



Graduate Student Association

University of Rhode Island

URI GSA General Assembly

Agenda for 03/13/2026

Date: 03/13/2026

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

Time: 3:00 pm

Members in Attendance:

Present:

Justin Watkins	President
Vacant	Vice President
Marianne Naana Otoo	Treasurer
Joshua Franco	Interim Secretary
Subek Acharya	Webmaster
Moazzem Houssain Saem	GAU Liaison
Mariam Oladepo	Past Treasurer
Ruth Nangeh Najel	Social Media Manager

Not Present:

Jordyn Hickey	Interim Events Coordinator
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Members in Attendance: (Senate)

Quorum: (22)/(42). $\frac{1}{3}$ of Voting Members

I. Call to Order.

II. Approval of February 20th, 2026 Meeting Minutes

-The chair moved to approve the minutes from the previous meeting. (Motion: Approved)

III. Roll Call

IV. **Approval of March 13, 2026 Meeting Minutes**

-The chair moved to approve the minutes from the previous meeting. (Motion: Approved)

V. Committee Reports (5 minutes each)

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

i. Committee meeting report

-The committee reported limited progress, noting that anticipated revisions were not ready for presentation. Updated bylaws are expected by the **final meeting of the semester**. Importantly, the committee is coordinating with the Elections Committee to ensure that any governance changes align with upcoming election procedures. While delays were acknowledged, there was no immediate concern raised by members, suggesting acceptance of the revised timeline.

b. Events Committee: (Tracy Santos):

i. Committee meeting report

-The Events Committee reported strong success with recent programming, including a collaborative Game Night with the Undergraduate Gaming Club and an ICE awareness event that engaged students, faculty, and staff in both educational and community-focused discussions.

-Looking ahead, the committee is planning a Trivia Night in March, a hiking event in April, and continuing preparations for the annual GSA Gala in May. Overall, the committee is focused on strengthening collaboration and maintaining consistent engagement across the campus community.

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

i. Committee meeting report

d. Publicity Committee: (Evelyn Mensah)

i. Committee meeting report

-The Graduate Student Conference has made strong progress, with 55 abstracts submitted and a goal of reaching around 70. Marketing efforts and submission processes have been improved, with flexible deadlines to encourage participation. Cost savings from catering have allowed for enhancements such as a jazz ensemble and student prizes, improving the overall conference experience. The inclusion of

upper-level undergraduate researchers has also expanded the conference's reach. However, concerns were raised about member inactivity, and a proposal will be introduced in April to remove stipends for inactive members to promote greater accountability.

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

i. Committee meeting report

-The committee presented the upcoming election timeline, with candidate filings due by April 1 and voting scheduled for April 6–10, with a possible extension.

Candidates must submit key details such as their platform and qualifications. The Senate structure was clarified as consisting of 45 members, including college-based, at-large, and first-year representatives. Overall, the process is designed to encourage broad participation while maintaining clear eligibility requirements and flexibility in how candidates run.

f. Technology Committee (Sansrit Paudel):

i. Committee meeting report

-The committee is working to improve hybrid meeting capabilities, including the purchase of a conference camera, though progress has been slowed by logistical challenges. Additionally, a Hackathon is scheduled for April 11 with two tracks—idea development and MVP creation. A small funding gap of about \$50 was identified, which may be addressed through collaboration with other committees.

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

i. Committee meeting report

-The committee reviewed several financial matters, including event funding requests, the use of leftover funds from dissolved committees, and potential spending caps for technology purchases. They also discussed the need to strengthen financial governance by clarifying reimbursement policies and defining what qualifies as a major event. Additionally, the idea of investing GSA funds was considered but ultimately paused due to concerns about maintaining nonprofit compliance.

VI. Executive Board Reports (5 minutes each)

a. President

i. External Revenue Task Force Update

-The President highlighted strong growth in programming and outreach, noting the successful launch of the “Pints & Perspectives” series, which drew solid attendance and generated revenue. Outreach efforts have also expanded into nearby areas like Providence and Newport. The organization is building partnerships with academic departments, Student Affairs, and the Undergraduate Student Senate. Moving forward, priorities include securing sponsorships, increasing event visibility, and strengthening long-term institutional partnerships.

b. Treasurer

i. Current Accounts Status

-The Treasurer reported a current balance of approximately \$90,855, with an additional \$15,695 in savings. Increased spending has been driven by event programming and conference reimbursements, and the balance is expected to

decrease as pending reimbursements are processed. The possibility of investing unused funds is still being considered.

VII. Unfinished Business

VIII. New Business

a. Google Workspaces and Documentation

-A new Google Workspace system has been implemented for the Senate and Executive Board to centralize operations. Committees are required to upload documents, record processes, and provide materials for future leadership. The goal is to improve organizational consistency, strengthen institutional memory, and support smoother leadership transitions.

b. Quality of Life Committee

-A new Quality of Life Committee has been established to focus on graduate student well-being, particularly housing challenges. The discussion highlighted an ongoing housing crisis, where leaseholders are prioritized while non-leaseholders remain vulnerable. A proposal for a 4-week rent waiver for current leaseholders is under consideration, and the committee plans to continue advocacy efforts and work with university administration to address these issues.

IX. General Discussion and Announcements

-Members provided feedback on the upcoming GSA Gala, highlighting the need to improve food quality and address technical issues such as DJ Wi-Fi access. It was also clarified that all funding requests must go through the Budget & Finance Committee, and members were encouraged to increase participation in conference submissions and GSA events.

X. Adjournment