

Attendance:

- **Present:** Greg Treich, Phillip Price, Morad Behandish, Tony Patelunas, Michelle San Pedro, Thomas Briggs (minutes), Ross Dardani

Meeting began 5.11pm

President: Tony Patelunas

- GSS Meeting dates for Spring 2016. Tony informed the Executive that the previous Vice President had made an error setting the meeting dates because one meeting date was set to occur during Spring recess. He informed the Executive that the new meetings dates will be at 7.00pm on:-
 - Wednesday, January 27th
 - Wednesday, February 17th
 - Wednesday, March 9th
 - Wednesday, March 30th
 - Wednesday, April 20th

All GSS Meetings will take place in the Pharmacy/Biology Building, Room 129 (PBB 129).

GSS Executive meetings will be held a week before GSS Meetings at 7.15pm in the GSS Office in the Student Union, Room 213. The meeting time is later this semester than the previous semester because the President and Communications Director are not free until later this term.

- Remote meeting access and voting bylaw revisions. Tony informed the Executive that the new venue for GSS Meetings allows teleconferencing so that graduates off-campus can participate in GSS Meetings remotely.
 - Microphones. Tony explained that they will be using the Web-Ex system to telecast the meeting and that speakers will have to use microphones. This will require someone to carry a roving microphone to senators who speak during meetings. GSS Administrator Dandini volunteered for this task.
 - Off-campus participation. Tony explained that off-campus participants can communicate to the Senate via a “online chat window.” He recommended that a member of the Executive could take responsibility for operating this interactive chat to communicate the opinion of off-campus participants to the Senate. Tom explained that the Communications Director may not be the most capable person to do this as he is primarily taking minutes during meetings. Ross explained that if he was carrying the roving microphone during meetings he also may not be the best person to monitor the off-campus online chat window. The Executive agreed to finalise these practicalities at the next Executive meeting before the first GSS meeting.
 - Bylaws. Phillip stated that he may need to revise the bylaws to account for new consideration arising from off-campus participation. He expressed concern

regarding voting procedures that involve votes from senators who are not physically present at meetings.

- GSS Short Term Loans (STLs).
 - Tony explained that there had been concern regarding when a new graduate student becomes eligible to apply for a STL. He explained that the Graduate School considers a student to have *matriculated* once they have actively participated in a course and a professor can verify they are taking that class. He explained that this is later than when a student has *enrolled* in a course. The Graduate School are currently getting data on the number of graduates who took out STLs after they had enrolled but before they had matriculated. They also intend to compare data on graduates who became overdue on payments and whether this is effected by when they took out the STL. Tony stated that he will let the Executive know once this data has been gathered.
 - Tom stated that GSS still needs better clarification regarding when loans need to be paid back, especially when UConn payroll can arrange for deductions to be taken out toward paying off STLs. Tom explained that following information given to GSS last semester that he could arrange a payroll deduction for his STL for the following semester which turned out to be untrue. He suggested the Executive clarify the rules on STLs as best as possible to prevent other students being confused by the policies and disgruntled at the Executive. Michelle suggested that the Executive produce a “GSS Short Term Loan trouble-shooting guide” which explains the rules, policies and procedures for STLs and includes a list of FAQ’s. This would help Ross explain to students how the process works. This guide could be put on the GSS website.
 - Tom also brought to the Executive’s attention that, following the payroll glitch that affected all GA’s, his reimbursement was allocated directly to his fee bill to contribute to paying off his STL even though he expressly requested in writing for the reimbursement to be paid directly to his own bank account.
 - Greg stated that ~\$90k has been taken out in STLs and that there have not yet been a sufficient number of loans taken out to test whether the extra \$50k of promised funding is available.
- Temporary lifting of a hold on a graduate student’s account. Tony explained that a graduate student had contacted him explaining that he was unable to repay his STL and was unable to enroll for classes due to the hold placed on his account.
 - **The Executive unanimously voted in favour of a 24-hour lifting of the hold on the graduate student’s account** on the proviso that he provides a written statement to the Executive by 5pm on Monday, 11th January, 2016, explaining his circumstances that will be reviewed for approval by the GSS President (Tony), GSS Treasurer (Greg), and GSS Parliamentarian (Phillip).
 - ***On January 11th 2016 Tony, Greg and Phillip, having received the written statement, approved the 24-hour lifting of the hold on the graduate student’s account.***

- **SOLID training.** Tony explained that they are still in the process of revising the training for Tier II and III GSOs. Greg requested that they include training on the financial processes, i.e. how to submit a budget to GSS, as graduate student leaders currently lack a sufficient awareness of this process.
- **Student Housing.**
 - Vice President for Student Affairs, Michael Gilbert, told Tony that there are 80 beds in Northwood Apartments available next year for graduates. Northwood is currently 94 units, each with 2 bedrooms. Graduate housing has one bed per bedroom, whereas undergraduate housing has multiple beds per bedroom. Therefore just under half of the units in Northwood will be available for graduates although there will be a much larger proportion of undergraduates as a whole living in Northwood than graduates. Tom explained that Northwood is good housing for new graduate students, but it would be preferable for it to be exclusively graduate. Michelle explained the need for the transitional type of housing to be appropriate for graduate needs.
 - Tony also stated that 3 large off-campus housing projects are scheduled for building which will potentially house undergraduates, and possibly leave a whole building on-campus free for graduate students. At the moment there is no such building available.
- **Community Standards.** Tony said that it has been brought to his attention by the Association of Graduate Advocates that graduate students are unaware of, and concerned by, the role of Community Standards. He explained that when graduate students are involved in investigations by Community Standards it tends to be for fairly serious allegations and therefore it is a part of the university about which graduates should have a better understanding. He stated that he is working on a flowchart to explain the processes of Community Standards. He also explained that for Graduate Assistants there are overlaps between concerns that fall under the remit of the UConn Graduate Employee Union, United Automobile Workers (GEU-UAW), where Labour Relations issues overlap with Academic Honour Code issues. He stated that he would also like to present to GSS a chart of the organizational structure of UConn in order to help better inform graduates about the workings of the university.
- **Connecticut Young Professionals.** Tony informed the Executive that he met with the Connecticut Young Professionals group (www.ctyp.org) who hold large networking events attended by representatives from large private and state organisations, and currently have a partnership with Yale University. He explained that they are interested in forming a partnership with UConn and they will be attending the next GSS Executive meeting. Morad stated that he was aware of a group called the Hartford Young Professionals and Entrepreneurs (HYPE) and enquired if they were a similar group.
- **Chat with the Dean.** Tony informed the Executive that the Graduate School have proposed to hold an event once every 5 weeks where graduates can meet with the Dean of the Graduate School to discuss their concerns. There will be 6 seats available for the members of the GSS Executive and 6 seats for other interested graduate students.

Michelle stated that it was a good idea but suggested it would be better to hold them less frequently and that it would not need all of the GSS Executive to attend.

- Guest Speakers.
 - Kay Gruder, Career Consultant, Graduate School
 - Melanie Chenette, Graduate School Advocacy Officer
 - Patrick Carr, Associate University Librarian for Collections and Discovery
 - Scott Jordan, Executive Vice President for Administration and Chief Financial Officer
 - William Wendt, Parking Services

Vice President: Michelle San Pedro

- Senator Apathy. Michelle suggested ways to inform and engage GSS Senators as she feels that the GSS Executive is “stretched thin” and that it would be better to delegate responsibilities to other Senators.
- Public speaking. Michelle stated that she is working to offer a workshop in public speaking that would help graduate students present their research more confidently and effectively to larger audiences.
- Library statement. Michelle suggested preparing a library position statement regarding how cuts to library services shall affect graduates. Tony informed the Executive that he has contacted Martha Bedard, Vice Provost for University Libraries, who encouraged GSS to produce such a statement. Todd Vachon, President of the Graduate Employee Union (GEU-UAW) is also willing to help draft a joint statement with GSS regarding this issue. Michelle also mentioned safety concerns regarding under-staffing of the library during the night.
- Emergency Preparedness. Michelle informed the Executive that she had met with UConn police who asked if graduates would like training for emergency events. Michelle explained that given the current mandatory sessions for all graduates in sexual harassment and diversity that it may be sensible to wait until a later date to offer further training for graduates. Tony told Michelle that we would like to know the situation regarding fitting classroom doors with locks that you can secure from the inside in the event of an emergency.
- Off-campus housing committee. Michelle suggested we form a special committee regarding off-campus housing. Tom suggested that it may be more effective to deal with housing under the current GSS Student Life Committee. Michelle stated that we need to get data regarding graduate student housing needs and that GSS should produce a specific survey to gather this data.
- GSS Service Award. Michelle stated that we need to promote this award and put it on the front page of the GSS website.

Treasurer: Greg Treich

- One card reader. Greg informed the Executive that he has ordered a swipe card reader to take attendance at GSS events and that it will be ready to swipe in graduate attendees at the next GSS Meeting.
- Special Allocations Budget. Greg informed the Executive that \$5,157 has been allocated from the total budget of \$12,327 leaving slightly over half the budget left to be allocated this semester.

Communications Director: Thomas Briggs

- Promotional Items. Tom informed the Executive that we have received our promotional items of GSS coffee mugs and GSS pens-and-jotters. He stated that they are ready to be distributed at the next GSS meeting. He also stated that there are a number of GSS Tote Bags and Tumblers left over that can be used as promotional items at the next orientation event. Tony stated that GSS declined the Graduate School's offer to host an orientation "pizza party" for graduates as he is wary of using GSS funds to host events for the Graduate School.

Parliamentarian: Phillip Price

- Attendance Requirements. Phillip stated that 4 organisations failed to meet their attendance requirements last semester and so will not be eligible to receive reimbursements for events held this spring semester:
 - Chinese Student and Scholar Association
 - The Optical Society
 - Civil and Environmental Engineering
 - The Association of American Pharmaceutical Scientists.
- At-Large Senator Elections. Phillip asked whether they should change the voting procedure for At-Large Senators to increase engagement as last year only one person ran to be an At-Large Senator out of a possible 6 seats. The Executive decided that it would be best to keep the procedure an online one but just promote the positions better. Phillip asked if we wanted to add any specific question to the nomination form. The Executive agreed that a statement regarding why a candidate wanted to be a GSS Senator would be sufficient.

Activities Director: Morad Behandish

- Thanksgiving. Morad explained that due to an error by catering services GSS was charged twice for thanksgiving. He has now rectified the error and assured GSS we have paid the correct amount and no more.

- Professional Development. Morad provided information about a speaker who could talk to graduate students about professional development. He explained that due to the cost it would require a sponsor but GSS could help fund part of the event.
- Optional Practical Training (OPT) visas. Morad explained that recent changes to the STEM extension to OPT have complicated the ability of graduates in STEM fields to remain in the country. He suggested providing workshops to international students about visa issues.
- Happy Hours. GSS will be running happy hours during spring semester and he will liaise with Ross to ensure the dates are effectively advertised on the GSS website.

Meeting adjourned 7.19pm