



GRADUATE STUDENT ASSOCIATION
University of Rhode Island

URI GSA General Assembly

Date: 03/08/2024, 10:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

Location: College of Pharmacy, 7 Greenhouse Rd, Kingston, RI 02881, USA ROOM 207

Members in Attendance: (Executive Council)

Asta Habtemichael	President
Karolina Wojcik	Vice-President
Obed Baah Amoah	Treasurer
Helani Singhapurage	Secretary
Joseph Owusu-Sarfo	GAU Liaison

Members in Attendance: (Senators)

Adelina Herbst	Florence Fields	Md Abdullah
Akissi Nelly Aka	Fred Addo	Rumon
Cheri Rowe	Justin Mayers	Olga Skende
Dennis Sagamang		Rafeed Hussain

Listeners: Marianne Otoo

Total number of participants: 15+1 = 16

[1] Call to order:

- The GSA General Assembly Spring Semester Second Meeting was held in person on March 8th, 2024. It began at 10:03 a.m.
- Karolina- Welcomed the new 2 senators, Fred Addo from the Department of Nutrition, Olga Skende from the College of Pharmacy, and Luiz Nunez from the Department of Music.

[2] Old Business:

1. Update from the president

Asta-

- Still do not have full access and signatory privilege on GSA accounts. The bank provided the wrong procedures, and now requested all signatories, including the Treasurer to be present in person. The GSA is using the carryovers from the last semester in terms of the budgets.
- Updated on the GSA resuming back to its normal structure and workflow as the position of Vice president, secretary, and most of the committee established.



- The challenge of GSA not having a uri.edu email that comes with a google drive. Past secretary used their own google drive to archive GSA documents. Will work with the graduate school and IT to gain uri.edu email so that GSA has an organization Google Drive for the smooth transfer of documents during the term transition of officers.
- Reminded that Discretion and accountability to the GSA is much needed.
- Informed on the need to appoint two faculty members (one permanent, the other is an alternative) for the graduate student appeals committee as per the Graduate school's request. Asked the participants of the meeting to nominate one before the end of the month. The result will be conveyed to the grad school.
- Shared in the Graduate reception ceremony in lieu of the grad school-only graduation, it is still in the works. Also, waiting for the details for assistance needed from GSA to the 3MT competition.

2. Regarding funding the student group during the 2024 Spring semester

Asta –

- mentioned that he had a discussion with the chair of the events committee (they have their own set budget) and treasurer on how the books look like and the future expenditures look like. And as the GSA has a lot of spending coming up for GSA's own activities and graduate reception. The executive council is following the GSA's governing body recommendation from the February meeting to have fiscally responsible spending towards other student groups' financial support.
- Mentioned that the GSA constitution doesn't stipulate that the GSA should give financial support to any external student group, and traditionally the GSA does it out of goodwill.
- Reported on the response given to the Persian Student Association's request for \$1000 support for their Nowruz event. As they were expecting a response before the March general assembly meeting after consulting with the treasurer and vice-president/Event Committee chair, a temporary provision was introduced, as it is read in Appendix A of this meeting Agenda (Karolina- Read the response Asta emailed to the Persian student group to the participants in the meeting).
- The executive council feels the need to put a temporary limit of only one time support to student organizations in financial support for 2023-2024 in light of the budget uncertainty as discussed above. This provision was drafted based on the treasurer's suggestion to follow the provision that GSA has in the constitution on student reimbursement for conferences to serve all the student organizations within the budget GSA has without affecting GSA activities. The executive council accordingly denied the support requested by the Persian Students Association. Explained the Persian Student Association is not accepting the response provided and is requesting the graduate school about student fee utilization by the university.
- Requested input from the governing body on the matter of the introduced temporary provision. Asta-
- Informed that he is working with bylaws and constitution committee, webmaster in developing 3 forms.
 1. Registration/Recognition of student group as a Grad student group in the GSA



2. A form to request funds ahead of time
3. A reporting mechanism on how many Grad students attend that event.

- Mentioned that this is the provision that would come in the upcoming Fall semester.
- Made a request to discuss the issue.

Dennis- I like a little flexibility in acknowledging small requests versus one large request.

Florence, consider a specific amount that can be requested in a year. Using GSA's financial status, estimate how many groups there are and how much GSA can assist per year.

Karolina – suggested language for two small requests.

Cherie- Wanted to clarify the temporary provision we made is to support the decision we made for the Persian student group rather than setting something up for the future.

Asta- This decision is valid for all the student groups until the end of May.

Karolina- The student groups should have clarity so that GSA can represent their requests properly.

Rafeed –Instead of having a cap laying out some sort of percentage of their events budget that we will support, based on how they explain how they are going to use it, the GSA can support or deny the amount they are asking for. And to have a separate Spring and Fall semester budget.

Dennis – We asked for a plan from the organization, but we haven't talked about what we pay out. Do we pay out the request for money, or do they give us a receipt for how they spent the money?

Obed - We don't have the audit before the event. We request for receipts. We don't issue the funds until we see the receipts of the event.

Asta –

- We can discuss the details of the caps later in the next meeting because the committee will develop the plan.
- “Do we agree as a governing body on the provision that is read right now having one group ask only one time for this 2023-2024 academic semester in the light of financial uncertainty that we have because of access issues? So I just need either the governing body to support this or to refute it and replace it with another one.”
- “Upon having the pressure from grad school and different other offices to support The Persian student organization, standing on my ground I said that I only report to the governing body which represents the whole graduate student body. So I will work towards your will.”



- “We set that provision as an executive response in a very short- limited time request that we got. I want to put that into a vote. I would like to hear a motion from one person on that, then we will vote and discuss if we need more.”
- So, the vote is going to be on. The provision set by the executive council, as read now, is for a temporary one-time limit on student organization support for the 2023-2024 academic year only based on the budget uncertainty that we have.
- Asta requested that a motion be made on the above point.
- Cherie made the motion. Dennis and Fred seconded.
- Votes in favor of upholding that provision and setting it as a guiding principle for us for this semester as we go forward - 14

Objections- None

Reservations- 1 (Joseph)

The vote moved with one abstain

- We can discuss the caps now or at a later time, but I will give you an insight. What we have is a \$500 precedence that we have set up so far because of the request that happened before.
- He mentioned that as the president who oversees the budget based on that provision and has already set the precedence of giving \$500 to the Persian students, he is going to set that one-time limit to \$500 unless the meeting participants want to change it.
- I was informed that the Bangladesh student group requested \$600 support for the first time, and they will be funded \$500. African Student Connect-URI has received \$300 for the final screening of the African Cup of Nations match.

Obed – mentioned that the Persian student group provided the two receipts, which covered around \$500.

Asta-

- Mentioned that the GSA Website will have the same wording on the one-limit.
- The Bangladesh event should be for all the grad students instead of all international students.

3. Regarding the back pay issue of Graduate Assistants

Joseph –

- Reported on the GAU meeting he attended last week on Tuesday regarding back pay.
- Last year, GAU successfully negotiated an increase in the salaries of grad assistants. A few grads haven't received back pay, especially some students in the English department. The GAU is working to fix the issue on back pay. They say that the payroll must go through manually and look for the student affected by this since it has slowed down the process.
- The heads of the payroll have been changed, which also affected the process. Again, the payroll doesn't have a lot of information, such as the contracts with grad school. Some of the information they need comes from the department administration. The GAU has



started to fix the case, starting to solve 10-15 cases per week. They estimate that by the end of April, everyone will have their issues fixed, and that they will meet the dean of graduate school.

Asta—I requested Joseph to clarify if everybody is covered and if they are not covered through the negotiations led by the GAU. Then, the GSA can pick up that flag and fill it for other grad students.

4. Remuneration for fulfilling the missing roles in the executive council

Karolina-

- Put forward the idea of remuneration allocation
 - The events coordinator's remuneration is to be shared by the events and community service committee members who are doing the work
 - for the current president since he carried out the work of the organization upon the resignation of the past president and the secretary. Since the current president has filled the roles of president, vice president, and secretary for the past service, 15% of each respective position's remuneration may be allocated to him.

Asta –

- The vice president brought up this point during the e-board meeting. He mentioned in the meeting that he felt the request for the events committee members is fair and shall be taken up to the governing body for discussion and decision in the upcoming general assembly meeting. It is the governing body that makes such decisions. Then, mentioned that it is nice of the vice president to consider his burden during the transition and think of similar appropriation for remuneration. However, he stated that he just served the roles because of the responsibility, and there was no expectation of any remuneration for those services. Since this directly relates to his role and remuneration, creating a conflict of interest, he will not be involved in directing the discussion; as such, he mentioned he is recusing himself from the discussion and decision-making regarding this point. Before doing so, he wanted to note that it is a sensitive matter and that whatever is to be done will set a precedence. That is, remember that currently, the roles are filled, and incumbents will be compensated, while past officers are already paid. Therefore, the reallocation of remunerations will create a gap in the budget and make it challenging as there will not be a distinctly allocated fund for such matters. The Event Coordinator position is open, so that might not be challenging.

Obed – If GSA is going with the 15% allocation, does that mean the one who is taking over is going to be paid 75% or 85% or 100% in full? Because the budget is for the role.

Karolina – remuneration is either a percentage of student fees per role or a minimum amount per semester, 15% of either.



Karolina – Put forward the fact that If someone didn't fulfill their duties and the GSA has an individual/people carrying that position, the GSA pays the e-board members who weren't fulfilling their roles.

Cherie mentioned that the GSA doesn't currently have anything in the constitution regarding whether a member of the council isn't fulfilling the role.

Karolina mentioned the need to specify the revamp of nomination requirements and role descriptions. That is the task of the Elections Committee with the Constitution and Bylaws Committee.

Asta - We need this discussion later because it needs an in-depth discussion. Let us put on the table the last point on the agenda regarding the allocation of 15% of Secretary and 15% of President remuneration to the current president for filling in for the active role of President, Vice President, and Secretary for three months (past service).

Cheire motioned to put that discussion off for the next meeting. Dennis seconded.

The motion passed unanimously.

NOTE: The number of members in the meeting at this point was not a Quorum since some members left the meeting in the middle.

Karolina – Mentioned that since the meeting isn't quorum at this point, GSA can vote on the proposal for remuneration distribution among the three Community Service and Events Committee members for playing the role of the Event coordinator in the April meeting.

Financial report by the treasurer

Obed-

- Gave the finance report for the month of February that included updates on the Paint the Town event, conference reimbursement, student group funding, and graduate regalia reimbursement.
- For the May 2024 graduation, the GSA will provide a \$50 discount voucher when ordering online for the people who are on the list. Showrov, Asta, and Obed will create a Google form to work on this.
- Mentioned on filing taxes.

Dennis mentioned that the Bylaws Committee will meet offline to determine how to use the GSA EIN number to obtain historical tax records.

4. Update from Vice-president

Karolina –

- Mentioned to put forward the approval of prior minutes in the April meeting since the meeting was not a quorum.



- Discussed efforts to recruit representatives/senators (10 colleges and 91 departments).
- The approach is to request the administration secretaries of the departments to distribute the form to recruit senators.

5. Update from the By-laws committee

- Dennis – Briefly mentioned the updates on the progress of Constitution and Bylaws Committee work.
- Mentioned the committee will focus 3 on working on elections, remuneration, and tax files for the next 30 days.
- By May 1st, a document will be out to review and ready to share.

6. Update from the GSA community services and Events committee

Nelly –

- The March event, held on March 1, 2024, from 12 to 2 p.m., was executed successfully, with 17 RSVPs and 8 guests. The upcoming April event options are either a trivia night or a comedy night, and we welcome your suggestions.

Helani – The photos will be shared with Abraham for posting on the GSA social media platforms.

[3] New Business:

N/A, 11:30 am

[4] Announcements:

N/A 11:30 am

[5] Adjournment:

Abdullah made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Karolina and Dennis seconded. The meeting ended at 11:30 a.m.

Helani Singhapurage, Secretary

03/08/2024