**UCLA Graduate Students Association Forum**

**Meeting Minutes**

**☒ Regular Meeting ☐ Special Meeting**

**5:30pm, Wednesday, October 12, 2016**

**Global Viewpoint Lounge, Ackerman Student Union**

1. **Call to Order**

The meeting is called to order at 5:40 PM by Ioan Istrate.

1. **Approval of Meeting Agenda**

Ioan Istrate moves to approve the meeting agenda

Ian Coley (MPSC) seconds the motion

The motion carries and the agenda is approved at 5:40PM

1. **Introductory Notes from Administrators**

Ioan Istrate: I would like to have members of the administration frequently present at the Forum meetings.

Robin Garrell, Vice Provost and Dean: Thank you all for taking on these leadership roles. Your voices are heard and appreciated. Some of our top list priorities in Grad Division in partnership with the Grad Council this year are a focus on student progress. Our goal is for every incoming graduate student to achieve their degree and begin a wonderful career. Our focus is to make sure that you are getting the feedback that you need from your department and mentors all along the way. What we’ve noticed is that some departments are doing a really good job with frequent reviews. Some of the professional schools have more established ways for getting career advice and mentorship, but that’s not a uniform thing on this campus. We also want to put a spotlight on mentoring, making sure you’re getting what you need as a person from your graduate experience. Now let me introduce April de Stefano.

Assistant Dean April de Stefano: Thank you so much for including us tonight. I am responsible for academic services. I want to mention a couple things that are going to be happening or continuing on campus this year. The plan is to roll out core competencies this year. They came out of a faculty work group last year. There is an opportunity for UCLA to foster that every grad student leaves with core competencies regardless of career path. We work collaboratively with the career center and other groups on campus. The website grad.ucla.edu/careerhub is a great resource for finding PhD and grad student events on campus. Please spread the word about that. There’s also an effort to make more resources available. Another new feature that we have is a case manager that is devoted to grad students and post-docs with academic concerns. That person’s name is Armando Flores and he is available for you to speak to.

Debbie Simmons: Hi everyone, I’m your Student Government Accounting manager. I’ll make this quick. I have a handout of a PowerPoint that I use every year that gives you some reference material to refer to. Ioan and me are working on the financial aspects of GSA this year. His mailbox is #3. Regarding the councils, what we will need from each of you is a signatory form with space for maybe four signatories to make sure that there’s no forgeries and that all of your requisitions can be approved. The signatory letter is actually on the GSA website and there’s a link to it in the handout. Check the GSA codes, #7 of which pertains to the councils. That actual document I need updated with the different departments that are related to your council. What I need to do very soon is the apportionment, which is based on enrollment. It would be great if you could update that.

Roy Champawat: Review for your council all the disciplines listed and send to Debbie any changes you need made. It could be new disciplines added or changes to the names of existing disciplines. This impacts the way money is apportioned to you. We need to get that updated each year and we’re trying to get this approved at next forum. 75% of last year’s budget is already available to you, but to finish the apportionment we need the final enrollment figures.

Debbie Simmons: We’re asking that you submit all of your requisition forms by May 31 2017. The other stuff is very self-explanatory; I’ll skip to the back. There’s a sheet that shows how your requisition form is channeled. I’ve attached several samples of different types of requisitions you may need. There’s a reference on a little card that’s included here. The budgets are updated weekly on the GSA website. Thank you guys.

1. **VPI Opening Notes**

Ioan Istrate: I would like to welcome you all to this year’s Forum. Thank you for your commitment to this graduate community at UCLA. My office doors and email inboxes are open to all of you. Please don’t hesitate to contact me or any of the other officers. We are working on redesigning the actual GSA office. My personal commitment is to make that an open and welcoming space for everyone in the graduate community. Welcome everyone. You all have my contact details, or if not please let me know. I would like to open the floor to the officers’ report.

1. **Officer Reports**

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| **Michael Skiles, GSA President** | Thank you all for coming and representing your departments. I look forward to working with all of you this year. We are here for you and you can always reach out to me. Internally, we’ve been producing some great programs. On the events front, we have our new events directors, Jessica and Kamal. They’ve gotten off to a tremendous start. Where last fall there was just one gradbar, this quarter we’re having seven, and their attendance is through the roof, twice breaking records at 900 and then 1,200 students. We very much hope you’ll come to our upcoming events. Tomorrow we’re having a comedy Gradbar in the Pauley club. We are also looking forward to an election party, or an election wake, and events with the International Graduate Student Association, which I’ve worked with our Communications Director, Alex Fung, to revive. We’re funding these events in very sustainable ways at about a third the price-point per student of last year’s events. As such, with the surplus we anticipate, we expect to be able to maintain this pace of awesome events and to add to all these Gradbars a Gradball involving a banquet, dance, and beneficiary. The whole community will be able to celebrate and contribute to the new Bruin Shelter. Melnitz Movies is doing very well – we have screenings basically every Tuesday and Thursday. Because these are pre-screenings, we now only have to pay for the cost of the theater and we are able to bring in great talent, actors and directors, for Q&A’s. Driving the increased attendance is our enhanced communications efforts. By working with Christine Wilson at the GSRC, coupled with going out and recruiting people to give us their email addresses, we have increased our mailing list four-fold. In terms of external advocacy, there are two very important issues coming before the regents. The two-year freeze on tuition, which was a godsend, is now up. There is considerable impetus to raise tuition, and raise it with a vengeance to make up for lost time, so we’re going to have to advocate strongly against tuition hikes. Another main issue is the Professional Degree Supplemental Tuition policy, which might be changing to allow each professional school to match the costs of comparable private, not just public, institutions. I fervently voiced my concerns that this could lead to run-away tuition increases to the Office of the President, the Board of Regents, the Council of Presidents, the Student Regent, and the UCSA, and convinced the latter three to oppose this change. Seeing opposition, the regents delayed consideration of this change from this past July to March of 2017, as part of a broader review of the PDST policy. Because there’s so much at stake this year, our association can no longer afford to remain on the sidelines. Because we need to engage on the UC-wide level, I secured my own election as Graduate Chair of the UC Council of Presidents and urged the leadership of UCSA to waive our membership fees for this year and restore our voting rights. I was thereafter able to encourage and support the election of our own Discretionary Funding Director, Parshan, as their Chief Financial Officer, and of my friend and predecessor as Graduate Chair of the Council of Presidents, Ralph Washington Jr., as President. I was also able to make sure that this PDST issue was on their graduate policy agenda. We have fights to fight, but I think we are well positioned to make our voices heard. On the internal level, Lindy Comstock, Tess and others of you worked with me to demonstrate the real demand for a TA marketplace, which Grad Division launched at the beginning of this year. Over 25 departments have posted positions and over a thousand students have used this service. Other initiatives we have undertaken deal with the towel ban at the Wooden Center – I have argued against this policy, because it doesn’t actually promote sustainability--either water will be used to wash towels there, or students are going to have to buy new towels and lug them back and forth to their washing machines at home where they’ll undoubtedly be washed in a less water-efficient way. Thankfully they reversed this change and the towels are back. We want sustainable initiatives that are going to help students, not inconvenience them, like community gardening, and expanded access to public transportation and food closets that eliminate pre-consumer waste. Turning now to some of the more enduring challenges we face, our gym and our place in the university. As you know, David Geffen donated $100 million to create a faculty high school where the Kinross gym currently is. The gym serves 6,000 regular users of that gym per year, and they were on track to just losing that gym, with the nearest alternative being a 25-minute walk to the overcrowded Wooden Center. It didn’t seem like a new gym was going to happen at all. It reached the point where administrators were telling me that I needed “to be realistic,” that most universities don’t have graduate gyms and that five years from now grad students would forget that there ever was a graduate gym. In consultation with many of you, I determined we needed to take a different approach. I noticed that students weren’t benefitting from these major donations but were being hurt by them. $100 million for the Geffen Academy just meant that our gym was getting kicked to the curb; $50 million for a Luskin Conference Center students couldn’t afford to use just meant that all of us in Lot 6 saw our parking lot demolished. We clearly didn’t have a seat at the capital planning table--and when they don’t give you a seat, you have to flip the table over. I created a more than 70-person-strong protest committee called the Save KREC Task Force and made clear to the administration that, if necessary, we were prepared to protest the donors themselves. Within a week, the administration promised us a new and better gym that they would work to have ready by the time the old gym closes, and told us that if there were any downtime between gyms, they would provide passes to the likes of LA Fitness, which they had previously said was off the table. They also created a fund that would pay for the cost of events like our Gradbars’ use of the Luskin Conference Center, and committed to making the space available for such events. Finally, they convened a meeting with me and Danny Siegel to see how we can get some of these major donations to go to causes that actually benefit students, such as funding a new residence hall so that we don’t have to pay for them with rent increases. The reason that the administration hasn’t been championing that sort of donations is that, in a way, in order to do so, they have to admit that there are problems – that there isn’t affordable housing, and that 42% of their students experience food insecurity. They want us to help them think of ways to put a “positive spin” on these issues. The other main issue we’ve been working on with Andrea from MPSC and Drake Smith from Bio Sciences is parking. Last year, graduate students were effectively evicted from lot 2 and sent to lots 4 and 7. This creates an inconvenience and safety hazard, as people are working late in labs past 2 am. Really appallingly, this lot is empty most of the time. Over the summer, they let students cross-park in lot 2, but they have discontinued this arrangement. Now we see every single day that the roof of this lot is totally empty. We’re probably going to need to start a media campaign if we don’t see some solution soon. I turn to you for your advice on these issues and any questions or comments you may have.Ian Coley (MPSC) – So did UCSA waive our fees? Michael Skiles – Yes. Our voting rights are restored and we have full membership, with no commitments on our part. Dolly Wilson (Nursing) – The professional supplemental tuition – is there a date set in March for that meeting? Michael Skiles – It will be the march meeting of the UC Board of Regents – I don’t know the date yet. We’ll make sure that a good group of students is there to give public comment to the regents. If you have any anecdotes about how this is a hindrance to the diversity of your department or the engagement of graduates in public service after they leave UCLA that would be appreciated. Ian Coley (MPSC) – Is our final 2016-17 budget for the year on our website yet?Michael Skiles – It should be there, things have been shifting on the websiteIoan Istrate – We had to redesign a bit of the website. All the minutes and weekly budget reports should be there, but it is a bit complicated for users to actually reach them, which I want to fix. The site should be a bit more streamlined. Michael Skiles – [In response to a question about where the gym will be] They’re building the new facility off site. It’s a modular building. That sounds makeshift but it’s not. The goal is that the building should fill our needs for about ten years, after which time there should be a new building. The modular building will be at the corner of veteran and Kinross – it will feature more square footage. It will actually have a considerable increase in the areas our focus groups have asked for; for example about a third increase in cardio equipment. They promise that it will be as good if not better than our current facility. Their goal was to make sure that there would be no downtime between gym closing and opening. Ian Coley (MPSC) – How have you involved the Union? Michael Skiles – We’ve reached out to the TA Union and they’ve reached out to us. They expressed their concerns about the fiasco in which a lot of students didn’t have their fees paid. I was happy to work with them on that. We have been on a couple of issues together. We’re eager to partner with them and see them as natural partners on a lot of these issues. Forum representative - It would be great to have a section on our website about issues and advocacy. Also, if there’s going to be any downtime between the old and new gym, and they will work out something with LA Fitness, they should have a timeframe of what the down time would be. Michael Skiles – I agree that a clear and concrete plan is the only tolerable way of dealing with any gym downtime.  |

1. **Approval of Appointments**

Ioan Istrate: I would like to invite the president up again.

Michael Skiles: Good to be back. We have a new wave of appointments as happens with every new year. They are principally for non-stipended and academic positions. Most stipended positions were voted on last spring. There are several exceptions to that. We have a host of appointments to the various senate and campus policy committees.

Ioan Istrate moves to approve the appointments.

Elizabeth Mills (MPSC) seconds the motion.

Ioan Istrate opens the floor to questions.

Michael Skiles moves to amend the appointments to reflect a change (Benita Jin moved to the Council on Research and Kaitlin Splett moved from Research to the Faculty Executive Committee).

Bio Sciences Forum representative seconds the motion.

The motion carries and the amendment is accepted

Ioan Istrate opens the floor again for discussion.

The motion carries and the appointments are approved

1. **Approval of Forum Schedule**

Ioan Istrate: looking at previous academic years, we had the first meeting today, which is Wednesday of third week. The second meeting falls Wednesday of sixth week. We have moved the last forum from the Wednesday before thanksgiving to Wednesday November 30th, which is tenth week. I would like to move to approve this schedule.

Ian Coley seconds the motion.

There are no comments.

Motion carries and the forum schedule is approved.

1. **Adjournment**

Ioan Istrate moves to adjourn Forum.

The motion carries and the meeting is adjourned at 6:37 pm.

Ioan Istrate: We will be carrying on the meetings using Robert’s Rules of Law.

**Respectfully submitted: Secretary**

 **Signature Date**