

To: The Senators and members of the
2019-2020 Graduate Student Senate,

This is Justin, the outgoing President of the University of Connecticut Graduate Student Senate (GSS). As many of you know, I have served three terms on the GSS, with the first term as the Treasurer, and the last two terms as the President. As such, I would like to take a moment to acknowledge that governance is never an individual enterprise, it is always a collective group effort. The successes of my tenure as President is directly tied to the countless hours of work that my team has put in, whether in a public capacity, or working behind the scene. Therefore, it is important for me to highlight and emphasize all of the work that my team has completed.

During my terms as President, I want to acknowledge my Vice President (of two terms!), Erin Curry, who has dedicated countless hours going to meetings on my behalf, that I couldn't attend. Erin has also gone up and beyond what was expected of her, and has never let me down. Next, the Treasurers, Kevin Boyd, and Nafis Fuad. Kevin went out of his way to accommodate graduate student TIIRSO groups who needed funding, and was creative in assisting those groups receive funding. Nafis spent additional time and effort to standardize it, and to streamline the process to ensure that grad students were reimbursed in a timely manner. The Communications Directors, Ngoc Chau Vy, and Gabrielle Corso. Both of them completed their terms admirably, and both of them will have served a minimum of two terms (Chau completed two terms, and Gaby will continue on the 2020-2021 executive board). Both of them were diligent and reliable when it came to filing necessary paperwork, and for everything else that was asked of them. Next, the Activities Directors, Jennifer Caffyn and Deepa Shukla, both of whom put in a lot of work behind-the-scenes to ensure that GSS run events ran smoothly and without issues. Those two hard-working individuals have really raised the quality of GSS events to a whole new level, and have been instrumental in fostering a sense of community among graduate students. Next, I would like to acknowledge the Parliamentarian, Damaris Thuita, who has put in more work than can be reasonably expected, in ensuring that the GSS bylaws and constitution were kept updated, and ensuring that our operations followed the will and spirit of those documents. Lastly, I would like to thank the GSS Administrative Assistants, Ross Dardani, and Manu Shankar, for all of their work. In addition, special shoutout to Executive Board members when I was in my first term as the GSS Treasurer: Vignesh Vasu, Alexis Ernst, and Graham O'Toole.

Next, I would like to thank and acknowledge all of the Senators that contributed to the dialogue and discourse of the Senate over the past two years. Senators are essential to the healthy function of the GSS, by presenting a diversity of views, providing feedback on issues, contributing brainpower to problem-solving, and representing their graduate student constituents at the GSS meetings. In addition, the following Senators also participated on a wide variety of University committees, representing graduate student interests wherever possible. (Senators Cynthia Gerber, Daniel Pfeiffer, Stephany Santos, Jennifer Akosa, Alexis Ernst, Jeffrey "JD" Tamucci, Thomas Briggs, Matt Kearny, James "Jimmy" deMayo, Danielle Heichel, and Rose Dziedzic.) All committees are incredibly important, and without the enthusiastic participation of these Senators, the GSS would not be as successful as it was in representing graduate student interests at these committee meetings.

Lastly, I would like to acknowledge and thank a few certain individuals, who don't fit neatly into the above two categories. These individuals are Tony Patelunas, Deepthi Varghese, and Samuel Surowitz. Tony Patelunas and Deepthi Varghese were the GSS Presidents prior to me, and I must acknowledge and thank both of them for all of their advice, support, and help. Both of them really stepped-up to mentor me, and with their assistance (most of which was behinds-the-scene), I was able to meet the expectation of the Senators of the GSS. Samuel Surowitz was the prior Graduate student Trustee on the UConn Board of Trustees, and it was a pleasure working with him to address graduate student issues with the Central Administration. By working closely, we were able to achieve forward momentum on a number of existing and newly rising graduate student issues at UConn.

As I reflect back on the two years of my Presidency, I wanted to take a moment to thank the members of the GSS for all of your support, advice, and help, over the years. It's accurate to say that without all of the work that you do, it would have been difficult for me to succeed in my role(s) on the executive board. Thank you. Thank you for all the countless hours of work you put in and thank you all for everything that you've done.

Presidential Farewell Address

Now switching gears, I would like to state that I have full confidence in the 2020-2021 Executive Board of the GSS. The three continuing officers (Nafis Fuad, Gabrielle Corso, and Deepa Shukla) are now veterans, and can be trusted to carry on the legacy of the GSS. They will be joined by three new officers (Roman Mays, Irio Schiano, and Robert Daniels), who all have held Executive-Board positions on other TII-RSO's, and thus are some of the most qualified individuals to hold officer positions, and to represent the graduate student community.

I would like to close by saying that this is a time of great change and upheaval at UConn. There is a new University President (Thomas Katsouleas), a new Provost (Carl Lejuez), a new Chairman on the Board of Trustees (Daniel Toscano), a new President at the UConn Foundation (Scott Roberts), just to name a few. In addition to the leadership turnover and change to the cast of characters, I have the misfortune of holding the GSS Presidency when the COVID-19 Pandemic hit, forcing fundamental and unfavorable changes upon the University. I have put forth my best efforts to ensure that graduate student interests were upheld to the upmost during these changes, prevent erosion to hard-won graduate student rights and privileges, and to support the UConn community at large. While the unfavorable situation continues on, I rest easy knowing that these six officers will reliably steer the ship clear despite these turbulent waters.

Nafis Fuad is the incoming GSS President and will be starting his Presidency as of Friday, May 1st, at midnight. I will no longer have access to this email address (GSSPresident@uconn.edu), so if you wish to contact me, please use the following email: justin.fang@uconn.edu.

Thank you and with best wishes for the future,

Justin M. Fang