

**GSA General Assembly Meeting Minutes**  
**November 1, 2023**  
**11:30 am - 1:30 pm**  
**Grad Pad (SSB 350) / Zoom**

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)
- Adam Binswanger (Treasurer)
- Claudia Johnson Madrigal (Academic Affairs Officer) **zoom**
- 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) **zoom**
- Arabi Seshappan (Solidarity Officer)
- Mohit Saraswat (Candidate for Legislative Affairs Officer) **zoom**
- 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) **ABSENT**
- Rachel Casper (Cognitive and Information Science) **ABSENT**
- Zachary Malone (Environmental Systems) **ABSENT**
- Emily Cobbs (Interdisciplinary Humanities)
- Ariell Smith (Materials and Biomaterials Science and Engineering) **ABSENT**
- Sameen Yunus (Physics) **ABSENT**
- Hunter Prout (Sociology) **ABSENT**

**General Assembly Member**

- Marie Buhl

**Guest Speaker**

- Connor Scott-Calaway (LGBTQIA+ Center) **ABSENT**

## **Purpose of the Meeting**

The purpose of this meeting is to have our monthly general assembly meeting. We will discuss the bylaws and have a conversation with Connor Scott-Calaway about the LGBTQIA+ Center.

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## **Meeting began at 11:30 am**

### **Welcome by the GSA President**

- We need to advertise the GSA Facebook page and Instagram
  - We will send out an email to both the Facebook and Instagram page

### **Semester Newsletter**

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### **President Update - Destina Bermejo**

- Charles Neis and Hrant Hrantchian's meeting is being rescheduled due to illness.
- Went to the Council of Presidents meeting last week.
  - Asked about ReGROW with other campuses.
  - Worked on determining the biggest concerns for graduate students that will be presented to the UC regents and President Drake
    - This conversation mainly focused on housing.
- Post-ReGROW Petition
  - We got ReGROW rescheduled to January 11, 2024, where graduate group chairs get to choose to opt-in.
  - With the petition, we got about 255 comments about the event and the timing of it.
  - We need to work on being engaged with Graduate Division about ReGROW.
  - How did ReGROW come to be?
    - Graduate Division did an audit last year with the 4th-years asking about how informed and prepared they felt qualifying and their program requirements.
      - We were told by them that the GSA would get the data from this audit but never did.
    - It was a goodwill gesture by the Graduate Division to inform students of information that they might be missing.
      - They want to make sure students are successful and fill out all the necessary forms.
- Need to reschedule October's monthly meeting with Graduate Division

### **External Vice President - Koto Babaguchi**

- Going to Graduate Summit at UCLA on November 4, 2023.
- We gave 3 students reimbursement for airport pick-ups.

### **Internal Vice President - Sarah Malone**

- Delegate Assembly (DA) meeting Agenda for November 2, 2023, includes the following:

- Vote on the by-law revisions
- Discussion about GSA election
- Communication in each department
- Adam is going to talk about amending the budget
- We now know who all the DA are and more people are active.
  - We need to advertise DA positions for the next election because we don't have all of the positions filled.
- Student Fee Referendum updates (Adam attended this meeting as well)
  - The student referendum committee asked for a DA member to join the committee.
  - Campus-based fees and student fees are different.
  - About increasing campus-based fees
    - Has been in contact with Brain O'bruba
    - Working with others about how to word our proposal
    - Planning to have a final draft done by the end of November 2023
      - This will have to be reviewed by lawyers.
      - After being reviewed by lawyers, we will need to talk to general assembly members and others.
      - Charles Neis sent a referendum example.
    - Marie from the Union says that campus-based fees are covered by the UC from our contract so graduate students wouldn't have an additional cost if we increase the fee.
- Elections committee updates
  - No update
  - Hayley who used to be our election go-to-person to set up the form has left UC Merced.
  - GSA decided that it is too late to hold a special election so we will focus on the next regular election.

### **Public Relations/Community Outreach Officer Updates - Mykael Pineda**

- Gradsgiving update
  - Location: Five Ten Bistro
  - Amount: \$1800 from GSA funds + Graduate Division funds
  - Graduate Division has funds for alcoholic drinks (with valid IDs)
  - We are not planning on making a carpool since there's alcohol at this event.
  - Expecting 100 people to show up to this event
- Grad Pad Game Night
  - The Grad Pad is going to be fixed this coming weekend
  - Hoping to host this event next weekend.
  - Morgan should send out an email about this event.
  - Update after meeting: pushing this event back since it is not finished
- Halloween Movie Night
  - The event went very well.
  - Had some technical difficulty using a Mac laptop in the room booked.
  - Jai mentioned that some students showing up was dependent on what movie was being shown
    - Next year, let's plan to have a chill movie and then later a scary movie.

- We need to clean the GSA office in the Grad Pad.
  - Need some volunteers with an hour of free time to get this done.
  - We need to think about what we should use the space for. (Caps and gowns?)

### **International Affairs Officer - Genevieve Edgbunno**

- Cultural Show Update
  - Talking with Mykeal about this event and what the budget will be.
- Immigrate Day Event
  - Have spoken with many people about this event.
    - Other organizations on campus would like to help sponsor this event. Hence, we might be organizing this event with more people outside of GSA and have more funds for this event!
  - Miguel supports two on-campus groups and has advised that we do the event in the spring to be able to collaborate with the other groups
  - The event will include everyone on campus, not just graduate students.
  - Suggested that we have a red-carpet event.
  - Need to form a committee to start organizing this event.
    - Jai has some people in the Monarchs that would be interested in helping.

### **Solidarity Officer - Arabi Seshappan**

- Transit Meeting Update
  - There was an agreement with cops?
  - There is a possibility of having subsidized e-bikes on campus (part of the new contract).
  - Later in the year (mid-November), we need to meet with Graduate Division to make sure that stuff stated in our new contracts is being done.
  - There were discussions about bus routes and bike paths.
    - There should be a survey being released about this to all students.
- Reminder to check paychecks!
  - There are different pay bumps for mixing TA and GSR.
  - Email the union if there are problems or questions.
- Union amalgamation (between Grad & Post Doc unions) was successful!
  - We are one big union.
- Strike-anniversary party: Tuesday, Nov. 14, 1-4 pm on the lawn in front of the Admin building
- Marie Buhl from the Union
  - Transit has the right to negotiate with the school about bus schedules and parking pricing.
    - Every student can attend the transit meeting.
  - With the amalgamation, they are working on the new structure of the union.
    - The problem for UC Merced is that we need 32 more union members to have voting power as graduate students!
  - For the Strike-anniversary, they are asking for a GSA 2-minute speaker.
    - We should table for GSA at this event. (Elsie is going to work on flyers.)
- Taxes for both federal and state are extended until November 16, 2023.
  - Asked Graduate Division about hosting a tax workshop.
  - Morgan will send out an email.

### **Social Media Coordinator Updates - Elsie A. Cortes**

- Tabling Merchandise Update
  - Using ImageMasters is does not fall within our budget and has fixed quantity requirements.
    - Emailed about getting smaller quantity but haven't recieved a response.
    - Looking at other options
      - Acquiring items without our logo at a lower cost and quantity requirement.
    - Emailed about
  - Instead of getting items, we could look at:
    - Spin the wheel
    - Face painting
    - Flyers with GSA info and FAQ
- Rolling out our new logo on social media.
  - UC Merced only cares about its official logo, not GSA

### **Internal Communications Officer - Morgan Lavenstein Bendall**

- Asked how the GSA wants to help campus organizations send out emails represented by the GSA.
  - Ex. Reproductive Rights Petition requested us to send a mass email
    - Decided that we wanted to share this.
  - If not GSA message, mention that we are forwarding the information.
  - Destina said to use best judgment.
- Starting to look at updating the website
  - Need to delete the podcast since we no longer do it.
  - Needs a general clean-up
  - Need to add more information/FAQ
- Fall Semester Newsletter
  - We should check the Box folder for examples.
    - Jordan is going to post an example to the Slack channel.
  - Change this to a welcome-back newsletter because we don't have that much time.

### **Treasurer Updates - Adam Binswanger**

- All the GSA funding applications are open.
  - The deadline for all applications is November 11, 2023.
  - Morgan needs to send a reminder email
- We accidentally made our budget too big so we have worked on fixing it.
  - We have gotten ride of a movie night in town
  - Graduate Division is now helping us fund gradsgiving
  - We have lowered the GSA stipends.
  - This discussion was with Cassie Gunther from Graduate Division back in September.
- Still need to check if we need to pay the UCGPC Fee.
- There was a fee that all students could opt in or out of, but we don't know what has happened about it. We will ask the Student Fee Advisory Committee

### **Undocumented Affairs Officer - Jai Mica Vaca**

- Have been working with Connor Scott-Calaway about getting gender-neutral restrooms

- and affordable gender-affirming care on campus
- Currently, issues being discussed on the reproductive justice committee:
  - Menstrual health products vary in price by building on the UC Merced.
  - Working on access to over-the-counter health items available on campus such as cough drops and menstrual health products.
  - Working on adding other STD prevention products available on campus other than just condoms.
  - Trying to get Plan B more accessible on campus
  - Currently available by going to the campus health center (Free with UCSHIP; \$25 without UCSHIP)
  - Going to be sending out an undergraduate survey about these issues, but would like graduate students to also do it.
- Need to make more awareness for services on campus.

**Academic Affairs Officer - Claudia Johnson Madrigal**

- Please send Claudia the meeting minutes of the meeting you attend.
  - Just a general summary is fine.
- Please everyone review the committee list.

**By-laws**

- The DA is hopefully going to vote on this tomorrow.

**Meeting adjourned at 1:21 pm**