

University of California, Los Angeles Graduate Student Association Forum #3, Fall Quarter, Wednesday, December 2, 2020, 5:30pm

Forum minutes taken by Elyse Brusher, GSA Director of Administrative Affairs

Week 9 Fall 2020 agenda

*** Items to vote**

5:30-5:35 Call to Order/Welcome Address

Musibau Francis Jimoh (GSA VP of Internal Affairs)

5:35-6:05 Forum Engagement

Karen Hedges (Ex-Officio Delegate on Forum - Student Affairs Representative and Deputy Director of Campus Life), Biological Sciences, and Humanities Council

6:05-6:15 Updates from GSA Leadership

JP Santos (GSA President), Letty Treviño (VP of Academic Affairs), Neda Ashtari (VP of External Affairs)

6:15-6:45 Update from UCLA Housing Administration

Pete Angelis (UCLA Assistant Vice Chancellor, Housing and Hospitality Services) and Sarah Dundish (Director, Housing Services & Strategic Initiatives at UCLA)

6:45-6:55 Vote to pass the Resolution for Graduate Equity*

JP Santos

6:55-7:15 Resolution to include student representation in Dean search committees*

Christine Abagat Liboon, Sophia Ángeles, and Ramon Flores (School of Education and Information Studies)

7:15-7:25 Resolution for GSA Service*

JP Santos

7:25-7:30 Updates from CalFresh

Isabel Benvenuti (GSA Director of Academic Senate)

7:30 Adjournment

Musibau Francis Jimoh

LETTING PEOPLE INTO THE MEETING--5:30

CALL TO ORDER/WELCOME ADDRESS--5:35pm

Musibau Francis Jimoh (GSA Vice President of Internal Affairs)

- I was hoping to use this time to have Grace Kurek-Boschan introduce herself, but since she is not here yet, let's jump right into Forum Engagement.

FORUM ENGAGEMENT--5:40

Karen Hedges (Ex-Officio Delegate on Forum - Student Affairs Representative and Deputy Director of Campus Life) (khedges@saonet.ucla.edu)

- I am happy to have the opportunity to speak with you all tonight and here is what I do:
 - In 20th year at UCLA Student Affairs
 - Serve as the Forum Administrative Rep along with Mike Cohn (Director of SOLE)
 - Focus on civic engagement (voting this year and also worked on the census last year)
 - Work to support student initiatives, especially underrepresented student initiatives
 - Can help you navigate bureaucracy
 - Work with [UCLA spirit squad](#) and oversee the program

Humanities Council (hsc@gsa.asucla.ucla.edu)

Yasmine Krings and Gaby Barrios (Humanities Council Forum Representatives)

- Who we are:
 - We represent almost 500 graduate students across 14 departments
 - Going through a lot of changes (departmental organization)
 - Recently the French, German, Italian, and Scandinavian departments merged to form the Department of European Languages and Transcultural Studies (ELTS).
 - We are attempting to figure out how to best operate as a council
- What we do:
 - Mostly spend our council meetings processing requisitions
 - Support creative use of funds during COVID ex. Purchasing gift cards for individuals so the money doesn't go to waste.
 - If anyone here is from a Humanities department, know that you have funds at your disposal and you should use them.
 - We also circulate information about conferences and events
 - We host online game nights (Jackbox games)
- Challenges/opportunities for connection:

- It has been hard to build up culture during COVID
- We also experience a lot of turnover, which makes it hard for us to build up and maintain institutional knowledge.
 - Specifically in terms of calculating and allocation funds and communicating and coordinating with GSA
- We are figuring out how to streamline and centralize processes so that every member is aware of the resources available
- Looking to hear from other councils who have experience with issues like ours and collaborate with them on events that can be beneficial to us both.

Biological Sciences Council (bssc@gsa.asucla.ucla.edu)

Alex Chubick (Biological Science Council External President)

- Who we are:
 - Executive board and general membership from 14 departments (biological and health sciences)
 - We can put you in touch with any of these departments
- What we do:
 - Goal is to represent interests of constituents
 - Social events at least once per quarter example whine and wine night
 - Back to school and end of the year party
 - Annual mug making contest where we sell the mugs at the end of the year party and donate the funds raised to charity (School on Wheels)
 - Collaborations with councils and other groups at UCLA
 - MPSC--keg race showdown
 - BruinTalks
 -
 - Cross promote events with other organizations students are involved with
 - Happy to support financially too
 - Professional development→ try to promote this as much as we can
 - We have an officer position called “career liaison” which unfortunately is currently not filled
 - Skill-sharing/swap events such as what we did with bioengineering students→ students from different labs would teach each other skills that they had developed
 - Working to address constituent concerns regarding COVID this year
 - Holding events to integrate first year students into labs and educate them

- Working to make sure to promote social justice and make sure all students feel their concerns are addressed and represented (conducting surveys about student concerns)
- Challenges/opportunities for connection:
 - We want to bring this skill swap event back and improve it and would like to hear from other councils about how they do this.
 - Difficult to figure out how to spend funds
 - Established a hardship fund
 - Donated some funds to charity
 - Difficult to get people involved in events and operations of the council--what strategies do other councils have for this issue?

Question from David Schaberg: I would like to offer to the Humanities Council for the College Dean's office to offer logistical support to address the continuity problem mentioned. We would like to see a broader range of activities as well.

Response from Gaby Barrios: That would be great and we definitely welcome support--we want to bring us together as a school of Humanities.

Question from JP Santos: Yasmine and Gaby, how would you like to collaborate with other councils? Are there particular events you would like to put on? What would be popular for the Humanities students?

Response from Yasmine Krings: We would have to poll the students because we have mostly just been processing requisitions. It sounds like we allocate our money differently than other councils do because we allocate to each department based on the department's enrollment. So, it is hard to organize Humanities Council events because departments want to hold on to their own money. We are still navigating the knowledge transfers that need to take place (we didn't even know we needed a constitution until this year). But we can definitely bring up this idea of skill-building and collaboration events.

Response from Gaby Barrios: I am also interested in the Alternatives to Academia (Alt-Ac) professional development event series as suggested in the chat. I know that Anderson talked at Forum last time about looking for students to put forth some entrepreneurial ideas and we have Humanities PhDs who would be interested in this (consulting and business). Though this year poses some challenges, it also presents opportunities that we can take advantage of. Perhaps there are more opportunities for low-budget events and we are excited about this.

Response from Yasmine Krings: Yes, I agree. We would welcome more training in the Alt-Ac area.

Comment from JP Santos: What are ways that we can support these cross-disciplinary events? Should we establish a Slack channel? What do you guys think would be the best way to coordinate?

Response from Yasmine: Slack works and we can use it more once we figure out our identity and operations a bit more. Coordinating inter-council socials will be difficult because of the way that we allocate money.

Comment from Elyse Brusher: Can we have a mixer on the GSA level where councils who feel like they have the bandwidth and want to commit to collaborating with another council come and we pair them together so that they can talk amongst themselves and figure out what would be the most beneficial to them. And we could do this once per quarter or however often it is useful.

Response from David Schaberg: I would look into that—if it's best to host the mixers from the graduate division level, then yes, that could work.

Response from Alex Chubick: you can get people to commit to coming, but getting them to attend is difficult. How can we ease people's anxieties when it comes to Zoom interaction? How do we keep people involved?

Response from JP Santos: I'll talk to our events director/campus relations and maybe organize these as just for council leadership.

Response from Musibau Francis Jimoh: In the interest of time, let's continue this conversation over Slack.

Response from Sarah Valdovinos: If councils would like to host sessions that are more "skill" based such as professional development, health/wellness etc., I am happy to help point you in the direction/connect you with some existing campus resources/services that may be able to host something for your council or department! My email is svaldovinos@saonet.ucla.edu

Response from Patricia Solomon: This is a great idea and ASUCLA would be happy to assist in any way we can to support and promote the events. psolomon@asucla.ucla.edu

UPDATES FROM GSA LEADERSHIP--6:08

JP Santos (GSA President), Letty Treviño (GSA VP of Academic Affairs)

JP Santos:

- I would like to use my time to show a [video for GSA](#). It serves to explain what GSA is and what it does. Please feel free to share it with your constituents.

Letty Treviño:

What my office has been doing:

- Catching up on reading for academic senate meetings (policy for students with disability and federal and state laws as to what universities are legally obligated to do to support them)
- Connected with Rose Paneno (Medicine) about how med students feel about how some of them don't have to do asymptomatic testing and she will be talking to her council to get feedback about this
- Would love to connect with other health sciences
 - Are you concerned that some students, specifically those on rotation, don't have to be tested?
 - I want to make sure that I am accurately representing your concerns in this area
- Isabel is giving a presentation later on CalFresh
- We also took time off last week because mental health is important!

Comment from Susan Ettner: The GSA video is a great idea. JP, if you're interested, I can talk to my staff about the possibility of posting a link to your video link on the GD website somewhere, so you can advertise it more.

Response from JP Santos: That would be great!

UPDATE FROM UCLA HOUSING ADMINISTRATION--6:15

Pete Angelis (UCLA Assistant Vice Chancellor, Housing and Hospitality Services) and Sarah Dundish (Director, Housing Services & Strategic Initiatives at UCLA)

Pete Angelis:

- Taking a look back
 - AY 2019-2020 was successful in terms of inventory
 - Acquired new housing by Santa Monica Blvd, great location, beautiful property, good-quality units, good price

- First 50/50 partnership between UCLA housing and another entity (health system--beds for medical residents) to acquire inventory for student use
- First two phases of development are complete and third and final should be complete soon
- Medical residents will have priority for these buildings and then we will go to the waitlist (usually 1000 students)
- There are still units available there now if anyone is looking for housing
- Renovations done:
 - Facility improvements at Keystone-Mentone and Rose
 - Improved security at university village (installing package lockers and bike cages) and we want to assess how those are working
 - We added new study rooms outside of family housing units and we were in the process of adding some to university village as well when COVID hit
- Bleak slide (financials):
 - We were tracking right along budget before COVID (especially the fourth quarter of last year)
 - Contributing factors are the fact the we have been letting students out of their contracts freely and not laying off staff (through the end of 2020)
 - We also could not (per state regulations) allow students in our units unless they could prove that they had no other options, which means that we lost a lot of our undergraduate students
 - We depleted our reserves (which we had previously used for acquisitions and renovations) and went \$13 million into the negative--digging out of a hole of \$110 million
 - We want to get out of debt within 5 years (down from 10) through attrition (by natural retirements of people)
- There are things we can still do that won't cost money post-COVID:
 - Dining program--we are the only UC Campus that buys our food through a Group Purchasing Organization (GPO), which supplies food to hotel chains such as the Marriott→ this allows us to share in the discounts they have negotiated as a group and offer lower cost meals to students
 - How can we buy in bulk, pre-package on the Hill and have this food available to students for pick up? We want to work with GSA on distribution.

Sarah Dundish:

- Snapshot of where we are at:

- In 2019, we had 3600 graduate students and now we have about 3000 due to the transition to remote learning
- Right now we have housing availability and housing continues to be a resource for you

Question from Akash Deep Singh: So are there 600 empty units in Weyburn?

Response from Sarah Dundish: That number pertains to all of graduate housing. Also, it's not necessarily units, but bedrooms because sometimes units have multiple bedrooms.

Follow-up from Akash: Does the fact that these units are empty affect the housing budget?

Response from Sarah Dundish: Yes, that was taken into account in the slides that Pete showed of the budget.

Question from Akash: As we talked about with JP last spring, because of COVID, many graduate students are experiencing housing insecurity. At that point, we suggested that the housing lottery be moved up to May, but that didn't happen. I was hoping that housing would be more proactive in allocating the available spaces but that doesn't seem to have happened, so can you shed some light on this? It also seems that this would have helped housing with the occupancy and resulting budget issues.

Response from Sarah Dundish: There was just some much we didn't know how COVID was going to affect us, so we had to keep the flexibility for graduate contract holders. Now, we know better and want to build in more flexibility for students in the lottery (maybe as early as March or April). But we still do have COVID hanging over our heads.

Response from Pete: Just to make you all aware, a lot of the uncertainty and delay stemmed from us having to wait on the LA Department of Public Health, not UCLA leadership, to make decisions and give us information. We found out 10 days before move in that all of our rooms could only be occupied by one student. So much has been changing very quickly.

Comment from Akash: When students contact the helpdesk, the answer is always "no, because policy does not allow for it" instead of "let's work together to find a solution". Can the people who handle these inquiries go through some kind of sensitivity training to help them better respond to and understand students' situations during this crisis?

Response from Sarah Dundish: Thank you for this feedback, I will continue to work with those people, as we have talked about. We receive a lot of student inquiries and sometimes we have to say no, but we should also be saying why.

Question from Alex Chubick: Graduate students have been having the issue of falling behind on housing payments and I understand from your presentation that housing needs to collect that money to operate. Is the housing department working on a plan for how this will work without a lump sum payment after COVID? Can we prevent students from having their accounts frozen?

Response from Sarah Dundish: Yes, we are working on it. We have not put students on hold for this since the pandemic hit. Once things improve, we will start that again, but how and when this will happen is up for discussion. Right now, we need partnership and creative flexibility to give students a way out. We look at things on a case-by-case basis, but also holistically so students don't feel singled out when we try to get information to them. There are resources available through the Graduate Division (financial aid counselors). There is more available than just the ECRT link.

Comment from Susan Ettner: I'm not sure which Graduate Division resources were being referenced. We usually refer to [ECRT](#).

Question from JP Santos: I have a question from the medical council. Some students were unable to get into the Boulevard housing unit or had their applications delayed in some way. This seems weird because it was set aside for medical students. Do you have thoughts on this?

Response from Sarah Dundish: There is space and we would love to connect with them.

Question from Juan de la Hoz: In normal times it's so hard to find affordable housing in LA, especially in the summer. I have found the process for terminating a contract to be extremely painful and not transparent. There is no way to contact the board for housing contract appeals and no graduate representative there. I also found that contracts are different for different areas of campus, so can we standardize them? Can we switch to month-to-month contracts?

Response from Sarah Dundish: We have no plans to switch to month-to-month contracts. In terms of the board's response, just so you are all aware, Housing doesn't sit on the board because we are the contract holder so we do not have a say, but we can serve as a bridge to the board. I know that we did use to have graduate and undergraduate representation on that board, so I will follow up to see what the status of that is now and ensure that this happens when the board restarts again (right now we are letting anyone who asks out of their contract).

Juan, I can follow up with you after this meeting and make sure the board receives this feedback.

VOTE TO PASS THE [RESOLUTION FOR GRADUATE EQUITY](#)--6:45*

Point of clarification from Francis: please only vote if you are attending this meeting as a voting member. Voting members are those who are representing their academic councils or the student interest board. Please make sure that only the assigned number of members from your council are voting. GSA Directors and Ex-officio members as well as invited guests are non-voting members. Let me know if you have any questions.

JP Santos

- This resolution is for equity in graduate services. We get proportionately less funding and support in student services at the graduate than undergraduate level and this resolution asks for this to be rectified.
 - See previous meeting notes for a more detailed explanation of and conversation about this resolution.

Question from Alex Chubick: Who is the resolution being submitted to?

Response from JP: This is a formal stamp of approval from GSA that we can take to the administration showing that we as the graduate student body support this.

Motion to vote: Alex Chubick (Biological Sciences Council) and Rose Paneno (Medical Student Council)

Motion to vote: passes

- Call for a vote. 19 yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain
 - **Vote: APPROVED**

RESOLUTION TO INCLUDE STUDENT REPRESENTATION IN DEAN SEARCH COMMITTEES ACROSS UCLA CAMPUS--6:55*

Christine Abagat Liboon, Sophia Ángeles, and Ramon Flores (School of Education and Information Studies)

- We have worked with JP and Francis to develop the present resolution, which asks all departments to include graduate students on their Dean search committees.
 - For more information on how this resolution came about, see the minutes from the previous meeting.

Question from JP: Do David and Susan have any questions/comments about the actual resolution?

Response from David Schaberg: I see that you have included some precedents where graduate students have been included on these committees and that's great. Any precedents you can find would be important to include because this is a highly procedural process and a lot of worrying about who gets to interact with the candidates. There is already a part of the process where the candidates interact and the students can participate in this. So, it is important to explain why graduate students should be involved in the committee specifically. Does it complement or improve upon the other form of engagement with the students. Also, how much have you worked with the chair of the Education Dean Search committee?

Response from Ramon Flores: We have only been in contact with EVCP Emily Carter, not the committee members. We have not yet reached out to the chair of the committee, Jennifer Mneukin or the other committee members, but we did voice these concerns during a Town Hall that was held a few weeks ago on this topic.

Response from Susan Ettner: I believe Jennifer is out on leave, so you may not get an immediate response from her. I agree with David about that precedent and you can even look for this at other UC campuses. At the end of the process, when there is a shortlist, there are fewer worries about confidentiality because candidates have let people who they work with know that they are applying. This is not the case with the long list. This doesn't mean that students shouldn't be on the committee, but that could explain why there has been hesitancy towards this issue in the past. Perhaps it would be helpful to get the Deans or the Senate on board. There is no legal reason not to do this. It seems possible--it's just a matter of convincing people and perhaps getting these folks on board could help make your case. What do you think David?

Response from David: Yes, I think it was right to have written to EVCP Carter first and to wait for her response before contacting the committee. And Susan, I agree that it could help to get the Deans and/or the Senate and faculty members on board.

Response from JP: I still think that we should pass this so that Ramon and Sophia can bring this to EVCP Carter. To David and Susan, is our language off? Is there anything we need to change? Are the resolve statements okay?

Response from Susan: I have not had a chance to read it yet, but I am happy to look at this afterwards more carefully.

Response from David: I do have one comment on the statement on p. 3: 4 additional members added to the committee will probably seem like too much, but it could be good to start by asking for a lot. You will probably end up with 1 or 2 students on the committee.

Response from Susan: Is this a starting point for negotiation or is that where you want to end up? And how many people were on the committee in question?

Response from Ramon: 8 plus Jennifer Mneukin. So this is what we were hoping for because we are a school made up of two departments and we would like the undergraduate perspective as well.

Response from Susan: Yeah, but if this is going to set a precedent, there are a lot of schools composed of a lot of different departments and it probably won't be possible to always have representatives from all of those different departments. So it would be more realistic to think of it as representation at the school level--maybe 1 graduate and 1 undergraduate student. If this is going to be accepted, you want them to feel like it is something that can realistically be applied in other cases.

Response from David: Could the final resolution statement be made clearer?

Response from Ramon: We were mainly asking for access to the actual procedures.

Response from Susan: Do you mean the rubric that gets used?

Response from Ramon: No, I think the process and reasoning underlying how they are composing these committees.

Response from David: I suppose it's not just how the committee gets chosen, but all of the steps that follow. This should not be problematic.

Response from Susan: Yes, and it did actually happen not too long ago that a Dean was put in place improperly--you need to have an open search.

Response from Ramon: Thank you for this feedback.

Response from Susan: And just realize that in general when people are considering these things, they always think about the slippery slope. So make it something that is reasonable going forward.

Response from JP: If this is what you council wants, I would like to offer someone to move to vote on this.

Francis: Does anyone want to motion to approve this resolution?

Motion to approve resolution: Alex Chubick (BSC) and Natalie Schibrowsky (MPSC)--Motion passes

- Francis: Call for a vote. 17 yes, 0 No, 2 Abstain
 - **Vote: APPROVED**

[RESOLUTION FOR GSA SERVICE--7:26*](#)

JP Santos

- This resolution serves to honor the individuals who tirelessly work on behalf of graduate students. Every awardee will receive a plaque. I would like for this to become a quarterly tradition.

Francis: Does anyone want to motion to add ten minutes to the meeting since we are out of time?

Motion to add 10 minutes to agenda: Alex Chubick (BSC) and Rose (MSC)--Motion passes

Francis: Does anyone want to motion to approve this resolution?

Motion to approve the resolution: Rami Bata (SBA) and Alex Chubick (BSC)--Motion passes

- Francis: Call for a vote. 15 yes, 0 No, 4 Abstain
 - **Vote: APPROVED**

UPDATES ON CALFRESH--7:35

Isabel Benvenuti (GSA Director of Academic Senate)

- A significant portion of UCLA students report experiencing hunger insecurity and CalFresh is a response to that. It's our version of SNAP. Student can get up to \$400 a month on a debit card that you can use to purchase food at Ralphs, Whole Foods, Trader Joe's and Target
- Application process: submit application, fill out required paperwork, phone interview
 - Applications are typically approved within 30 days
 - Challenge: CalFresh has trouble understanding and processing graduate student funding structure and income documents→ get graduate programs approved as exempted student employment programs
- Help get more programs exempted→ [sign up as an advocate](#) and it will ask you for an SAO advocate and then the application will take 30-60 minutes to complete.
- If you have questions, you can contact the CalFresh team
- We want to identify which programs to prioritize
- Additional resources:
 - [Form to sign up as an advocate](#)
 - [For exempted student employment program applications](#)
 - [How to apply for Calfresh](#) (video)
 - [Calfresh office hours sign-up \(for individual applicants\)](#)
 - [Needs Calfresh Website](#)

Question: Does the CalFresh application have to be renewed every year?

Response from Letty: No, it's one and done.

ADJOURNMENT--7:47

Francis: Thank you again to all who have worked so hard to support graduate students. We wish you a wonderful winter break and we will see you again at the first meeting of winter quarter on January 20th, 2021. Does anyone want to motion to adjourn the meeting?

Motion to Adjourn meeting: Yasmine Krings (HSC) and Rami Bata (SBA)--Motion passes