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