



**Graduate Student Association**  
University of Rhode Island  
**Senate Meeting Minutes**

**Date:** November 22, 2024

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

**Time:** 5:34-6:18 pm

**Members in Attendance:** (Executive Council)

Karolina Wojcik	President
Quinn Tucker	Vice President
Mariam Oladepo	Treasurer
Evelyn Mensah	Secretary
Waqar Alam	Event Coordinator
Evans Boateng-Boakye	Social Media Manager
Showrov Rahman	Webmaster
Marianne Otoo	GAU Liaison

**Members in Attendance:** (Senate)

Quorum:  $\frac{1}{3}$  of Voting Members

**Member in Absence:** (Executive Council)

Asta Habtemichael	Past President
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**I. Call to Order.**

The GSA's third and last Senate meeting for the Fall Semester was held in person on November 22, 2024. Quinn Tucker, Vice President and Chair of the Senate called the meeting to order at 5:34 pm. The Chair expressed gratitude to everyone for attending the final Senate meeting of the semester. He discussed the winter break activities, emphasizing that no meeting will be held in December. He also outlined the

responsibilities of senators during the break and shared what to anticipate in the upcoming semester. He mentioned that he would provide further details during his report.

Joseph raised a concern about the consistent presence of executive board members during Senate meetings, questioning the appropriateness of their attendance since they are not senators. Quinn responded that he intends to address this issue in his reports and that the agenda going forward will differ. Karolina noted that the executive board members serve the graduate students alongside the Senate. Joseph clarified this point by comparing it to government structures, stating that one typically does not see the president of a nation in cabinet or parliamentary meetings. Karolina reminded everyone they were discussing the University of Rhode Island and cited an example of the Graduate Assistant Union representing graduate teaching assistants. Quinn interjected, suggesting that they return to the meeting agenda and that this topic could be discussed later.

He also announced the presence of a final-year graduate student filming Ghazal, a senator, for a documentary project. Attendees were given the option to opt out of being filmed. Everyone agreed to the filming.

## **II. Approval of October 25th, 2024, Senate Meeting Minute.**

The minute from the October 25 meeting was reviewed and approved after a motion by Sarah and a second from Joseph and Kirk. The minute was approved unanimously with no opposition.

## **III. Executive Board Reports**

- A. **President:** A written report by the president was sent via email to all senators before the meeting (see addendum). No additional comments were made during the meeting.
- B. **Treasurer:** The treasurer provided an update on the budget, including recent expenditures and the current financial status. She reported on last month's expenses (events, meetings, checkbooks) and reimbursements. She urged the members to attend events due to significant funding.
- C. **Vice President:** Quinn requested unlimited time for discussion. Victor approved the motion, and Ghazal seconded it. All members were in favor.
  - i. **December recess:** The GSA will not meet in December, but committee chairs and the e-board will remain active.
  - ii. **Spring semester meetings:** Meetings will continue in January and on the last Friday of each month for the upcoming semester. Senate meeting schedules will be posted on the website, and rescheduling will be allowed.

- iii. **Recruitment for additional senators:** Quinn noted that out of the 42 senators, only 32 are currently active. Recruitment efforts will focus on departments currently without representation through their department chair. Quinn outlined his plan to reach out to departments without representation and programs with a large student population to have more senators. This recruitment will be targeted outreach instead of general.
- iv. **Senate Proceedings:** Quinn noted that he had reviewed the constitutions, by-laws, and Robert's Rules of Order, which state that only three members of the executive council must be present at Senate meetings: the treasurer to give a report, the secretary to write minutes, and the vice president as senate chair. He emphasized that while executive board members do not have to attend every Senate meeting, they must receive consent from the Senate to speak. He also mentioned his intention to allow petitions to speak moving forward. To improve efficiency and ensure that all concerns are addressed in Senate meetings, Quinn proposed a new format. He suggested that any senator could petition to speak on any topic, provided they include a reason for their request. The executive board members could also petition to speak. Additionally, he proposed an open forum at the end of each meeting for public comments and encouraged senators to email him directly with any concerns or questions. Quinn stressed the importance of maintaining productive and orderly discussions, with committee chairs deciding who speaks during their respective segments. He clarified that he has the authority to make changes to the agenda as necessary. These changes were implemented in response to numerous concerns about the efficiency and effectiveness of the Senate meetings. Quinn elaborated on the changes in the Senate's structure and highlighted the importance of every member's voice. He emphasized that the Senate should not be sidetracked by unrelated matters and that its authority should remain within the body itself. Abigail asked Quinn if his petition process meant that everyone could petition to speak during the Senate meeting. Quinn clarified that only topics relevant to the business of the Senate would be allowed. Joseph inquired about whether executive board members are permitted to speak, and Quinn responded that they could only do so during discussions. Karolina stated that the Senate meeting is open to all graduate students and the public and that every attendee, except senators, can speak but cannot vote. She also suggested forming an ethics committee to accept complaints and present them during Senate meetings, as well as an election committee for the spring semester. Quinn indicated that any complaints regarding the Senate should be directed to him, while general complaints could be addressed to the executive board. Abigail

further clarified Joseph's question, to which Quinn responded that only three executive board members need to be present at Senate meetings. A new procedure was introduced requiring members to petition to speak on non-agenda items, aiming to streamline meetings and ensure that only relevant discussions take place.

- v. **Personal update:** Quinn also mentioned his upcoming wisdom teeth surgery and his absence from answering emails for a few days. He then opened the floor for discussion on the topic, emphasizing that the rule of petitioning to speak only applies to subjects not on the agenda.

- D. **Webmaster:** A new webmaster, Behtom, was introduced by Showrov, who will handle the GSA's digital presence and updates. The house congratulated him, and he introduced himself to the senate.

## V. Committee Reports

- A. **Events:** The committee chair discussed the success of recent events and the challenges of managing large RSVP numbers. Plans for future events, including bowling and ice skating, were reviewed, with attention to budget considerations and strategies for handling high attendance, as raised by Yvonne. The chair mentioned that the Events Committee had successfully received 107 RSVPs for the event on November 23rd. However, Waqar, the event coordinator, noted that actual attendance often fell short of expectations. He expressed concern about the possibility of more attendees than anticipated, as this could impact the budget. Waqar suggested centralizing data to improve the management of future events. Karolina pointed out that there is a budget cap, stating that any expenses exceeding the planned budget for an event would not be permitted. Waqar highlighted the lack of previous data regarding attendance and budget for past GSA events. Due to the high number of RSVPs, the committee decided to limit free access to the first 30 people only. Showrov shared that other GSA events had received 85 RSVPs, but only 30 attendees showed up. Waqar also declared that there would be no late spending during the events. Karolina requested more details about the costs associated with the upcoming event, and upon calculating the total expenses, she recognized a new approach for GSA's involvement in their events.
- B. **Graduate Student Conference:** The Graduate Student Conference Committee also discussed the decision on dates, themes, and itinerary. The team is considering venues for the conference and is looking into Swan Hall and Edwards Hall. The committee provided updates on the planning of the upcoming conference, including dates, venues, and keynote speakers. The proposed theme, "Interdisciplinary Collaborations: Breaking Boundaries," was discussed and postponed for approval by the Senate. Ghazal praised each committee member for

their efforts. The plan moving forward is to reach out to more advisors and sponsors and issue a call for abstracts soon. Cara suggested that the Dean of the Graduate School sign conference attendee certificates. Blythe announced that there is an opportunity for the best presenters to have their work published in a journal focused on education and technology.

- C. **Publicity:** The committee chair discussed their plans for the next semester, including reaching out to students through the graduate student spotlight and promoting events. The committee requested funds to start their work, including purchasing promotional materials. Plans for promoting upcoming events and activities were discussed. The chair emphasized the importance of notifying publicity in advance about events to ensure they can effectively advertise and reach a larger audience for GSA events.
- D. **Constitution and By-Laws:** The committee chair stated that they are working on amendments to the constitution and bylaws, focusing on grammatical changes and formatting fixes. Karolina spoke with the chair about postponing the vote on the amendments and suggested continuing to work on it. A virtual vote may be held to approve these changes.
- E. **Finance and Budget:** The meeting also covered the Budget and Finance Committee's account status and the need for more detailed information when requesting conference reimbursement. The committee chair provided updates on the accounts and budget, including recent expenditures and future financial planning. Plans to develop a survey to gather feedback on budget priorities were discussed.

#### **VI. New Business:**

- A. **Review and Approval of Constitutional Amendment:** The constitution and by-laws committee chair withdrew their corrections and decided to table the matter.
- B. **Approval of Graduate Student Conference theme:** The theme "Interdisciplinary Collaborations: Breaking Boundaries" was reviewed and approved by the senators. Motioned by Blythe and seconded by Yvonne.

#### **IX. Announcements**

- a. **Fall remuneration dispersal post adjournment:** The meeting ended with an announcement about the remuneration for senators' duties. Senators were reminded to collect their remuneration checks after the meeting.

#### **X. Adjournment.**

The meeting was adjourned at 6:18 PM after a motion by Natasha and a second by Peace. The motion was passed unanimously.

## **Addendum**

### **President's Written Report for the November 22, 2024 Senate Meeting**

Due to the presence of special guest speakers at the Senate meeting on Friday, November 22, 2024, I am providing my announcements in this written statement to allow us more time for presentations and meaningful in-person discussions. This Friday, we are honored to welcome:

- Vice President and Chief Diversity Officer Marquisha Miner
- GAU President Maggie Bernish will provide detailed updates on contract negotiations and opportunities for graduate student involvement.

#### **1. Updates on Financial Filings and Withum Partnership**

I am pleased to announce the successful conclusion of our contractual relationship with Withum. Withum finalized and filed Forms 1024 and 990 by November 13, 2024, meeting the IRS deadline of November 15. Secured nonprofit status. Ensures annual compliance for nonprofit reporting. The Form 990 for the fiscal year ending June 2025 is due on May 15, 2025 (or November 15, 2025, with an extension). Annual filings of state tax forms and Form 990 will be required. Withum has issued a final invoice of \$3,640.00 for their services. The Budget and Finance Committee should collaborate with Mariam on future filings. If needed, Withum can be re-engaged.

#### **2. GSA Financial Updates**

A request for \$88,674.71 was submitted to the Controller's Office on November 3, 2024, to replenish the GSA account, in line with the Senate's proposed budget.

#### **3. Technology and Communications Updates**

Behtom Adeli has been successfully appointed as the GSA Webmaster, with a term beginning on January 1, 2025, and concluding on June 29, 2025. Behtom brings valuable experience managing the NeuralPCLab's webpage, along with proficiency in the University's WordPress dashboard and HTML, making him an excellent fit for this role. Outgoing Webmaster Showrov Rahman will guide Behtom through the transition, provide training, and offer ongoing support as needed. IT has approved a modest amount of additional storage for the GSA website to accommodate growing content needs. Traffic from the obsolete Graduate Student Conference website will be redirected to the GSA webpage. A new Graduate Student Conference subpage, hosted within the URI domain, is currently in the planning stages. GradCon email addresses for abstract submissions are being set up, with embedded Google Forms planned to streamline the submission process. We are collaborating with IT to recover access to the old Graduate Conference email address. Restoring access will ensure continuity for future conference planning and correspondence. We are working with our faculty advisor to secure an independent electronic storage account for the GSA. This account will centralize and safeguard important documents and records, ensuring accessibility and long-term

organizational efficiency. These updates reflect our commitment to improving GSA operations and enhancing technological resources for graduate students.

**4. Collaboration with GAU**

We are currently gathering interest from graduate students for participation in two important initiatives. GAU is seeking graduate students who may be interested in assisting with the drafting of a new graduate assistant contract and attending meetings with the administration, beginning in January 2024. This is an interest form only, and no commitment is required at this time. If you are interested, please notify the GSA Executive Board before Friday's meeting. Lane Demaske, GAU's Grievance Chair, met with Ted Walls from the Faculty Senate and confirmed that a committee will convene for three meetings to revise the University's property regulations. GAU is seeking to collaborate with GSA to ensure graduate student representation during this process. If you are interested in either of these opportunities, please indicate your interest.

**5. December Recess Guidance**

The Senate will be on recess during December. Executive Board and Committee Contacts: The Executive Board and committee chairs will remain reachable for urgent matters. The Senate will resume sessions in January 2025. Take this opportunity to outline objectives, draft proposals, and identify agenda items for the spring semester. Consider hosting a virtual mid-break meeting for pressing committee updates. This is not required but encouraged for alignment.

Your preparation and participation is essential. Please bring forward any questions or concerns to ensure a successful meeting.

Thank you,  
Karolina S. Wojcik  
President, Graduate Student Association