

University of California, Los Angeles
Graduate Student Association Forum #2, Winter Quarter
Wednesday, February 13, 2019, 5:30pm

Forum minutes taken by Jackie D’Almeida, Director of Communications

CALL TO ORDER – 5:40 pm

Consent Calendar:

1. Approval of Minutes - No Objections
2. Approval of Agenda – No Objections

Executive Officer Reports

Michael Skiles GSA President

- With respect to the executive pay resolution, I brought it up with my meeting with Chancellor Block. Much of the conversation went as you might expect, the Chancellor argued that it was necessary to pay executives much more than \$200,000 in order to attract top executives. I countered that it takes more than \$21,000 a year to attract top TA’s, and that many might skip opportunities because of the lack of affordability.
- Effectively he argued that because of the numbers of people, the University could succeed in providing an attractive offer for top executives but would not succeed in making the changes needed to attract and sustain student workers and their families.
- The conversation got sidetracked as it turned towards the conduct of representatives who have brought this issue up at other committees, which I think is a red herring argument. The Chancellor declined the forum’s invitation to have any UCLA representative come and defend the pay structure, he felt that would be unfair and would put the person on the spot.
- He suggested we make efforts to take this to the UC-wide level, saying that the UC as a whole control the salaries that accompany each pay scale. I plan to bring this up in our next meeting.
- We are starting a good conversation about what pay justice at the University looks like.
- One of the main parts of my officer report concerns a matter about which there has been threatened litigation. The best course is to move it to an executive session – but since we have guests, I would like to table the remainder of the officer report.

Transportation Program Update and FY19-20 Parking Fee Consultation

Lisa Koerbling and Staff, Commuter Parking Services

Not present

Discussion of Elections Calendar

Richard Tran, GSA Commissioner of Elections

- Elections are coming up in the spring, for that to move forward we need approval for the general election calendar, and for the change in the signature requirement.

- The election calendar – this year’s proposed calendar very closely mimics the calendar for last year, which was approved, so I don’t see any need to change the calendar for this year.
 - Question: is it possible to change the application deadline?
 - Answer: No, it has to be approved by this date.
 - Question: Is the referendum time frame the same as last year?
 - Answer: Any referendum will be discussed in the forum, this is just the deadline to submit a referendum to the forum.
- Move for a vote:
 - In favor: 16, the motion passes.
- Second thing is a little different that last year. We decided that making the signature requirement may present a challenge for graduate students who are in smaller cohorts. For example, a PhD student in a small cohort may have a harder time collecting fifty signatures than a student in Anderson, for example.
- We discussed waving 20 of the 50 required signatures if the candidate shows commitment to the process by submitting a one minute video. The challenge is that GSA code specifies that a candidate must collect 50 signatures, so this would require changing the GSA code.
 - Question: What is in the video?
 - Answer: It is just a self-introduction.
 - Question: It could create a situation where only people with the capacity to make a video are able to apply. One suggestion is making it a limited video – if we’re able to designate times where they can sign up to come to the GSA office to take a video, instead of having a professionally made video submitted.
 - Answer: We were afraid that we wouldn’t have the funding to do that, so it would just have to be one of us making the video.
 - Statement: There could also be some guidelines to ensure there isn’t a lot of crazy editing happening – just sitting and talking in front of a camera, for example.
 - Statement: We could take the video during the interview process.
 - Statement: This could help drum up interest in voting because people could see who they’re voting for, which could engage students more.
- The person still has the option of gathering 50 signatures instead. Waiting until after the deadline passes to make the videos during the interview stage would be challenging, because they need to have proof in order to get the interview.
 - Statement: I suggest having guidelines in place for the video or having GSA take the videos in a specified location.
 - Statement: I think it’s better to give students more control – so while we can have guidelines for some aspects, giving them more creative control could help students feel more excited about the process.
- This is still a general idea, and once we have it in writing we will create guidelines.
- Motion to bring to a vote: motion carries.
- Motion to vote as amended (seconded)

- **Vote: APPROVED** (14 in favor, 1 opposing)

LGBT Resource Center Presentation

Andy Cofino, LGBT Resource Center Director, and Ernest Arciniega, GSA Director of Diversity, Inclusion and Community Engagement

- We have a special guest today to talk about the resources at the Undocumented Student Program.

Yadira Hernandez, Undocumented Student Program

- Undocumented students don't have access to many funding opportunities. In the past few years we have received \$400,000 to create fellowship opportunities for undocumented students.
- Technically this is the only funding that undocumented students have access to. We have at least 50 undergraduate students. Some UC's don't have any undocumented students, some only have one or two. For us to have fifty is really a lot.
- We provide several scholarships and fellowships. Students who have immediate families who are undocumented also have access to these resources.
- We have been given funding to hire a graduate student.
- Question: Would it be helpful for GSA to pass a motion expressing support for increasing funding?
 - Answer: Yes, that would be wonderful.

Andy Cofino, LGBT Campus Resource Center

- We're located in the Bruin Resource Center at the basement level.
- We have a lot of different options for students to use our space. They can use the lounge, and we also have a center space for events. We have a private office for our CAPS counselors. We have a library which is the largest of existing LGBT libraries on a campus.
- We provide a comprehensive range of advocacy and support services. These services are designed to impact students holistically, and not just their LGBT status.
- We also provide services to staff and faculty, but primarily assist students.
- We have a lot of connections to organizations throughout LA city and county.
- We provide opportunities for students to attend LGBT conferences.
- In partnership with Robert Gamboa we do a lot of advocacy and policy related work.
 - For example, if you're a graduate student TA, you're considered a UCLA employee and you are unable to use a preferred name. Requiring a legal name doesn't allow people who are nonbinary to use their preferred name and affirm their identity. We are working with human resources to address this.
- We also provide crisis management, job opportunities and other career development.
- We opened a new program called We Write the Rainbow, and also Grads and Grinds.

Discussion of Resolution to Declare Westwood Community Council Lacks Democratic Legitimacy and Withdraw Representation Unless it Commits to Proportional Representation of Westwood's Stakeholders

Michael Skiles, GSA President

- I'd like the representatives of the Westwood Community Council to come forward.
- We previously discussed a resolution stating that students are not well represented on this body, and if the council did not take sufficient steps at the next meeting to remedy this, then GSA would consider leaving the council. The chair of the council has graciously decided to join us tonight.
- Every individual has a right to sue UCLA for building student housing projects that they don't like, but what's problematic is when they do these things, but they claim to be doing so representing us, when they are not representing us.
- It's problematic when they add gravitas to their name by calling themselves the Westwood Community Council, which suggests that they fairly represent all of Westwood stakeholders.
- Looking at the website we see the first seat is Westwood property owners. North Village Residents Association.
- Many of the rest of these seats are homeowners associations.
- Westwood Village Business Association – this isn't the business improvement association. I've seen articles that Steve Sann himself is the chair of this association. It doesn't seem that they have meetings that are open to the public, but if there are I would love to learn about them tonight.
- Others on this list are business and property owner stakeholders.
- The common theme of all of these are: property owners. Most certainly not students.
- Environmental association – this is not open to people to become members of as far as I have seen, their purpose seems to be to oppose any new housing.
- Finally, one seat for students.
- Faculty and staff stakeholders seat – vacant.
- Members at large, all appear to be property owners. Of course, here we have Steve Sann.
- The concern here is that this amounts to token representation, and not actual representation. In order for this council to suggest that it represents Westwood as a whole it needs to be restructured.
- We had previously suggested that students should be granted more board seats, but each time there was some excuse that led to the matter being tabled or delayed.
- Last month they finally decided to discuss the matter and have suggested that they will consider it in March.
- Taylor will now speak to the amount of respect that students have been shown at these board meetings.

Taylor

- I've never been to a GSA meeting. About a year ago Michael asked me to attend these board meetings. Some initial impressions: over the last year I have seen that they are a

group that is largely against everything I feel is important as a student. Bike lanes, for example, they are very strongly against.

- They talk a lot about how there is not enough parking in Westwood.
- A study showed that there is too much parking in Westwood, they dismissed that.
- They have dismissed opinions that global warming is a serious issue.
- They are against student housing, no support for public transportation.
- Scooters have been a big topic at every meeting. They are strongly against scooters and have asked the police to address the scooter issue.
- I think the relationship has been very fraught, I came in with an open mind ready to cooperate and found that the relationship was already toxic and beyond repair.
- I don't think there is any hope for students to continue with this association, I feel that I've wasted many hours dissenting to no avail.

Michael Skiles

- The problem is that they can validly claim that they represent all of Westwood.
- Question: Is this related to a neighborhood council?
 - Answer: The neighborhood council is an elected board. The North Westwood Neighborhood Council, for example, is a fairly representative board.
 - This is the Westwood Neighborhood Association that was formed in the fear that the Westwood Neighborhood Council would become overrun by student concerns. In fact, they found that the Westwood Neighborhood Council never became a voice for progressive student concerns.
- Question: Are any of these people elected?
 - Answer: the structure of the board itself is not elected by the people. They don't receive money from the city and are not bound by the same city charters. Some of the representatives from homeowners' associations are elected by their peers.
- Question: Are we looking to have more representatives? What's the benefit to being part of this? I've been reading about them, and it says they are representatives of Westwood stakeholders and of UCLA.
 - Answer: Feel free to address this to the chair.

Steve Sann

- I'm a Bruin myself, I have immense respect for you.
- I was not informed of this item, the President did not tell me and I found out for myself. I wish the President had informed me of this item before because I have nothing prepared.
- I would say to you, regardless of how you feel about this or any other item, each of you are very intelligent people. Ask yourself one thing: why would he schedule something so important in a way that you would only hear one side? That to me is a giant red flag.
- There have been many misstatements. I will address any of your questions in the time that I have. I will meet with any of you at a time of your choosing, and we can discuss all of these items. They deserve serious discussion.

- There is a term in the law, rightness, that says you don't discuss anything until you have to. We will discuss this in March I will be in support of any part of this motion that increases student involvement.
- This motion, which I just saw, that would require us to rip up our by-laws. Ten years ago I was here. Mr. Skiles was not.
- Let me describe our organization because there have been so many misstatements.
- We formed 10 years ago, there were 4,000 registered student organizations. Then there was the academic senate, the alumni association, just on this campus. On Westwood we have business association, we have the rotary club, the friends of the library. There are thousands of organizations in this community.
- There was no place where the organizations could speak with each other.
- The Pacific Palisades Community Council were the most respected agency, who had been around for decades. We also looked at the Brentwood Community Council, and we said we wanted to form a body to have these conversations.
- Our mission and purpose.
 - The purpose of the Westwood Community Council shall be:
 - To promote and support the Westwood community.
 - To provide a forum for the consideration and review of community issues of interest to all stakeholders in Westwood.
 - To be an advocate for Westwood upon those issues that the WSCC selects, and when there is broad support (2/3) from the board.
 - Palisades Council recommended that there be two-thirds support from the council before we take a position. We do this because we want to ensure there is broad support.
 - We brought together students, faculty, staff. All the groups were brought in when we formed.
- This motion, which is demanding: "if you don't approve this, we will resign" and threatening to write nasty letters to Koretz, I can tell you that making threats and ultimatums in any situation, is not a good tactic.
- I can't tell you how other people will vote about adding students to the council, I will absolutely support it, and I think others will too.
- Taylor mentioned that he has never been to a GSA meeting, so the council said "how can you represent GSA if you've never been to a meeting?" That's how seriously we take student representation. Maybe Taylor represents what Michael Skiles wants, but not what GSA wants.
- This deserves a serious conversation, not one-sided.
- I think the most prudent thing to do is to wait and see what my council does in a month. I am on your side on this. Maybe not fully, but I support GSA having a separate seat.
- Our bylaws require that any bylaw amendment is given time, so it's done over a two-meeting process. Our bylaws are meant to be thoughtful and not one-sided. I was not supposed to be here. You are free to make any decision you like tonight, although I hope that if you walk away that you understand the facts, not the rhetoric.

- If GSA decides not to be a part of the council, we will miss you, but we will continue to have students on our council because they are a vital part of the community. They just might not be appointed by this group. You have a right to have a seat at the table.
- I personally have supported the purple line, I have supported public transit, there have been many misstatements. We have ensured that the train will be running to Westwood.
- Let me know if you would like me to come back to your next meeting, I would be happy to.
- Question: Thank you for the history of the council, I'm happy to hear that you support the purple line. I hear you saying that the body was formed to have important conversations. And you said that 1300 student organizations are associated with this council?
 - Answer: No, I said that there are 1300 student organizations currently.
- Question: Taylor brought forward comments saying that he has to protest the vote every time and feels frustrated. Cameron says that he has to speak with Koretz. Why are these people so frustrated in trying to work with you?
 - Answer: My point was that we brought together a group of neighbors, renters, students. We looked at the two biggest groups in student government – the omnibus student groups – USAC and GSA, who represent all students. We thought this was the way to be the most inclusive. If we went to the fraternities or other groups we would not be including all students.
- Question: I thought you made a lot of good points, but you said that your group requires a 2/3 majority. It's fair to say that because of this you are able to minimize student involvement on the board. I'm not here to accuse you of nefarious work, but this can be a way to breed a lot of frustration because a lot of agency has been taken out of our hands. For example, we didn't know about your work on the purple line; there is no communication. I don't think you can brush it off by saying it's all part of someone's agenda.
 - Answer: You make really excellent points. First of all, I can't speak to others' motives. We looked for models, the Palisades Council had one student vote. We have renter seats and nonprofit seats that can be filled by students. The point of having a student seat is to ensure that there is always a student seat on the council.
 - The boundaries of Westwood are the boundaries that we adopted. We are still the only body or council that holds those boundaries. The neighborhood councils now represent segments of Westwood. We're not planning to split, and we look at things holistically.
- Question: I went to the same schools as you. When you said that we didn't hear from your side, that's concerning because we did hear from your side. We heard last forum from your student rep. That's your side, that's your organization. They've sat on that organization and they are appalled, and they are angry. When I first heard about the shenanigans that were going on I thought that it sounds like a cancer on American society. Your website says it's still being built, the last thing is from 2010. Is this a real

thing that gets a chair for UCLA students? Is this efficient? The North Westwood Village Residents Association gets the same vote as thousands of students?

- Answer: I'm not a member of that association, what I do know is that organization has been in existence at least since the 1980's. If you go to Zev Yaroslavsky he will tell you that he was working with that organization many decades ago. They have been an organization that are active in the community.
- Question: How many people are in that organization?
 - Answer: I'm not a member.
 - Question: But you gave them a seat?
 - Statement: Maybe they were active in the past.
 - Statement: I tried calling them and my number was blocked.
- Question: Do you own a stake in the W hotel?
 - Answer: That is not true and was never true.
 - Statement: I said that he owned a restaurant in the W hotel.
 - Answer: Another misstatement is that this was a feather in my nest, because the W hotel is the only hotel to allow entertainment.
- Question: Is it true that someone on the organization runs a "UCLA Watch?"
 - It is not true, it was true. One of the biggest things they did was champion trees on this campus. It was an environmental group. They were characterized as some nefarious force.
- Question: Is there access to minutes?
 - Answer: I'll see what I can get to you. Many of the things that we were alleged to take a position on, I would like to clarify. A lot of people do raise their hands and voice opinions on things, but we haven't taken a position on them.
 - We found that the bike lane interacting with bus trips on Westwood was dangerous. We are on record strongly supporting a dedicated bike lane.
- I do believe that Mr. Skiles is doing what he thinks is best for the community, and I don't question his or Taylor's motives. Cameron is a terrific individual but is closely associated with Mr. Skiles. When Cameron comes and expresses his opinions, while they don't speak in unison, they express a very similar point of view.
- I don't think this vote needs to be taken today, but as a pledge to you, next month I will vote to split the seats to allow a separate GSA seat.
- Motion to cap the conversation (seconded)

Michael Skiles

- I think that very few of you can say that any of your questions were answered in a straightforward way. He sidesteps questions about the W hotel. By picking just the two principal student associations, he's found a way to token represent all of us while giving us one single vote. Now he is proposing to give us two votes.
- Even if they increased out representation to two votes they would still be able to ride over us.
- Statement: I don't agree with the approach that's being taken, I think that GSA can present themselves professionally.

- I think that if you knew more you would see that he is very hostile and doesn't honor students with respect.
- Taylor was appointed in consultation with the External Vice President. Josh actually left the position early because he felt that the council was illegitimate and treated him with hostility.
- Question: Would it be too much of a harm to table this to next meeting?
 - Answer: It wouldn't be a problem our next meeting will still be before their March meeting.
- Question: What is his motivation in coming here? What is his motivation for wanting us to stay?
 - Answer: In my opinion he wants the legitimacy that he gets from the status quo.
- Move to table the discussion (seconded)
 - Motion carries.
- Move to postpone the end of the officer reports (no objection)
 - Motion carries.

ADJOURNMENT 7:45pm