a club
 - It is a slightly different process but very similar.
 - If you are reviving a club that has been gone for a while, you will need to contact the Office of Student Involvement to gain access to the account to update the information.
- Can you register your clubs for both graduates and undergraduates?
 - Yes! But the undergraduate funding options require over half of members to be undergraduates (50% + 1)

12:02 pm Hayley Montoya left the meeting

Destina Bermejo (President) Updates

- Going to speak with Dr. Hrant Hrantchian at the end of the month to talk about student concerns on-campus.
 - Will ask about why the fees from the Graduate Division are different in comparison to last year.
- Officer from the chancellor office is looking for a graduate student to be at the open forum for some positions next week. The meeting times and availability are in the GSA Slack Channel. Lorenzo is going to the first section if you have questions about what you would be doing.

Arabi Seshappan (Solidarity Officer) Updates

- Asked the union how the about the fee structures work (the \$168.50 if we are considering to propose to increase student fees)
- Asked the union why the money from the Graduate Division is so different from last year.
 - They did not have an answer but will look into it.

- We have the same number of graduate students so we shouldn't be having a budget decrease of the amount the Graduate Division is saying we have this year.
- Cassie from the Graduate Division told us this is the money that we get.
 - Note that we should get this from her in writing.
- Will find more information about these two things before our next meeting
- **Question: What happens if we increase our fees? Does the school pay or do we as students pay?**

Claudia Johnson Madrigal (Academic Affairs Officer) Updates

- Has made an excel sheet with the committees and council meetings that we need to participate in
 - This is in the Box on Slack
- **Request: Everyone on the executive council should look at this excel sheet and fill out what committee they are responsible for**
 - Having this done by next week would be very useful but we have set this to be done by the next general assembly meeting

Elsie A. Cortes (Social Media and Graphic Design Officer) Updates

- Updated the logo and working on sharing it
- Participated in tabling at the student employment
 - We currently don't have much for tabling and should work on improving that.
 - Thoughts on things to have for tabling:
 - Resource guides
 - Informational flyers about GSA
 - Merch (stickers, shirts, etc.)
 - Communicate with Cassie about merch and include Adam

Kotono Babaguchi (External Vice President) Updates

- In November, we have the grad summit where all the UC campuses come together to share what they are doing.
 - It would be nice to have merch for this to be able to share with other campuses.
- We need to set the priorities of the GSA for this year.
 - After discussing, we came up with:
 - Updating the by-laws and how we conduct elections (especially how the delegate assembly members are elected since it is not consistent between departments)
 - Advertising resources that are on-campus already
 - Currently, there are resources that provide emergency funds, transition housing for incoming graduate students, club funds, etc.
 - We should have an end of semester survey to see what people would like to see improved on-campus.
 - GSA Events

- ***Request: Have a speaker at each of the general assembly meetings such as administrative staff to guide graduate students with resources available to us.***

Genevieve Egbunno (International Affairs Officer) Update

- Meet with Lacey Long-Vejar from the International Students & Scholars Office about the Multicultural Center
- Discussed having a cultural show at the Multicultural Arts Center (in November)
 - Checking on food regulations
 - Would potluck style make this easier?
 - Could have people wear cultural and traditional apparel to represent their culture
 - Would be good to have this in November during UCM international week
- Plan for helping international students move to Merced
 - Build a housing network so people can find housing easier
 - Plan to have two days where we have a bus that will take students from the airport to Merced (prior to the beginning of the semester)
 - We can work with the international office to create this resource and make it more of an established resource
- Working on building an Alumni connection group for international students
 - International students have 2 months after graduating to obtain a job to stay in the U.S.
 - ***Goal: Have resources on how previous international alumni were able to obtain jobs after graduating.***
 - Arabi Seshappan and Mykael Pineda would like to help with this

Adam Binswanger (Treasurer) Update

- Met with Cassie Gunter from the Graduate Division last week about the projected budget for this year.
 - Cassie seemed happy with the plan.
 - Cassie told us that we need to be careful about our funds and that she needs to approve how money is being spent.
- Currently planning on \$12,000 designated to the travel award where there will be 30 awards set at \$400 each.
 - This year it won't be based on reimbursement.
- Last year, we spent \$83,764
 - \$10,000 was from the Transformational Impact Grant (which paid for the TEDxUCM talk)
- Worked on cutting \$33,000 out of last year budget
 - Cassie told us this was an accounting issue and we weren't supposed to be getting as much money as we were before but GSA will be investigating what exactly the accounting issue was or have it in writing
 - Mohit Saraswat suggested that we have this in writing from Cassie.
 - Travel awards are being impacted from the cut.
- Suggestions:

- Mohit Saraswat suggested reducing the number of awards rather than reducing the amount within the award
 - Claudia Johnson Madrigal and Jai Mica Vaca think that it is equitable for keep the travel award at \$400
 - Jullanar Williams noted that this problem is caused by the Graduate Division.
- Need to look at the wording of the Travel Award
 - Some departments have issues with providing double funding for travel
- Added more funds to supporting clubs matching with our goal to have more graduated clubs on-campus
- Allocated funds for events that were successful last year
- Allocated money for Koton Babaguchi (External Vice President) travel expensive for when she has to meet with other UCs
 - We haven't gone to some of the UC GSA events in the past since some are based on lobbying.
- Need to ask if the fees for the UCGCP have changed
- Planned to give out travel awards every three months
 - Note that this will be difficult to put together and is usually once a semester.

By-Law Revision Committee (Jordan Collignon, Claudia Johnson Madrigal, and Morgan Lavenstein Bendall) Update

- We looked at other UC GSA by-laws to see how they are structured and funded.
 - We are the only UC GSA that are volunteers. Every other school is paid monthly.
 - We really liked UC Santa Cruz's structure of combining the Executive Council and Delegate Assembly meeting. It seems to make voting easier.
- Currently, we are working on
 - Meeting proceeding
 - Legislative powers of DA
 - Combining the Executive Council and Delegate Assembly would make everyone vote at the same time so we can get things done more effectively.
 - We have had problems in the past with having to wait until the next in-person meeting to make a decision.
 - Elections
 - Having each department follow the same voting practice instead of allowing them to do their own voting process
 - Figuring out what the responsibilities of the delegate assembly are moving forward
 - Implementing in the by-laws that the GSA Officers are able to get paid because UC Merced's GSA is the only GSA across the UCs that are not paid positions
- We need people to look at what we currently have for by-law revisions (particularly the election process)
- Until the by-laws are approved by the delegate assembly, we must follow the previous by-laws

- Talking about the Constitution
 - Article III, IV, and V have ties to the by-laws
 - Article III requires us to know how departments currently choose reps for the delegate assembly
 - We will need public comment on revising/adding amendments to the constitution
- Currently, we can update by-laws every semester.
- Looking for feedback on merging the two meeting (Executive council and delegate assembly meetings)
- After we are done, we will send a copy to Patricia Ordonez-Kim, executive director of the UC Graduate and Professional Council (UCGPC)

Need to have Mykeal Pineda and Mohit Saraswat officially voted into office by the next Delegate Assembly meeting which will be September 21, 2023 at 4:15pm in SSB 350 (Grad Pad)

Jordan can add people in the Executive Council and Delegate Assembly to the GSA Slack Channel.

Meeting adjourned at 1:23 pm