



Graduate Student Association
University of Rhode Island
Senate Meeting Minutes

Date: April 25, 2025

Location: Hamilton Senate Chamber, Memorial Union (3rd floor, Room 300)

Time: 5:05-6:24 pm

Members in Attendance:

Executive Council

Karolina Wojcik	President
Quinn Tucker	Vice President
Mariam Oladepo	Treasurer
Evelyn Mensah	Secretary
Behtom Adeli	Webmaster
Marianne Otoo	GAU Liaison/Incoming Executive Board
Waqar Alam	Event Coordinator
Evans Boateng-Boakye	Social Media Manager/Event Coordinator Assistant

Senate

Florence Fields	Graduate Student Conference
Rebecca Chan-Chao	Nomination and Election
Margaret Grady	Nomination and Election
Rebecca Kpoor	Events
Taylor Elpers	Events
Ali Raoufi	Graduate Student Conference
Amirali Momeni	Graduate Student Conference
Samuel Osafo	Graduate Student Conference
Moazzem Hossain Saeem	Incoming Executive Board
Manjeet Kumar Heeragowlikar	Nomination and Election
Oluwatobi Opesade	Budget and Finance
Md Abdullah al Rumon	Budget and Finance
Helani Singhapurage	Publicity
Subek Acharya	Incoming Executive Board
Ruth Najel	Incoming Executive Board

Terpase Gbaa	Publicity
Ololade Gbadebo	Publicity
Harvey Hayes	Publicity
Joseph Owusu-Sarfo	Publicity
Ghazal Nessari Poortak	Graduate Student Conference
Abigail Smith	Parliamentarian/Constitution and Bylaws
Nicolette Scarduzio	Budget
Nelly Aka Akissi	Events/Incoming Executive Board
Victor Olaoye	Budget
Doris Ndassi	Graduate Student Conference
Kirk Brown	Constitution and Bylaws
Mariyam Abbas	Nomination and Election
Emily Kenyon	Budget
Mary Allbee	Events
Blythe Albanese	Graduate Student Conference
Justin Watkins	Incoming Executive Board
Nausad Miyan	Incoming Executive Board

I. Call to Order.

The GSA's third and last Senate meeting for the spring semester took place in person on April 25, 2025. Quinn Tucker, the vice president and chair of the Senate, officially called the meeting to order at 5:05 PM and warmly introduced President Parlange as the guest speaker.

II. Guest speaker, President Parlange

President Parlange expressed his pleasure in being with the graduate senate, welcomed everyone, and wished students well as they approach the end of the semester, acknowledging their busy schedules with teaching and research. He highlighted the importance of the university's status as a research institution and its contributions to the state and beyond. He highlighted the vital role of graduate education at URI, emphasizing its significance in fostering research and academic excellence. The president touched on various achievements and activities at the university, including notable awards, the recent Biomechanics Day event, a lecture focused on the crucial topic of freedom of the press, and ceremonies honoring long-serving faculty members celebrating 10 to 40 years of contributions to the university.

He acknowledged the hard work of students by mentioning the research presentations they recently delivered, underscoring the progressive environment at URI. As he spoke about the upcoming May commencement for graduating students, he extended heartfelt congratulations to senators completing their studies and explained the rotation of events among colleges to ensure fair scheduling. He also referenced URI Day at the State House, in which the university actively engages with state leadership to highlight its

contributions and initiatives. President Parlange further discussed the recent town hall meeting that took place in March, outlining key concerns raised by students and faculty. He remarked on the high caliber of URI's graduate students and reinforced the principles of academic freedom that underpin the university's mission. The president elaborated on the university's strategic plans, mentioning how federal policies have a direct impact on research funding, enrollment numbers, workforce development, and economic growth. He painted a comprehensive picture of the URI research ecosystem, which encompasses various fields such as business, healthcare, life sciences, technology, and the blue economy, showcasing how URI works to attract businesses and families interested in education.

During the Q&A session that followed, the Senate expressed its appreciation for his insights. Abby raised concerns about potential budget cuts in the upcoming fiscal year, and President Parlange confirmed that future reductions to research funding are indeed anticipated. He explained that numerous directors and faculty members might face challenges because of these cuts, highlighting that two critical funding sources, NIH and NOWA, have already experienced reductions. He elaborated on the historical context of the National Science Foundation, established post-World War II, which once provided substantial funding for university research and is currently seeing a troubling decline in approval rates for grant applications.

To address these financial challenges, the president proposed exploring innovative revenue-generation strategies and partnerships with local industries to create alternative funding sources. He recognized that meaningful progress might take two to four years, but immediate action is necessary. Rebecca praised the president's transparency and inquired about actionable steps that students and departments could take to support the university. In response, President Parlange suggested that students consider inviting local agencies and industries to engage with them, emphasizing the importance of aligning academic interests with workforce opportunities available in Rhode Island. He stressed the value of collaboration and encouraged students to assess ways they could contribute to URI's mission.

Karolina proposed that the university community could rally to sign a petition supporting the institution, but President Parlange advised against this approach, stating it would be more prudent for him to lead such initiatives. Instead, he encouraged open dialogues with department heads and deans to brainstorm collective solutions to support the university amid funding cuts. Rebecca followed up by raising the issue of financial support for students who have recently lost funding. The president detailed that the administration is actively brainstorming strategies to assist these students, urging engagement groups to reflect on how they might contribute as well. Justin echoed the president's points, emphasizing that collective efforts from faculty and departments could bolster the university's position during challenging budget negotiations. He proposed that the Senate serve as a platform to unify stakeholders and explore solutions that would address both budget constraints and student needs effectively.

III. Approval of March 14, 2025, Senate Meeting Minutes

Rebecca moved to approve the minutes from the previous meeting, and Ghazal seconded the motion. The minutes were unanimously approved.

IV. Executive Board Reports

- a. President:** The president shared updates from the Council of Graduate Schools, noting improvements aimed at enhancing services for students. Recommendations included expanding the graduate school team and introducing a 24/7 interface to facilitate tracking of faculty and student research activities. She celebrated the doubling of the student community and the growth in Senate membership over the past few years, thanking the executive board for their dedicated support. She also raised concerns regarding property regulations, including bicycle usage, building access, and guidelines for amplified sound during events. The establishment of a university ombuds office was highlighted as a resource for addressing grievances effectively between students and faculty. Additionally, she discussed new initiatives regarding the university's ticket policy for football and basketball games, which now includes access to 1,000 tickets available to all students, including graduate students.
- b. GAU Liaison:** The GAU liaison provided updates on ongoing negotiations, which have been challenging, especially concerning the cancellation of free parking for graduate students, housing issues, and dining services for graduate students. Efforts are ongoing to restore these cancellations for graduate students. But the university authorities have approved an increase in stipend for the coming academic year. The town hall meeting to address concerns expressed by graduates to RI senators saw a noticeable turnout, anticipated by both graduate students and senate members. The GAU is also working on refining contract language concerning teaching assistant recruitment, aiming to revise milestones based on the number of years students have studied. The frequency of GAU meetings will increase to weekly to expedite negotiations, set to commence on Monday. Lastly, Marianna encouraged GAU members to submit their grants for reimbursement before the June 30th deadline.
- c. Webmaster:** The webmaster encouraged all students to visit the university's website to access essential resources. New links include funding opportunities, the senators and committee list page, a dedicated graduate student page, and an updated meetings page to ensure students remain informed and engaged. More details in the addendum.
- d. Treasurer:** In the treasurer's report, updates were given regarding regalia reimbursement, along with financial support for GSA-sponsored events such as conferences, meetings, and monthly GSA events. There were mentions of payments made to an executive board member from a prior office, tax filing processes that need to be completed, and an urgent reminder that all checks should be cashed promptly to facilitate the transfer of funds to the upcoming executive board. Quinn promised to email the financial reports to all members; Abby noted the absence of this communication, and Quinn assured her it would be sent shortly. The treasurer urged everyone to cash their checks as soon as possible to avoid complications.

- e. **Secretary:** The secretary reminded attendees about the importance of committee and senate attendance, reinforcing how essential it is for effective governance and administrative success within the institution. Quinn expressed the need for all committee members to remain engaged and informed both in their committees and in the Senate to fulfill their responsibilities effectively. Evelyn reported on the general emails sent to graduate students to keep them informed of GSA events and other events, preparing agendas and minutes for all GSA meetings.
- f. **Vice President:** In our recent Senate meeting, we reflected on the accomplishments and challenges of the past year. Karolina encouraged everyone to consider self-nominating for positions within their respective departments for the upcoming year/semester, emphasizing the importance of active participation in our governance.

V. Committee Reports

- a. **Events:** The chair shared updates on the event planning for the upcoming gala. She outlined the necessary resources required to ensure a successful event and proposed an increase in the budget to facilitate the gala's execution. Victor, the budget committee chair, was asked by Quinn to provide additional insights on the budget discussions during new business, and the committee appreciated his contributions.
- b. **Graduate Student Conference:** Ghazal, a co-chair, reported on the successes of the recent Graduate Student Conference, highlighting the positive feedback received from participants and the impressive attendance of 107 individuals. She suggested developing a set of archives for future senators to reference, ensuring continuity and support for subsequent conferences. Ghazal extended her gratitude to the co-chairs for their invaluable support, and Karolina expressed her backing for the establishment of an executive board to oversee future conferences. Byle also acknowledged the tremendous efforts of all those involved in making the conference a success.
- c. **Publicity:** The chair commended the members of the Publicity Committee for their hard work, particularly in promoting both the gala and other events through captivating pictures and videos. He noted that interest in research night remains high, with several students eager to participate, and encouraged ongoing promotional efforts.
- d. **Constitution and By-Laws:** The chair addressed the committee's diligent work throughout the year, despite facing scheduling challenges. He expressed gratitude for the comprehensive review of the constitution and bylaws, emphasizing the committee's dedication to ensuring clarity and organization.
- e. **Budget and Finance:** The chair provided an overview of the budget spreadsheet for the academic year 2024/2025 and discussed the reallocation of funds to support regalia purchases and conference expenses. He noted that certain checks had not yet been cashed, which would not negatively affect the overall budget. Akissi, the event committee chair, mentioned a request for an additional \$1,000 for upcoming events, and Victor confirmed the feasibility of this request, with Quinn indicating they would address it further in the new business section.

- f. Nominations and Elections:** The chair shared updates on the election process, including nominations and the declaration of results. She extended her appreciation to the committee for their efforts and thanked advisors Quinn, Marianne, and Evelyn for their guidance. Additionally, she announced the newly elected executive board members, of whom one was absent from the senate meeting. Quinn congratulated the new members and praised the election process for its transparency and high turnout.

VI. New Business

- a. Graduate Student Conference (GSC) executive board position:** Karolina highlighted the need for an executive board dedicated to the Graduate Student Conference, seeking input from the senate. She proposed an amendment to the constitution to formalize this role, explaining that the new executive board would be responsible for executing all conference-related activities.
- b. Additional Funds to Gala (Event):** A motion was introduced to add a \$1,000 funding request to the agenda as a new business, proposed by Rebecca and seconded by Samuel. The additional funds were approved by Maggie and seconded by Md Rumon.

VII. Announcements

- a. Appreciation:** Quinn concluded the meeting by thanking various individuals for their contributions. He encouraged everyone to pick up their checks before leaving and specifically praised Karolina for her exemplary support and commitment as president, Mariam for her meticulous management as treasurer, and the secretary for effective communication. He also recognized the webmaster for his dedication to maintaining the website and the GAU liaison for providing timely updates. Additionally, he applauded Waqar for organizing successful events and fostering connections within the graduate community. Finally, he expressed appreciation to Evans for the Publicity Committee's efforts to communicate effectively with the student body, acknowledging all committees for their hard work and emphasizing that the Graduate Student Assembly is poised for future success. Quinn expressed his honor in serving as both vice president and Senate chair.

VIII. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 6:24 PM, with members Rebecca, Maggie, Victor, and Kirk confirming the motion.

Evelyn Mensah
GSA Secretary 2024/2025

Addendum

Webmaster Report

GSA Website Annual Webmaster Report

Over the past year, the GSA website has undergone several key updates to improve clarity, transparency, and usability:

- I. Meetings Page:
A new layout separates Senate minutes, agendas, and E-board meeting minutes, making navigation clearer. A “Permission to Speak” link has been added, allowing non-senate members to request to address the Senate via the Chair’s invitation.
- II. Funding Page:
Helpful resource links have been added at the bottom of the page to assist graduate students seeking funding opportunities.
- III. Senate Page:
A new section displays senators by program/department and the committees they serve on.
- IV. Housing List:
Regular updates now reflect current housing availability. Additional security measures were introduced, including link verification, Google Earth checks, and ad comparison. In some cases, direct contact with advertisers was made to prevent scams.
- V. Conference Page:
The Graduate Student Conference information has been fully migrated to the new GSA website layout. The page now includes guidelines, registration details, and keynote speaker information.

These changes have transformed the GSA website into a more dynamic and comprehensive platform where graduate students can easily find information about their senators, the Graduate Conference (GradCon), funding opportunities, and other important resources.

Thank you.

Behtom

GSA Webmaster

Committee Reports (April 2025)

Graduate Student Conference Committee Report

Programming Logistics and Art Sub-Committee Report

The purpose of the Programming, Logistics, and Art Sub-Committee was to ensure the smooth operation of the Graduate Conference while maintaining a creative and engaging atmosphere. The committee's responsibilities included (1) programming coordination, organizing and playing a key role in shaping the conference agenda; (2) logistical setup, assisting with venue arrangements, technical requirements, and ensuring that all necessary materials were available for attendees; and (3) art & design, developing posters with approval from the social media team and contributing to video content creation.

This committee consisted of six members, each assigned specific roles or tasks and contributing ideas to ensure its proper functioning. The members included:

Ruth Akorli, who served as the Transportation and Parking (TAP) liaison, facilitated communication between the committee and TAP to secure parking availability and permissions. Florence Fields was responsible for procuring all necessary poster equipment for the conference, designing flyers, serving as a liaison for the hospitality team, contributing to conference agenda ideas, and assisting in communication with Joan Peckham. Amirali Momeni played a significant role alongside the social media team in covering the conference and served as the video content creator for promotional purposes. Shannon (Shay) McKee was responsible for communication from the Audio-Visual Unit (URI technical support) and the GSA social media unit. As the co-chair, I delegated and oversaw all responsibilities and tasks assigned to the members of the Programming Logistics and Art Sub-Committee. I worked closely with the other chairs in communicating ideas, securing and/or procuring the conference location and rooms, assembling the agenda, and providing art and design approval and elements. Other members include Md Abdullah Rumon and Mariama Fatajo.

Members who carried out their tasks and responsibilities included Ruth, Florence, and Amirali. Shay, however, did not execute her responsibility in communicating with the URI technical support team or the social media team to my knowledge, and as a result, any flyer communication was primarily done by myself and/or Florence and the members of the committee, along with helping members within GSA, contributed to the technical issues that arose or demands held by the conference.

The committee held approximately three meetings, and consistent communication occurred via Gmail chat, which eliminated the need for Zoom meetings. Those who participated in the conference from the Programming, Logistics, and Art Sub-Committee included me and Florence Fields. Those who actively worked during the conference were I, Florence, and Amirali. Challenges faced included communication between the social media unit regarding clear responsibilities that needed to be shared between them and this committee, the lack of URI technical support, and the required participation of some members within this subcommittee. As a result, GSA members who were not part of the GradCon committee were encouraged to volunteer during the conference to help increase the number of conference workers. For future conferences, there should be clearly defined responsibilities and expectations between the conference committee and other GSA units. This could include assigning an active liaison from the beginning to facilitate coordination. The limited planning time led to rushed decisions and

communication gaps among members. However, it is important to note that the committee had to start from scratch when planning this conference. General feedback suggests that the number of speakers should be limited to two, given that it is a one-day conference. Additionally, ensuring an even distribution of oral and poster presentations throughout the day would allow presenters to participate in other oral sessions and engage in poster viewing outside of their own.

Hospitality Sub-Committee Report

The purpose of the Hospitality Sub-Committee was to manage and ensure a welcoming and comfortable environment for attendees at the Graduate Conference. This included organizing refreshments, facilitating attendee check-ins, and liaising with other teams to ensure smooth operations during the event.

Unfortunately, none of the assigned members actively participated in fulfilling their responsibilities, which posed significant challenges. As a result, I had to personally commute frequently to the catering center to ensure that refreshments and related tasks were handled properly. Additionally, miscommunications early on complicated the coordination process, but with perseverance and adjustments, everything ultimately came together successfully—a result I am happy with.

For future conferences, it is essential to set clear expectations and accountability measures for subcommittee members from the start. Having contingency plans and backup volunteers can also help mitigate issues arising from a lack of participation.

Abstract Submission and Review Sub-Subcommittee Report

The Abstract Submission and Review Sub-Committee was tasked with overseeing the review, selection, and organization of abstracts submitted by participants for the Graduate Conference. Their responsibilities included ensuring the quality of submissions, assigning presentations to sessions, and coordinating with other committees to finalize the schedule.

This committee consisted of three exceptional members: Evelyn, Blythe, and Demetrios, all of whom demonstrated outstanding dedication and teamwork. Their diligence ensured that abstracts were reviewed promptly and fairly, with high-quality feedback provided to authors. They also coordinated seamlessly with other committees on the day of the conference to ensure that oral presentations and poster sessions were well organized.

Despite my absence on the conference day, Evelyn, Blythe, and Demetrios worked hand in glove with the other committees to guarantee the success of the event. Their efforts truly stood out and set a standard for future conferences.

For future conferences, I would suggest not planning a gala at the end of the conference.

Organizing such an event takes considerable time and effort that could instead be used for other critical tasks or components of the conference. Additionally, any decisions regarding the conference should be communicated to all co-chairs responsible for their respective subcommittees to reduce confusion and ensure everyone is aligned.

Challenges included managing a high volume of submissions within a limited timeframe. In the future, having an expanded review team or staggered deadlines could streamline this process further. Additionally, maintaining consistent communication with speakers could ensure smoother scheduling and participation.

Special thanks go to Ms. Karolina Worjick and Evelyn for their exceptional dedication and contributions. Their hard work was invaluable to the success of this event, and their efforts should be recognized as an example for future committees.

For future co-chairs, please note that the username and email for the GRADCON email account are

Email: gsagradconference@gmail.com

Password: gsagradconference1^

Additionally, all relevant information, resources, and materials you might need for planning are stored in the Google Drive associated with the event.

Events Committee Meeting

Date: April 4, 2025

Location: Online

1. Attendees:

- Waqar Alam
- Akissi Nelly Aka
- Tracy Santos
- Taylors Elpers

2. Agenda:

1. The potluck and game night event review
2. The Gala organization

3. Key Points Discussed:

- The Potluck and Game Night
- Less successful than the past event, but people showed up and had an enjoyable time playing games and bringing their dishes.
- Games provided by the games club
- April Event: the GSA Gala “A Night under the Stars”
- Venue Location: Quidnessett Country Club, 950 N Quidnessett Rd, North Kingstown, RI, 02852

- Dates: May 09, 2025
- Time: from 5:00 pm to 10:00 pm

4. Decisions Made concerning the Gala

- \$15 entry fee for both graduate students and guests
- Carpools are provided if necessary
- Certificates and Awards receptions during the Gala

5. Next Steps:

- Invitation of the faculty, professors, or alumni of URI

Prepared By:

Akissi Nelly Aka

Chair of the Events Committee.

Nomination and Election Committee Report

The Nomination and Election Committee has completed the key stages of the GSA 2025 E-Board election process. This includes drafting and distributing nomination forms, issuing reminders, confirming nominations, and preparing for the voting phase. Below is a summary of the committee's progress:

Nominations

- Nomination forms were sent to the graduate student body on March 21, 2025.

- Multiple reminders were issued, and final nominations were collected by April 4.
- A total of 35 nominations were received.
- Additional nominations for the secretary position were managed on April 14.

Confirmation

- A confirmation form was created and shared on April 7.
- Emails were sent to nominees for verification and photo submission.
- 31 nominations were confirmed.
- After removing duplicates and accommodating changes in role preferences, 19 positions are up for ballot.

Voting Status

- Voting is currently in progress.
- The voting email was sent out on April 16, and a reminder email to vote was sent on April 18. We will send two more reminders before the voting closes (i.e., April 23).

Next Steps

- The committee will tally votes on April 24.
- Election results will be shared with the Senate and the full graduate student body on April 25.

The committee remains on track with the established election timeline and is committed to ensuring a fair, transparent, and well-organized process.

Sincerely,
Mariyam Abbas,
Chair, N&E Committee,
Graduate Student Association.

GSA PUBLICITY MEETING RECAP HELD ON 18TH April 2025

Attendance: 5

Agenda

1. Gala Night
2. Research Spotlight
3. Handover plan

Gala Night: The committee discussed the plan to take pictures at Gala Night. From the entrance to the gala night. The committee also wants to make short videos to post on social media handles.

Graduate Students Research Spotlight: We got the names of those interested in the Graduate Students Research Spotlight. However, the social media manager was unable to shoot the video due to time constraints. We want to hand over the names and the details to the incoming social media manager to ensure the continuation of the process.

Handover: We have returned all the GSA items to the secretary, preparatory to the end of the semester. We shall use them at the Gala Night and return them.

ATTENDANCE

TERPASE STEPHEN GBAA
EVANS BOATENG-BOAKYE
OWUSU-SARFO JOSEPH
LOLADE GBADEBO

COMMITTEE CHAIR
E-BOARD REPRESENTATIVE
MEMBER
MEMBER

The **Constitution and By-Laws Committee** has not met since the last GSA Senate meeting, where we introduced an amendment.

GSA BUDGET AND FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT (APRIL) – VICTOR I. OLAOYE

The Budget and Finance Committee held its meeting on Friday, April 18, 2025. After briefly checking in with one another, we proceeded to review the GSA account, carefully examined the approved budget, and assessed how much each committee has spent as well as the remaining funds.

We implemented the adjustments approved during the March Senate meeting to the 2025 budget—specifically, the additional \$5,000 allocated to the Graduate Student Conference and regalia reimbursement and the \$2,500 deduction from student group funding.

We also reviewed the overall state of the GSA account and found that, so far, spending has been well-managed. However, it's important to highlight that the current account balance reflects figures as of the end of March, not April. As such, it does not yet account for pending checks issued by Mariam in April that have not been cashed. The actual balance will be updated once these checks are cleared.

Thank you.

Attendance:

Victor (Chair)

Mariam (E-board member, Treasurer)

Emily

Nicollette

Tobi

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
1		GSA 2024 BUDGET						
2	S/N		2024 Proposed	2024 Adjusted	2025 adjusted	Spent as at March 2025	Amount left	
3		1 Constitution and By laws	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	
4		2 Publicity	\$9,299.71	\$4,745.71	\$4,745.71	\$3,890.46	\$855.25	
5		3 Graduate Student Conference	\$15,000.00	\$7,000.00	\$12,000.00	\$2,012.58	\$9,987.42	Not yet summed
6		4 Events	\$17,625.00	\$10,000.00	\$10,000.00	\$2,821.37	\$7,178.63	
7		5 Fall Renumeration	\$8,800.00	\$8,800.00	\$8,800.00	\$8,458.70	\$341.30	
8		6 Spring Renumeration	\$9,800.00	\$9,800.00	\$9,800.00		\$9,800.00	
9		7 Conference Reimbursement	\$10,000.00	\$10,000.00	\$10,000.00	\$4,901.44	\$5,098.56	
10		8 Regalia Reimbursement	\$9,000.00	\$9,000.00	\$14,000.00	\$3,340.00	\$10,660.00	
11		9 Bonding Issurance	\$300.00	\$300.00	\$300.00		\$300.00	For 2025/2026 Session
12		10 Envelope and Stamps and check books	\$100.00	\$100.00	\$100.00	\$123.50	(\$23.50)	
13		11 Graduate Student Group Funding	\$3,000.00	\$3,000.00	\$500.00		\$500.00	
14		12 GSA Graduation Dinner	\$3,500.00	\$3,500.00	\$3,500.00	\$3,500.00	\$0.00	
15		13 Non-profit status and federal Tax filling	\$750.00	\$750.00	\$750.00	\$542.00	\$208.00	
16		14 GSA meetings (5)	\$1,500.00	\$1,500.00	\$1,500.00	\$1,261.30	\$238.70	
17								
18		TOTAL	\$88,674.71	\$68,495.71	\$75,995.71	\$30,851.35	\$45,144.36	
19								