



Graduate Student Association
University of Rhode Island

URI GSA General Assembly
Minutes for 01/30/2026

Date: 01/30/2026

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

Time: 5:00 pm

Members in Attendance: (Executive Council)

Present:

Justin Watkins	President
Marianne Naana Otoo	Treasurer
Joshua Franco	Interim Secretary
Jordyn Hickey	Interim Events Coordinator
Subek Acharya	Webmaster
Moazzem Houssain Saeem	GAU Liaison
Mariam Oladepo	Past Treasurer

Absent:

Ruth Nangeh Najel	Social Media Manager
Nausad Miyan	Vice President

Members in Attendance: (Senate)
Quorum: (23)/(42). 1/3 of Voting Members

I. Call to Order.

-The Graduate Student Senate meeting was called to order at 6:12 PM in a hybrid format, with members attending both in person and remotely. Attendance was recorded via QR code to confirm quorum and ensure accurate participation tracking.

-Twenty-three (23) voting members were confirmed present out of 42 seated senators, satisfying quorum requirements.

-The agenda was presented, and a motion to approve it was made and seconded. The motion passed by unanimous voice vote, with no abstentions or objections.

Agenda Approval Vote:

- In Favor: 23
- Opposed: 0
- Abstentions: 0

Motion Passed (23–0–0).

II. Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes

II. Approval of November 19th, 2025 Special Senate Meeting Minutes and November 21st, 2025 Regular Senate Meeting Minutes.

A. November 19, 2025 Special Senate Meeting Minutes :A motion to approve the minutes was made and seconded.

Vote:

- In Favor: 23
- Opposed: 0
- Abstentions: 0

Motion Passed (23–0–0).

III. Roll Call

IV. Approval of the Agenda

-B. November 21, 2025 Regular Senate Meeting Minutes :A motion to approve the minutes was made and seconded.

Vote:

- In Favor: 23
- Opposed: 0
- Abstentions: 0

Motion Passed (23–0–0).

V. Interim Chair Candidates (Floor Time to Address the Senate)

-The first major item on the agenda was the election of an Interim Chair for the remainder of the semester. Both candidates, Matthew Cayer and Mariyam Abbas , were allotted three minutes to address the Senate.

-Matthew highlighted his experience with parliamentary procedures, Robert's Rules of Order, and committee leadership, emphasizing efficiency, fairness, and structured governance. He expressed his commitment to ensuring that meetings remain productive and equitable.

-Mariyam emphasized her prior experience in student governance, including her service on the Constitution and Bylaws Committee and other university committees. She stressed the importance of neutral facilitation, transparency, accountability, and inclusive participation.

Voting was conducted via QR code and verified for eligibility among both in-person and virtual participants.

VI. Vote on the Interim Chair

I. 11-10 vote in favor Maryiam Abbas

VII. Passing of the Gavel to the New Interim Chair

VIII. Vote for Approval of Committee Chairs

-A motion was made and seconded to approve committee chair assignments. Each chair was voted on individually.

IX. Vote for Approval of University Committee Placements

- a. Faculty Senate Academic Calendar Committee Margret Grady
- b. Faculty Senate Constitution and Bylaws Committee Matthew Cayer
- c. Faculty Senate Service and Community Life Committee Joshua Franco
- d. Faculty Senate General Education Committee Nicholas Labriola .

Motion Passed (23–0–0).

Committee Reports (5 minutes each)

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

i. Committee meeting report

-The committee reported that a comprehensive review of the Senate constitution is ongoing. Members are analyzing officer roles, succession procedures, committee authority, and language clarity to ensure institutional stability. Particular attention is being given to clarifying Executive Board powers and formalizing reporting expectations.

-Concerns were discussed regarding structural similarities to undergraduate governance documents. The committee acknowledged the feedback and noted that further refinement may be incorporated through bylaw revisions and potential legal review. A revised draft will be circulated prior to formal debate.

b. Events Committee: (Tracy Santos):

i. Committee meeting report

-The committee reported active programming initiatives, including a vision board and goal-setting workshop aimed at professional development and academic planning. A food drive initiative is being organized to support students experiencing food insecurity.

-The committee is developing a semester programming calendar to ensure balanced academic, social, and wellness-focused events. Budget planning remains aligned with approved allocations.

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

i. Committee meeting report

-The committee provided a detailed update regarding the two-day spring Graduate Student Conference scheduled for late March. Subcommittees are managing programming, keynote outreach, logistics, sponsorship coordination, and financial oversight.

-A draft call for proposals is being finalized. Efforts are being made to ensure interdisciplinary representation and expanded participation across graduate programs.

d. Publicity Committee: (Evelyn Mensah)

i. Committee meeting report

-The committee reported improvements in coordinated outreach, including standardized promotional templates and expanded social media engagement. A strategy to centralize event promotion through a shared calendar was discussed to reduce scheduling conflicts.

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

i. Committee meeting report

-The committee emphasized the need to recruit additional members in preparation for upcoming elections. Proposed constitutional amendments include:

- Candidate eligibility standards
- Joint presidential and vice-presidential tickets
- Senate confirmation of Executive Board appointments
- Creation of a permanent Speaker role

f. Technology Committee (Sansrit Paudel):

i. Committee meeting report

-The committee reported on planning an inclusive hackathon event featuring multiple

participation categories. Faculty mentorship and external partnerships are being explored to enhance engagement and ensure accessibility

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

i. Committee meeting report

-The committee presented a financial overview, including current balances and recent expenditures such as officer remuneration, conference reimbursements, regalia purchases, and event costs.

-Plans are underway to secure a new accountant to ensure tax compliance and improve reporting accuracy. The committee emphasized preserving budget flexibility for spring programming.

XI. Executive Board Reports (5 minutes each)

a. President

i. External Revenue Task Force Update

-The President provided an update on the External Revenue Task Force and efforts to diversify funding sources. Meetings with administrators are ongoing to strengthen graduate advocacy initiatives. Coordination with the GAU regarding housing concerns and grievance systems was discussed.

b. Treasurer

i. Current Accounts Status

-The Treasurer reviewed current account balances and projected expenditures. A breakdown of committed versus discretionary funds was presented. Emphasis was placed on responsible spending to ensure sustainability through the academic year.

c. Interim Secretary (2 minutes)

-The Interim Secretary reported improvements to documentation procedures, including standardized formatting and digital archival systems to ensure institutional continuity.

d. Interim Events Coordinator (2 minutes)

-The Interim Events Coordinator provided updates on vendor coordination, event scheduling logistics, and accessibility considerations.

XII. Unfinished Business

a. Special Senate Meeting Constitutional Amendments

-A motion to approve the revised constitution was made and seconded.

Vote:

- In Favor: 23
- Opposed: 0
- Abstentions: 0

Motion Passed (23–0–0).

b. Joint Grievance Support Team with the GAU

-Discussion continued regarding collaboration on housing and the potential development of a dual-grievance system. No formal vote was taken.

C. Constitutional Review

A motion to approve the revised constitution was made and seconded.

Vote:

- In Favor: 23
- Opposed: 0
- Abstentions: 0

Motion Passed (23–0–0).

XIII. New Business

A. Google Drives and Password Management System

Motion to establish shared digital infrastructure.

Vote: 23-0-0

Motion Passed.

B. Drink Tickets Budget Request – \$750

Vote: 23-0-0

Motion Passed.

C. Shared Google Calendar

Vote: 23-0-0

Motion Passed.

XIV. General Discussion and Announcements

a. Announcement on the Quality of Life Committee

b. Announcement of Vacancies on Committees and New Senators Recruitment

XV. Adjournment