11/20 GSA Forum Minutes

* Executive officer reports
	+ Zak Fisher, President: he met yesterday with the Chancellor, discussed a variety of issues
		- Housing: it feels like administrators are not taking the housing plan seriously. Zak is hoping that having a clear plan after this forum will help with this issue
		- More CAPS counselors will be hired to improve wait times
		- Only about 10% of the need for students with dependents is actually met; he asked for a 300% increase in resources for grad students with dependents, and the Vice Chancellor is willing to attend a task force on this
		- The chancellor does not think a salary cap is a good idea
		- Zak and others feel that the Chancellor’s office has not been transparent about the admissions scandal
	+ Tonight is the first grad bar of the year, 6:30-9:30
	+ There is interest in a small GSA holiday reception during the first two weeks of December
	+ Zak motioned to move the budget item up to the beginning of the meeting, and this motion passed unanimously
	+ JP Santos, VP of External Affairs: his office is continuing to work on mentorship and consolidating resources for graduate students
		- they are also working on mental health legislation, and they need more volunteers for this effort
		- They’ve met with the Geffen School and Anderson School councils to talk about EVP activities and pass down resources that are important for students to be aware of
		- JP wants to partner more with the UCLA Government Relations Board
		- JP’s UC Santa Cruz counterpart has accused a member of the board of regents of sexual assault, and it has been swept under the rug, and JP is working to help and support her
		- He is continuing to work towards re-opening the UCLA housing portal
		- UCGPC council (made up of all the EVPs in the UC system) is working to overturn a decision to classify graduate students as “not workers”
		- His office has been working with CalPIRG to increase voter turnout for the 2020 elections
* The budget for the year was discussed by Zak Fisher
	+ the budget is quite similar to how it has been in previous years
	+ more money has been allocated towards publications than in the past
	+ there is a $2000 honorarium that will likely go towards GSA workers who are not currently being paid
	+ much of the budget surplus will go to events, some will go towards Melnitz Movies
	+ $1500 is added for travel (e.g. to the Regents)
	+ Many councils are not spending all of their money
	+ The forum has $25,000 to spend each year
	+ the last percentage of the budget is allocated to councils
	+ The budget passed with 7 abstentions
* The minutes were approved of with 7 in favor and 4 abstentions and the agenda was approved with 17 votes
* JP Santos, VPE discussed progress on issues regarding mentorship and grad progress
	+ the purpose of the discussion was to gauge student support for new mentorship policies
	+ first question: if there were to be a yearly check-in for all students, what is the best way for that to happen?
		- this should be between the adviser and potentially committee members
		- students were concerned that this process should be adaptable, since committee and advisement structures are different across departments
		- there also needs to be a protocol for handling potentially abusive advisers
			* Ombuds is for mediation between you and your adviser; you can also get help through the union
			* in any formal grievance process, there should be protections against retaliation
		- One students suggested averaging data at the department level, so student satisfaction can be compared across departments; this would not replace a grievance process for abusive advisers
	+ Second question: how do you find out about your resources?
		- one student suggested that a database might be challenging for students who do not know what they’re looking for; have a clearly organized website with categories would be useful
		- One streamlined website that directs students to all resources would be very helpful
		- The GSRC website already has some of this, but this new website would be an expanded version
		- One student asked if there could be a physical office where students can ask questions (note: the GSRC sort of does this)
		- Students were generally in favor of GSRC representatives speaking with councils about what they do, as many students don’t know about the office
		- Students are interested in more information about CAPs, and they would like to see the number of CAPs sessions per year increased
	+ There was a discussion on changing language/policy surrounding at-whim dismissals and retaliation
		- JP is interested in collecting stories about these dismissals so that the university will take these cases more seriously
		- A student pointed out that there is also need to deal with instances where advisers more subtly push students out/force them to leave
	+ The union has an equity survey
		- administration said there’s no data that discrimination happens at UCLA, so this survey would serve as a data point
		- the union does keep data on how many people per department participate, but respondents are anonymous
* Zak Fisher and Zoe Brown discussed progress on the GSA’s efforts to address homelessness and housing insecurity
	+ the emergency fund is based off of an existing program at USC; applicants would be anonymous, and approved by the forum
		- this program would cost $10,000 and would come from the forum funding
	+ this would propose lowering rent to $1000 in graduate student housing
		- One student pointed out that this is still a hardship for students who are only employed at 25% time
		- if you’re outside of university housing, the university should subsidize the difference between what you pay and the $1000 limit (within reason)
	+ This bill would also make it easier for students to apply for emergency funds
	+ This bill is generally about setting an example, and the hope is that the $10,000 fund will be one of the ways that we do that
	+ There was a question about whether this is an allowed use of student funds – Zak believe that this is an allowed use
	+ If this passes tonight, Zak will take the bill to grad bar and start getting signatures of support
	+ To include students who make less than $25,000 a year, we amended the language from “are often required to pay an unsustainable 70-80% of their income to rent alone” to “are often required to pay all of virtually all of their income to rent alone”; a footnote will say that 70-80% is the average
	+ JP wondered whether Grad Division understands the consequences of their policies on students’ lives and their debt; students would like it if Grad Division would attend our meetings and provide their perspective
	+ We amended the language under “be it resolved” to include that the subsidy will not exceed $1000
	+ We voted to approve the bill, 15 in favor and 1 abstention
* We voted to table the discussion on the Agora project until the next meeting