



Graduate Student Association
University of Rhode Island

URI GSA General Assembly
Agenda for 02/20/2026

Date: 02/20/2026

Location: Hamilton Senate Chamber, Memorial Union (3rd floor, Room 300) **Time:** 5:00 pm

Members in Attendance: (Executive Council)

Justin Watkins	President
Vacant	Vice President
Marianne Naana Otoo	Treasurer
Joshua Franco	Interim Secretary
Jordyn Hickey	Interim Events Coordinator
Ruth Nangeh Najel	Social Media Manager
Subek Acharya	Webmaster
Mariam Oladepo	Past Treasurer

Absent

Moazzem Houssain Saeem	GAU Liaison
Ruth Nangeh Najel	Social Media Manager

Members in Attendance: (Senate)

Quorum: (28)/(42). 1/3 of Voting Members

I. Call to Order.

-The meeting was called to order at 5:00 PM in the Hamilton Senate Chamber. With 28 of 42 voting members present, quorum was confirmed.

II. Approval of 01/30/2026

-A motion was made and seconded to approve the meeting minutes dated 01/30/2026. (Majority In Favor-Motion Passed)

III. Roll Call

IV. Approval of the Agenda

- a. Approval of the agenda was passed with majority vote

V. New Senators Welcome

-New Senators were formally welcomed. Brief introductions were encouraged to foster engagement and familiarity across committees.

VI. Committee Reports (5 minutes each)

- a. Constitution and By-Laws Committee: (Matthew Cayer):

- i. Committee meeting report

The committee reported that discussion of the proposed new constitution and potential alterations would initially be deferred to allow additional internal review and structured preparation. The committee emphasized its commitment to ensuring Senators have adequate time and context prior to deliberation.

Later during New Business, the constitution was formally reviewed and voted upon. The committee reiterated that bylaws may be refined following constitutional adoption and recommended future legal review to ensure alignment and compliance.

- b. Events Committee: (Tracy Santos):

- i. Committee meeting report

-The Events Committee reported active planning for a Mario Kart event scheduled for the 27th. Discussions included event logistics, participation format, and engagement strategies. While planning is well underway, final logistical confirmations are pending. The committee continues coordinating with the Publicity Committee to ensure alignment with broader engagement goals and maximize participation.

- c. Graduate Student Conference Committee: (Emelia Tawiah-Arthur and Dakota Hunter):

- i. Committee meeting report

The committee reported significant progress following a recent Friday planning meeting. The keynote speaker, Dr. Wolff, has been confirmed, and alignment regarding the conference theme and direction has been established.

The conference will adopt a revised format rather than a traditional academic structure to increase accessibility and interdisciplinary engagement. Subcommittee progress was reviewed in programming, logistics, sponsorship outreach, and budget management.

Additional faculty participation has been secured from history and philosophy, culture and arts, and communications. Interest has also been expressed by Tammy Reiss, Women's Basketball Coach at the University of Rhode Island.

Posters have been distributed, and assistance with broader distribution was requested. Three additional event dates are being finalized (one in March and two in April spaced approximately three weeks apart).

Discussions included outreach strategies emphasizing community engagement beyond campus and encouraging attendees to invite broader community members.

- d. Publicity Committee: (Evelyn Mensah)

- i. Committee meeting report

-The Publicity Committee reported ongoing efforts to promote the Graduate Student Conference and other GSA initiatives. Collaboration across committees has improved consistency in messaging and visual branding. The committee is reviewing outreach analytics

and refining promotional strategies. Plans include new poster creation and identifying potential gaps in advertising coverage.

e. Nominations and Elections Committee: (Nick Labriola):

i. Committee meeting report

-No major updates were reported. However, early recruitment was emphasized to prepare for the upcoming election cycle. Increased participation now will ensure smoother execution of election procedures later in the semester.

f. Technology Committee (Sansrit Paudel):

i. Committee meeting report

-The committee reported acquisition of an advanced high-value webcam to improve hybrid meeting quality and recordings. Preliminary planning for an upcoming hackathon continues. Discussions include scope, goals, accessibility, and interdisciplinary participation. Further proposals will be presented at a later meeting.

g. Budget and Finance Committee: (Gavin Moffat):

i. Committee meeting report

-The Finance Committee reported ongoing fiscal planning and compliance review. A meeting is scheduled next Wednesday to evaluate potential accounting firms for required financial filings. Evaluation criteria include cost, services provided, and long-term sustainability. The committee also discussed:

- Fund tracking and reallocation
- External Revenue Committee initiatives
- Conference funding oversight
- Investment exploration and long-term sustainability strategies

(These discussions are exploratory and intended to inform future decision-making. The committee plans to meet every three weeks to ensure consistent oversight and accountability.)

VII. Executive Board Reports (5 minutes each)

a. President

i. External Revenue Task Force Update

-President Watkins provided updates on administrative discussions related to Pints and Perspectives as a conduit for URI representation. Additional conversations included:

- Potential keynote speakers for Living Labs
- Industrial partnerships
- Entrepreneurial initiatives
- Transitioning toward sponsor and donation acquisition once venues and speakers are finalized

b. Treasurer

i. Current Accounts Status

-Treasurer Otoo provided updates on current account balances and fiscal positioning. Emphasis was placed on responsible spending and maintaining flexibility for conference and programming needs

VIII. Unfinished Business

a. Google Drives Set Up And Shared Password Manager

-A. Shared Google Drives & Password Manager: Discussion centered around implementing shared digital infrastructure.

Quotes were presented for 1 Password:

- \$20/month option
- \$14 per user per month option

Discussion focused on cost structure (per Senate, Executive Board, or committee-based licensing). It was agreed that a formal budget proposal will be prepared once a recommended structure is determined.

IX. New Business

a. Drink Tickets Budget Request

i. A budget request of \$750 was presented for drink tickets.

Vote:

- In Favor: Majority
- Opposed: Minimal
- Abstentions: Minimal

Motion Passed.

b. New Constitution Review and Voting

i. CONSTITUTION HERE

-The proposed constitution was reviewed. Gavin raised concern that the constitution closely mirrors the undergraduate governance document.

-Matthew noted that immediate adoption would serve as a placeholder, with future revisions to occur through bylaw amendments. It was proposed that future constitutional amendments and bylaw revisions be reviewed by legal counsel and presented collectively.

Gavin introduced an amendment; however, it was repealed as it did not align with current constitutional stipulations and was tabled pending identification of the relevant section.

A friendly amendment regarding Zoom and hybrid meeting inclusion was drafted and incorporated. Friendly Amendment: Passed.

Final Vote on Constitution (with Friendly Amendment):

- In Favor: Majority
- Opposed: Minimal
- Abstentions: Minimal

New Constitution Passed.

c. Shared Google Calendar

i. Shared calendar for everyone on the GSA to put events their committee will be having, meetings for each committee advertised, and will include emails

d. Interim Vice President Position

e. Interim Chair Remuneration and Bonuses for Senators

-It was agreed that no interim Vice President position will be created this semester.

-President Watkins proposed:

- \$200–\$250 raise for Chair Abbas
- Bonuses for Senators

-Concerns were raised by Senator Nicholas Labriola regarding fairness and potential inequities. Other members recommended keeping funds in the general budget.

Outcome:

- Chair stipend increase approved
- No senator bonuses approved
- No interim VP appointed
- Remaining funds left unallocated

f. Quality of Life Task Force

-Discussion included clarification regarding reimbursement guidance for student groups. Marianne requested clarification regarding bylaw language. It was noted that previously debated language was not present in the current constitutional draft. An amendment was rescinded following clarification.

g. Rescinded amendment made prior by Gavin, point of clarification asked for by marianne in regards to the guidance needed for reimbursement to student groups, clarified about changes that would occur in the bylaws and current language that was debated on wasn't there

h. Amendment asked to be drafted for zoom and hybrid meeting inclusion

i. Friendly amendment to the constitution passed

j. New constitution passed with friendly amendment

X. Adjournment