



**Graduate Student Association
University of Rhode Island
Executive Board Meeting Minutes**

Date: June 27th, 2025

Time: 7:02-9:21 pm

Location: Hoffman room (Swan Hall) & Zoom

Members in Attendance (Executive Council):

Outgoing

Karolina Wojcik	President
Quinn Tucker	Vice President
Mariam Oladepo	Treasurer
Evelyn Mensah	Secretary
Behtom Adeli	Webmaster
Marianne Otoo	GAU Liaison

Incoming

Justin Watkins	President
Nausad Miyan	Vice President
Marianne Otoo	Treasurer
Subek Acharya	Webmaster
Ruth Nangeh Najel	Social Media Manager/Event Coordinator Assistant
Moazzem Houssain Saeem	GAU Liaison
Akissi Nelly Aka	Event Coordinator
Karolina Wojcik	Past President

Members in Absence

Evans Boateng-Boakye	Social Media Manager/Event Coordinator Assistant
Waqar Alam	Event Coordinator
Asta Habtimachael	Past President
Arindam Laha	Secretary

I. Call to order

The last GSA E-Board meeting of the academic year 2024/2025 was called to order by the president, Karolina Wojcik, at 7:02 PM. The president began with a land

acknowledgement, recognizing the traditional lands of the Narragansett and Niantic people.

II. Approval of Minutes

The meeting minutes for April 1 and May 8, 2025, were approved with a motion by Quinn Tucker and seconded by Behtom Adeli. The minutes were approved unanimously.

III. Reports:

- A. President (Karolina and Justin): Karolina provided updates on various GSA matters, including transitions, records, and ongoing collaborations. She reported on uploading records to a shared Google Drive, efforts to increase graduate student representation on Faculty Senate committees, and the reinstatement of the dishonesty insurance bond. Karolina also mentioned the bank account transition process, potential collaboration with the Student Senate, and upcoming events such as the September welcome luncheon. Karolina and Justin discussed funding requests, website updates, and ongoing communication with university officials regarding various initiatives. Justin discussed the upcoming committee appointments and the need for additional representatives on various faculty senate committees. He highlighted plans to expand events, foster interdisciplinary collaboration, and strengthen partnerships with industry and nonprofits. Justin discussed a coordinated response to Vice Provost Sue Adams' request to attend the fall GSA meeting with the NECHE reaccreditation committee. He planned on working with the executive members to vote on the new faculty advisor position and the graduate student conference director. He plans to meet with Student Senate External Affairs Committee member Ryan Nero in mid-August regarding GSA-Student Senate collaboration. There was a strong emphasis on record-keeping, with all documents and materials being uploaded to a shared Google Drive for continuity. The dishonesty insurance bond was reinstated after an accidental cancellation, ensuring financial protection for the new board.
- B. Vice President (Quinn and Nausad): Quinn provided updates on the transition process, emphasizing the importance of advertising the GSA's activities and improving communication. He also discussed the need for outgoing board members to share their experiences on social media to raise awareness and visibility about the GSA and its activities. Nausad and Justin plan to create and implement a strategy for increasing graduate student engagement and Senate participation. Quinn plans to transfer URI Involved access and instructions to the new executive board members. The GSA is working to increase graduate student representation on university committees, especially within the Faculty Senate. There were discussions about committee appointments, nomination processes, and the need for earlier engagement and communication with senators. Some committees failed to submit year-end reports, but most transitions were smooth. The board discussed the importance of improving outreach, especially through social media and newsletters. Delegation of tasks within the publicity and events committees was proposed to manage workload and improve efficiency.

- C. Treasurer (Mariam and Marianne): The transition of treasurer's responsibilities from Mariam to Marianne and Justin. Mariam is finalizing the remaining checks and will hand over the checkbook and documents once the new signatories are in effect. Marianne has signed the necessary forms, but some tasks, like changing online banking passwords and obtaining new debit cards, will be completed when she returns in mid-August. In the interim, Justin will handle check signing, though there are concerns about managing conference reimbursements during the transition period. Marianne and Mariam discussed the process for conference reimbursement applications, agreeing that applicants should be patient and expect processing to begin in August due to the change of term. Marianne and Justin plan to transfer banking credentials and update account information after July 1st.
- D. Secretary (Evelyn): Evelyn briefed the new secretary, Arindam, a few weeks ago on his responsibilities, including agenda preparation, minute-taking, and report compilation for Executive Board and Senate meetings. She emphasized the importance of working with the President and Vice President, getting approval before sharing documents, and notifying graduate students about upcoming Senate meetings. Evelyn was asked to share graduate student conference director applications and candidate information with all new board members before the next meeting. Evelyn is to ensure all board members have access to the GSA Conference email forms and responses.
- E. Webmaster (Behtom and Subek): Karolina discussed the need to upload documents to the GSA Google Drive for better organization and accessibility. She suggests that everyone share their forms and documents, including passwords and editor access settings, to ensure a complete transition to using Google Drive as the GSA hub. The group also discussed the need to transfer old meeting minutes from a previous Gmail account to the current system. Behtom was tasked to assist Subek to complete this activity. Subek, the new webmaster, has been familiarized with webpage management and has access to make necessary updates. The team plans to update the website with new board members' information and photos, and Subek will ensure that the URI Involved platform is updated with the new executive board members' access, with assistance from Behtom. The group discussed improving the Senate webpage by adding pictures of senators, potentially taken in front of flags during the first meeting. They considered getting GSA pins and improving their office space in the Memorial Union. Karolina explained that GSA has an office with supplies and a background banner and suggests organizing office hours or updating the website with contact information for main officers to improve accessibility for students. The group also discussed the need for better storage and more open office space.
- F. Social Media Manager (Ruth): Ruth discussed the need for new social media accounts and strategies. She mentioned creating a new Facebook account and receiving login information for other platforms. The team explores ideas for improving their social media presence, including curating content for Instagram,

addressing privacy concerns, and potentially using alternative platforms. They also discussed collaborating with the university's media team (Rhody Today) to publicize graduate student events and research. The team suggested creating a PR package and managing multiple social media platforms, noting that Instagram is currently the most active account. Justin and Ruth discussed how to implement an improved photo management strategy for GSA events on social media platforms with privacy considerations. Ruth is to schedule a training session for camera usage with the old social media manager, Evans, and a member of the old publicity committee, Ololade. Justin suggested creating a monthly GSA newsletter to improve communication with students.

- G. GAU Liaison (Marianne and Moazzem): Marianne spoke about the importance of the GSA-GAU liaison attending meetings of both organizations to facilitate information sharing. Marianne emphasized the need for the liaison to become a GAU member to access closed meetings. The conversation then shifted to concerns about graduate student housing, particularly the planned demolition of some apartments and the shorter housing contracts ending in May instead of July. The group considered ways to advocate for students and potentially help them find alternative housing. The discussion focused on the formation of a housing committee and the representation of graduate students on it. Marianne suggested that the Graduate Student Association (GSA) should have a seat on the committee alongside the Graduate Assistants Union (GAU), as the GSA represents all graduate students. The team was provided with updates on the housing situation, including plans for renovations at Graduate Village and potential rent increases. The group discussed the importance of advocating affordable housing and protecting current and future graduate students' interests, emphasizing the need for clear communication and planning for rehousing during renovations. The group discussed the need to address the housing crisis for graduate students at URI. Justin planned to meet with the GAU president and Ellen Reynolds to gather information and develop a strategy. The GSA aimed to take a separate stance from GAU to increase pressure on the administration. Justin considered reaching out to state officials and emphasizing the importance of maintaining URI's R1 status. The group agreed to approach the issue formally and collaboratively, while also being prepared to be more assertive if necessary. The team stressed the need for clear communication and coordination between GSA, GAU, and graduate students in addressing this challenge. The GSA and GAU (Graduate Assistants United) are coordinating advocacy efforts to ensure current and future graduate students are not negatively impacted. There was a call for town halls and meetings with administrators to voice student concerns and demand transparency as reported by Justin.
- H. Event Coordinator (Nelly): Nelly discussed plans for organizing events, including coordinating with the Budget Committee and the Secretary for advertising. Nelly and Justin suggested creating a schedule for the entire year, covering every month, and potentially expanding to college or department-level events with matching funds. The idea of increasing engagement and representation in the

Senate through events was also mentioned. Justin discussed the need to improve communication and awareness about GSA activities among graduate students. Justin proposed a dual approach to reaching more students, acknowledging that emails are sometimes easily ignored.

IV. New Business

- A. The outgoing Executive Board presented a farewell gift to the outgoing GSA president, expressing gratitude for her leadership and hard work throughout the year. The outgoing president was honored with a heartfelt thank-you and a commemorative gift. The meeting concluded with a sense of optimism and commitment to building a stronger, more inclusive graduate student community.

V. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 9:21 PM after a motion by Quinn Tucker and a second by Behtom Adeli.

Evelyn Mensah
GSA Secretary 2024/2025