



Graduate Student Association
University of Rhode Island

URI GSA General Assembly
Minutes for 9/26/2025

Date: 9/26/2025

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

Time: 5:15-5:58 pm

Members in Attendance: (Executive Council)

Justin Watkins	President
Nausad Miyan	Vice President
Marianne Naana Otoo	Treasurer
Arindam Laha	Secretary
Karolina Wojcik	Past President
Akissi Nelly Aka	Event Coordinator
Ruth Nangh Najel	Social Media Manager
Subek Acharya	Webmaster
Moazzem Houssain Saeem	GAU Liaison

Members in Attendance: (Senate)

Quorum: (38)/(42). $\frac{1}{3}$ of Voting Members

I. Call to Order.

The first General Assembly of the 2025–2026 academic year was held in person on September 26, 2025. The meeting was called to order at 5:18 p.m. by Vice President Nausad Miyan, Chair of the Senate. He welcomed all senators and executive members, expressing appreciation for their attendance and commitment to strengthening the GSA's mission. The motion to commence was seconded by Margaret, and the motion passed unanimously.

II. Approval of April 25, 2025 Senate Meeting Minutes.

Marianne Otoo moved to approve the April 25, 2025 Senate Meeting Minutes, which was seconded by Margaret. The minutes were approved unanimously with no amendments or comments, confirming the Senate's agreement with the record of the prior session.

III. Welcome Note

Secretary Arindam Laha and President Justin Watkins jointly welcomed all senators and executive board members to the new academic session. They outlined the roles and responsibilities of senators and emphasized the importance of active participation in committees. Both highlighted the GSA's mission to strengthen collaboration, inclusivity, and representation across graduate programs while advancing initiatives that improve the graduate student experience at URI.

IV. Executive Board Introductions/Reports

A. Webmaster: Subek discussed plans for enhancing GSA's digital presence and advancing the use of technology for major events such as the Graduate Student Conference (GSC). He emphasized the need for an integrated online platform to streamline communication, registration, and event coordination.

B. Treasurer: Marianne warmly welcomed all senators and committee members. She described the GSA's financial structure, including available funds and their operational sources. She outlined how the Budget and Finance Committee will collaborate to ensure transparent allocation of resources for each committee, emphasizing funding for events and student-led initiatives.

C. Social Media Manager: Ruth emphasized the importance of digital engagement and invited all senators to follow GSA's official social media channels. She shared plans to increase online visibility and promote events through consistent and creative outreach.

D. GAU Liaison: Moazzem provided updates on ongoing collaborations with the Graduate Assistants United (GAU). He discussed current concerns among graduate students, particularly regarding housing availability and parking challenges, and shared plans to advocate for these issues.

E. Event Coordinator: Akissi welcomed all senators and expressed enthusiasm about the upcoming year's event calendar. She discussed plans to work closely with the Events Committee to organize inclusive activities and foster collaboration across departments.

F. Past President: Karolina briefly welcomed the senators and expressed gratitude to everyone in attendance. She reflected on past achievements and offered continued support and guidance for the new executive board.

V. Committees

A. Budget and Finance Committee

1. Chair: Gavin Moffat

Gavin opened by thanking the senators for their confidence in his leadership. He explained that the Budget and Finance Committee's primary responsibility is to ensure financial transparency and efficiency in all GSA activities. He emphasized that proper allocation of funds allows the association to support student-driven events, professional development programs, and large-scale initiatives like the Graduate Student Conference. Gavin noted that he will be meeting regularly with Treasurer Marianne Otoo to evaluate proposals submitted by each committee and ensure equitable funding across departments.

He encouraged all committee chairs to prepare clear budgets and reimbursement records, as these documents are crucial for the GSA's year-end financial report.

B. Constitution and By-Laws Committee

1. Chair: Matthew Cayer

Matthew thanked the assembly and acknowledged his committee members for their readiness to serve. He described the importance of maintaining the constitutional integrity of the GSA, noting that updates and amendments are essential for keeping the governing structure effective and relevant. He outlined initial priorities, including reviewing attendance policies, remuneration structures, and eligibility guidelines for committee appointments. The committee will collaborate closely with Vice President Nausad Miyan and President Justin Watkins to draft revisions before the Spring semester. Matthew also invited senators to submit recommendations or observed inconsistencies in the By-Laws so that the committee can address them during its scheduled reviews.

C. Events Committee

1. Chair: Jordyn Hickey

Jordyn extended warm appreciation to her fellow members and emphasized the committee's role in fostering community engagement. She described a series of upcoming social and cultural events designed to connect graduate students across disciplines and promote inclusion. Plans include informal networking mixers, cultural appreciation nights, and collaboration with the Events Coordinator, Akissi Nelly Aka, on community-building projects. Jordyn emphasized the importance of creative input from senators and encouraged all departments to participate in GSA-sponsored events to help strengthen graduate student unity.

D. Graduate Student Conference Committee

1. Co-Chair: Huifang Li

2. Co-Chair: Emelia Tawiah-Arthur

Huifang Li, from the Department of Biomedical and Pharmaceutical Sciences, gave a thoughtful address highlighting her excitement and sense of responsibility in serving as Co-Chair for the Graduate Student Conference. She spoke about the conference as a cornerstone of the GSA's mission, providing a space where research, innovation, and diversity intersect. Huifang detailed her vision for an event that not only celebrates graduate scholarship but also fosters meaningful collaboration between departments. She emphasized that the committee's 13 members bring expertise from a range of disciplines, allowing for a broad representation of ideas. Huifang then discussed plans to expand the conference's reach by introducing cross-disciplinary sessions, poster awards, and professional development workshops. Drawing on lessons from last year's organizing team, she outlined how the committee intends to build upon their successes by integrating technology for seamless abstract submissions, live-streaming key sessions, and increasing faculty engagement. Her speech emphasized inclusion, calling on every senator to help identify presenters and reviewers within their departments to ensure broad participation. In her closing remarks, Huifang expressed gratitude to her Co-Chair, Emelia Tawiah-Arthur, and to the GSA Executive Board for their trust and encouragement. She underscored the importance of teamwork, transparency, and communication between committees and reaffirmed her belief that the Graduate Student Conference should stand as a defining moment of scholarly collaboration at URI. Emelia followed by introducing each member of the conference committee, thanking them for their service, and pledging a shared vision of excellence in hosting the Spring 2026 event.

E. Publicity Committee

1. Chair: Evelyn Mensah

Evelyn expressed gratitude to the Senate and outlined her committee's goal to strengthen GSA's communication presence. She discussed plans to collaborate with Social Media Manager Ruth Najel on unified branding across digital platforms. Her focus includes regular newsletters, event photography, and cross-promotion with the Publicity Committee to increase visibility of GSA activities among graduate students. Evelyn emphasized that consistent outreach helps ensure higher attendance, community participation, and awareness of available GSA resources.

F. Nominations and Elections Committee

1. Chair: Nick Labriola

Nick opened by acknowledging the importance of maintaining fairness and transparency in all election processes. He explained that his committee's immediate task is to prepare for upcoming nominations in accordance with the GSA Constitution and By-Laws. The committee will oversee candidate eligibility verification, election logistics, and results certification. Nick also mentioned plans to document and digitize procedures to streamline future elections and reduce administrative delays.

G. Interdisciplinary Affairs and Industrial Partnerships

1. Chair : Niraj Bhatt

Niraj highlighted his committee's focus on promoting collaboration between URI's academic departments and industry partners. He described planned initiatives to facilitate research partnerships, internships, and workshops that expose graduate students to practical applications of their academic training. Niraj also noted that the committee aims to strengthen relationships with local companies and national organizations that share URI's mission of innovation and sustainability.

H. Technology Committee

1. Chair : Sansrit Paudel

Sansrit outlined his committee's mission to enhance the GSA's digital systems and improve communication infrastructure. He discussed collaboration with Webmaster Subek Acharya to develop online forms for reimbursements, event registrations, and digital surveys for feedback collection. Sansrit emphasized that technology-driven tools not only streamline administrative work but also promote accessibility and efficiency for all members of the graduate community

VI. Announcements

- A. New Faculty Advisor: Vice President Nausad Miyan formally announced Dr. Colleen B. Mouw, Professor of Oceanography and Acting Dean of the Graduate School, as the new GSA Faculty Advisor. He acknowledged her distinguished academic contributions and her long-standing commitment to graduate student mentorship.
- B. Upcoming GSA events and committee meetings will be communicated via email and the GSA website. Senators were reminded to remain active in their assigned committees and coordinate closely with their chairs for progress updates.

VII. Adjournment.

Before adjourning, Vice President Nausad Miyan delivered closing remarks reflecting on the meaning of shared leadership within the Graduate Student Senate. He acknowledged the senators' service to their departments and the wider graduate body of over 2,000 students. Nausad expressed gratitude to those who stepped forward as committee chairs, reminding everyone that leadership is defined not by perfection but

by commitment, learning, and collaboration. He highlighted the GSA's role in advancing URI's mission of scholarship, education, and service, encouraging senators to continue their engagement with integrity and enthusiasm. Drawing inspiration from the association's legacy, Nausad emphasized that their collective voice and actions would shape the future of graduate life at URI. He concluded by thanking all present for their time, dedication, and contributions, expressing optimism for the year ahead. A motion to adjourn was made by Marianne Otoo, seconded by Matthew Cayer, and passed with majority votes. The meeting was adjourned at 5:58 p.m.