

## **University of California, Los Angeles Graduate Student Association Forum #9, Spring Quarter, Wednesday, May 26, 2021, 5:30pm**

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

### **Week 9 Winter 2021 Agenda**

#### **\*Items to vote**

#### **5:30-5:40 Call to Order/Welcome Address**

Lewis Luo (GSA VP of Internal Affairs and Forum Chair)

#### **5:40-6:00 Updates from GSA Leadership**

Musibau Francis Jimoh (GSA President), Lewis Luo, Isabel Benvenuti (GSA VP of Academic Affairs)

#### **6:00-6:30 GSA Budget for 2021/22 Academic Year\***

Musibau Francis Jimoh

#### **6:30-7:00 GSA Service Awards\***

Musibau Francis Jimoh

#### **7:00-7:30 Graduate Indian Students' Concerns\* (items 3 and 4)**

Nikunj Sanghai (UCLA Samueli Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering)

1. Delegation representing 95 Graduate Indian Students wanting to address GSA regarding their VISA situation in light of COVID-19.
2. Presenting grievances of International Indian Students to the GSA. [Fall 20 & Fall 21 Admits]
3. Getting GSA's letter of support for students to be offered the option of deferral to Fall 2022 in light of COVID-19 wave in India.\*
4. Getting GSA' letter of support for University to provide us with personalized letters to facilitate Emergency Visa appointments for Students.\*

#### **7:00 Adjournment**

Lewis Luo (GSA VP of Internal Affairs Elect and Forum Chair)

## LETTING PEOPLE INTO THE MEETING--5:30

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

Lewis Luo (GSA Vice President of Internal Affairs)

- Quick run thru of agenda

### UPDATES FROM GSA LEADERSHIP--5:40

Musibau Francis Jimoh (GSA President)

- Settling into the Office of the President and being onboarded
- We put up the GSA hiring documents and we designed promotional materials for this purpose.
  - We are hiring directors and committee representatives (~30 open positions)
    - This is an opportunity to...
      - Represent ~13,000 graduate students
      - Engage in professional development (hard and soft skills)
      - Network and connect with other graduate students who share the goal of improving the UCLA experience
    - Please note, some positions come with a stipend and others do not
    - Encourage your colleagues to apply!
  - The priority application deadline is **June 4th at 11:59pm PDT**
  - You can access the application here:  
<https://truebruin.ucla.edu/committees/apply/gsa>
  - Please direct any questions to: [appointments@GSA.asucla.ucla.edu](mailto:appointments@GSA.asucla.ucla.edu)

Lewis Luo (GSA VP of Internal Affairs)

- Transportation
  - Originally there were no Bruin GradPasses during the summer, but since there was low usage of them this year, they will be offered this summer
  - The metro is including a new Microtransit in the Bruin GradPass, which is an on-demand bus service for Westwood
    - Microtransit will hopefully be operating later into the night
- Housing
  - Planting fruit-bearing trees in University Village (Sawtelle)
  - Currently in phase 3 for medical residents' housing (Boulevard)--getting furniture ready soon
- Reminder to Academic Councils
  - Hold elections prior to the end of the school year and [report your results here](#)
  - Details about this process have been sent to your council's official email address

- If you do not yet have access to this email account, please email [administrativeaffairs@gsa.asucla.ucla.edu](mailto:administrativeaffairs@gsa.asucla.ucla.edu) to receive your login credentials

Isabel Benvenuti (GSA VP of Academic Affairs)

- Publications
  - Funding decisions will be out by June 11
- CalFresh
  - Anderson MBA program was approved as an exempt employment program
    - If Anderson students are interested in getting CalFresh benefits, they can reach out to their SAO and apply
    - Thank you Austin Howley!
- Academic Senate
  - Proposal to change the Incomplete notation was approved!
    - USAC was slated to present something similar, but that was tabled indefinitely due to a lack of data
  - The letter we presented to be sent to departments, encouraging them to reevaluate their admissions process and acknowledge that the GRE is not a fair assessment of potential applicants' potential was not approved
    - We are seeking endorsement from Forum of this letter--you will see this later today
    - Shoutout to the Academic Senate committee reps!

### **GSA BUDGET FOR 2021/22 ACADEMIC YEAR\*--6:00**

Musibau Francis Jimoh and Patty Solomon (ASUCLA Student Union Division Manager)

Here is the [budget we will be discussing](#) for AY 2021-2022

- Vision
  - Support for graduate and professional students pos-COVID
  - Foster cross-disciplinary community
    - Ex. through GradBar
    - Hopefully we can have some in-person activities
  - Improve graduate experience
    - Increased access to affordable housing
    - Increase knowledge of existing resources and how to access them
  - Increase GSA visibility and student participation
- Explanation of Budget
  - GSA Membership fees (Central Office)
    - Main source of funding

- Pays for GSA's operations including staff, stipends, utilities, maintenance, etc.
  - ASUCLA Interaction fund
    - Must be spent on expenses related to **graduate events**
  - Student Fee Advisory Committee (SFAC)
    - These funds go mainly towards **GSA Director of Publications** and **GSA Director of Discretionary Funds**
  - GSA Budget Distribution:
    - 30.1% Academic Councils
    - 25.2% Graduate Student Writing Center
    - 17.9% Stipends
      - For elected officers and directors
    - 17.6% Association Overhead & Space Cost
      - Includes costs for office space in Kerckhoff
    - 9.2% Other Expenses & Programming
- Changes from previous budgets
  - Councils and the GWC will be asked to contribute 5% of their funds to share the cost of administrative fees (previously the central office had covered this alone)
    - This will significantly reduce the budget deficit
  - Student fee will be increased to account for inflation
    - This will result in higher spending power, a better-staffed GSA, and more funding for GSA events
  - Creating a Director position for social media/web manager
    - This person will work closely with with Director of Communications to manage the GSA website and social media
      - They will also work with the Elections Commissioner to spread awareness about GSA elections
    - This will result in a better informed and engaged graduate student community
  - Merging the Directors of Community Relations and Organizing
    - This will free up funds of the Director of Social Media's salary

Comment from Patty: To clarify, the vote tonight would be to approve the budget that Francis outlined.

Question from Alex Chubick: If we vote to approve the budget, can these numbers be adjusted or will they be set in stone for the next academic year?

Response from Patty: Once these numbers are voted on they will be the numbers for the academic year. During the fall quarter, there will be some adjustments as the councils receive their carryover. We allocate 75% of your councils' funding now and the remaining amount after we have the final enrollment numbers. There will also be surplus coming into play in the fall to help fund grad events.

Question from Kathleen Kane: Does the vote we are doing tonight also confirm the 5% increase in council contributions to the administrative fees?

Response from Francis: Yes.

Question from Melissa Haller: Going off of that, does that mean that we are essentially reducing the budget for the councils by 5% to pay for the budget deficit in the GSA central office?

Response from Patty: Yes, currently the burden of all of the overhead costs including student accounting (which processes requisition forms) lies with the GSA central office. This is an opportunity to help fulfill the requirement of having a balanced budget at the end of the year without having to cut into say our orientation budget etc.

Comment from Melissa: What would that actually look like in terms of reduction in funding for the councils? That could be miniscule, but I am not sure. I feel like this merits further discussion.

Response from Francis: This would not significantly affect the councils' budgets. Councils have had a lot of money unspent this year. It's not fair for the central office to bear the cost of all of these fees alone.

Response from Patty: I agree and Vuong is here (he is our accountant) and he may have more to add. You will also get your carryover in the fall and councils historically have a significant amount of carryover

Response from Vuong Tran: I don't have specific numbers. In total it will be \$9000 from all of the councils combined, but not too much from each individual council.

Response from Melissa: I know that a lot of councils have significant carryover right now, so I guess it's not that big of a deal for this year. It sounds like it will not meaningfully affect our bottom line.

Response from Patty: As Francis said, we are looking for a long-term solution. One of the requirements for us to get our budget approved by the board of directors is to have a balanced budget. We will continue to look for these long-term solutions.

Question from Jacob Green: I am confused about the admin and services fee and the money we pay to ASUCLA. Has the amount of money we give to the ASUCLA fee increased over the past few years? The GWC had funds cut from other sources already, so how would this impact the services they offer?

Response from Francis: In terms of what percentage of these funds would be going to ASUCLA, it's basically increased by \$2000-\$3000 due to inflation. ASUCLA provides a lot of services to GSA from helping to process requisitions to helping us to run our offices and that's what this money goes towards. With respect to the Graduate Writing Center, the fee is tied to inflation. We have not spoken with the GWC about this, but I don't see this cut as significantly affecting the services that the GWC provides.

Comment from Patty: What we are requesting from that 5% increase is for all of the budgeted expenses from the central office, not just ASUCLA. This also includes director stipends, bank fees, supplies, advertising, outreach, coffee machines, discretionary funds, graduate student events, orientation, and elections. There was a slight increase in regards to the slight increase of labor cost (\$15 CA minimum wage effect), but we decreased costs and utilities to help offset this.

Question from Jessie Chen: Is this something that we have to vote on today because I feel like I would have liked to take this back to my council and it's a lot of information to take in right now. I would appreciate some sort of internal memo for us to look at where everything is laid out clearly.

Response from Francis: That's a great idea, but one of the reasons why we make the supporting documents available before the meeting is so that you can look through them and consult with your councils before the Forum meeting. We don't have to pass the budget now, but we rely on the summer to plan for the next academic year and not passing the budget can make this very challenging. For example, we would have trouble paying the directors who work over the summer.

Response from Karen Hedges: I am the Student Affairs Administrative Rep to GSA. Jessie, I am really glad that you asked that question because I think you bring up 2 valid points. One, GSA when you ask us to consider these complex issues, will you give it to us in advance and in

writing in a clear way? That's really good feedback for GSA. The other thing you are bringing up is the power of the vote. And I want to underscore the power of your positions--you are here for a reason and every time you come to Forum, you are expected to vote based on the best information that you have at the time. You should be given all of the information you need to vote during the meeting and if you don't receive that, it is your responsibility to ask questions to get the information that you need to cast an informed vote. Otherwise, nothing can happen at Forum except for updates. You all want work to happen and you are paying fees and you want that to be for something. Finally, as students with financial need, you know the importance of being paid. It would be counter to you as a working student to ask students to volunteer over the summer in the hopes that they will be paid in the near future.

Comment from Kathleen: Thank you, Karen, that was helpful to hear. Just echoing Jessie, just getting a spreadsheet as a supporting document is hard for me to interpret because I am not an expert in finance. I understand that we need to vote tonight, but I just wanted to say that it would be useful to share the screen with the spreadsheet on it and go through it line by line.

Comment from Jessie: I agree with Kathleen. Also, as a student, when we hear about these fee increases, it just sounds like "we want to pay GSA electives more" and the general student body doesn't know what GSA is doing sometimes, so there is hesitancy to increase their pay. I know it's a chicken and egg question especially with the Director of Social Media, but if I am voting on behalf of the Law school, I think there would be a lot of hesitancy to vote for this.

Response from Francis: Just to clarify, there is not really a fee increase here. It's saying that there is a deficit and the councils can help the central office to come back from this because we have to submit a balanced budget. Councils receive direct services in return for the administrative fees we pay ex. Having requisitions processed, so we are asking them to help pay these fees this year. A long term solution would be to tie our fees to inflation as we tried to do earlier this year.

- Motion to add 10 more minutes to the agenda to discuss the budget: Alex Chubick (BSC) and Kathleen Kane (PHSA)--Motion passed

Comment from Francis: We do have figures for the [5% from the councils' budgets](#) that would go towards the administrative fees (highlighted in yellow)

Comment from Patty: I know earlier there was a request to go more closely through the spreadsheet, so we can do that now. Someone had also asked in the chat about the fees you pay to the GWC, and that is about \$7,600 total. The top part of the first tab shows available

income for GSA. The expenses are listed below. Column C is the actuals from AY 2019-2020. Column D is the actual budget for AY 2020-2021. We are seeing more funds going unused on the council level this year. We spent more on programming this year than expected and hope to offset some of those costs with surplus in the future.

Question from Vikranth: How do we interpret the difference between the original and revised budget?

Response from Patty: The revised budget is the carryover. This amount varies from council to council. We anticipate a little surplus this year, but we have to be very modest with our projection. Regarding the fee calculation, you can see this on the second tab of the spreadsheet. The other tabs show the stipend levels for each position.

Comment from Francis: As you can see, we are not taking money from the councils to augment director or elected officer salaries. It's important that we address this budget issue now.

Comment from Patty: The vote tonight will also allow us to activate your council's funding on August 1st.

Question from Alex: If we approve the budget and the 5%, when will we see that go into effect?

Response from Patty: It will be factored in starting on August 1st.

Question from Jessie: Are we saying that we are allocating up to, but not more than 5%?

Response from Francis: Yes, for this year, it will just be 5%. The next administration may have to revisit it unless we can pass the referendum we discussed earlier this year.

- Motion to vote on the GSA Budget for 2021/22 Academic Year: Alex Chubick (BSC) and Kathleen Kane (PHSA)--Motion passed
- Call for a vote. 9 yes, 5 No, 3 Abstain
  - **Vote: APPROVED**

### **GSA SERVICE AWARDS\*--6:30**

Musibau Francis Jimoh

You can see the [full text of the resolution here](#). Here are the awardees being recognized:

- 2020-21 GSA President, JP Santos



- Director of Finance, Sunny Perkins
- Social Sciences Council Representative, Melissa Haller
- Math & Physical Sciences, Samuel Baugh
- Humanities Council Representative, Jasmine Akiyama-Kim
- Law Council Representative, Jessie Chen
- Biological Science Council Representative, Alex Chubick
- Biological Sciences Council Representative, Cassie Klune
- Education Council Representative, Christine Abagat Liboon
- Education Council Representative, Sophia Ángeles
- Education Council Representative, Ramon Flores
- Engineering Council Representative, Vikranth Jeyakumar
- Engineering Council Representative, Jean H. Marques Ribeiro
- Engineering Council Representative, Vera Smirnova
- Engineering Council Representative, Samatha Arun
- Nursing Council Representative, Valeria Flores-Rivero
- Nursing Council Representative, Sarah Wagstaff
- Shoshana B. Seidenfeld, Management Council
- Garrett Szafman, Management Council
- Mara Matta, Public Health Council
- Nayelie Benitez Santos, Public Health Council
- Geneva Vogelheim, Public Health Council
- Lorena Espinoza, Public Health Council
- Mary Kathleen Kane, Public Health Council
  
- Motion to vote on GSA Service Awards: Melissa Haller (SSC) and Jacob Green (SSC)--Motion passed
- Call for a vote. 11 yes, 0 No, 2 Abstain
  - **Vote: APPROVED**

### **GRADUATE INDIAN STUDENTS' CONCERNS\*--7:00**

Nikunj Sanghai (UCLA Samueli Mechanical & Aerospace Engineering)

1. Delegation representing 95 Graduate Indian Students who were admitted to UCLA for fall 2021 wanting to address GSA regarding their VISA situation in light of COVID-19.
  - We all got our UCLA acceptances, but due to the horrible COVID situation in India there is no resolution on what our status is, so we have gathered together across departments to better advocate for ourselves and make our concerns known to the UCLA administration
    - You can [see our full letter here](#)

- There has been a worrying surge of COVID during the month of April in India and this has resulted in our visas getting cancelled because the American consulates in India were closed
      - The US Department of Homeland Security has recently allowed for a process for continuing students to receive waivers, but this does not apply to newly admitted students
      - There is also a long backlog of appointments, which means that a lot of us may not be able to get visas in time to attend UCLA in-person in the fall
      - About 20% of the students we are representing were able to get visa appointments, but because of the lockdowns in India, they are not sure they will be able to get to the US
    - We request that GSA write a letter in support of the following measures to the University:
      1. Grant the incoming students a personalised visa support letter that highlights the challenges of doing classe remotely from our home country and urges the authorities to grant expedited visa appointments to the eligible students while recognizing each student as essential. Universities like NYU had granted each individual applicant a similar personalised letter which can be leveraged while securing an emergency visa and the exceptions to the travel ban.
      2. Allow students to defer their current admits to Fall 2022 if they are not able to obtain visas on time or are directly impacted by COVID-19 and do not feel safe entering the US yet.
2. Presenting grievances of International Indian Students to the GSA. [Fall 20 & Fall 21 Admits]
- All UCLA admits are facing the same issue
  - It's a very scary and precarious situation for the students
  - Emergency visas are processed on a case-by-case basis, so each student's individual case needs to be highlighted
3. Getting GSA's letter of support for students to be offered the option of deferral to Fall 2022 in light of COVID-19 wave in India.\*
- If GSA writes a letter of support to the Dashew Center, this will help out case
    - Highlight the option of a modified I-20 to allow us to start at a later date, if necessary

- GSA could also write a letter of support to individual departments to encourage them to offer more flexibility in terms of when they start (the option to defer to Fall 2022)
  - Every department has different policies, but they should also consider this issue with leniency and approach it holistically

Comment from Amira: Thank you for the presentation. It's so important to highlight the situation of international students. A lot of people are not aware of the hectic procedure we go through and that takes a lot of our time and energy and causes a lot of anxiety for us. It doesn't need to be so hard. As a fellow international student, I want to share my support. We should do everything we can to support international students.

Comment from Karen: Thank you for bringing this issue to Forum. It's so important for domestic students to hear about this. I wanted to offer a few suggestions and resources below. Also, I wanted to highlight that the academic units speak to the necessity of these scholars for the University. Perhaps the UC Graduate Association could write a letter of support. The power of 10 is very important when it comes to these issues.

President Drake and 10 chancellors sent to state department

[https://www.ucop.edu/federal-governmental-relations/\\_files/Federal-Correspondence/20210430-uc-dos-dhs-letter.pdf](https://www.ucop.edu/federal-governmental-relations/_files/Federal-Correspondence/20210430-uc-dos-dhs-letter.pdf)

This is 100% a UC issue, not isolated at UCLA.

Embassy tracker:

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/15KbRghR0pZKvxgdb1hH064H4urKSI6GJoFBM0MXDRhs/edit?fbclid=IwAR2c5PoWcfNdr2Wzoralvi9WZ9hwRzOgTxnpH8qgfDVmeJ9caLqTCwL6W4#gid=0>

- This has helped a lot of students with wait times

At UCLA you can speak with the UCLA Dashew Center

General Inquiries: [oissassi@saonet.ucla.edu](mailto:oissassi@saonet.ucla.edu)

MORNING: 9:00 AM - 11:30 AM

AFTERNOON: 1:30 PM - 4:00 PM

Access and join the Front Desk Q&A Zoom session by completing the check in below:

Join URL -

<https://saweb.uclanet.ucla.edu/SAWeb/SAIT/Lobby/Student/Welcome.aspx?appId=31B9D0>

Comment from Nikunj: The embassy situation is one issue, but what we need from the UCs is the option of deferring. We believe that a letter from GSA will help with this.

- Motion to vote on the letter of support for students to be offered the option of deferral to Fall 2022 in light of COVID-19 wave in India: Alex Chubick (BSC) and Melissa Haller (SSC)--Motion passed

- Call for a vote. 15 yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain
  - **Vote: APPROVED**
  
- 4. Getting GSA's letter of support to ask the University to provide us with personalized letters to facilitate Emergency Visa appointments for students.\*
  - Motion to vote on getting GSA's letter of support to ask the University to provide us with personalized letters to facilitate Emergency Visa appointments for students: Alex Chubick (BSC) and Melissa Haller (SSC)--Motion passed
  - Call for a vote. 15 yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain
    - **Vote: APPROVED**

### REVISITING THE GRE REQUIREMENT

- Asking Forum to endorse the [letter that will be sent to departments](#)
  - This letter urges departments to reconsider the GRE requirement on the grounds that:
    - It is discriminatory and provides a barrier to entry
    - It reflects less specialized knowledge & test-taking ability
    - Exam scores are not necessarily universally comparable
  - Here is the [link to a form that you can fill out to be a signatory of the letter](#)
  - We have been working on this proposal all year long and have presented it twice at Graduate Council
    - It was voted down by faculty because they felt it was not neutral enough
  - We are seeking Forum's endorsement because we are not neutral on this issue--we are committed to equitable education.
    - This letter is endorsed by the Committee on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (CODEI)

Question from Alex: Is there any more information on what the faculty mean, what is "more neutral"?

Response from Isabel: They told us that they felt that it read more like an advocacy letter. We were honest with them and told them that we find the GRE to be discriminatory and we are not neutral and they told us not to change anything. They did not highlight anything specific about it that was "not neutral".

- Motion to vote on the GSA Endorsement of the letter urging reconsideration of GRE Requirement: Kathleen Kane (PHSA) and Melissa Haller (SSC)--Motion passed
- Call for a vote. 12 yes, 0 No, 2 Abstain

- **Vote: APPROVED**

**ADJOURNMENT--7:30**

Lewis Luo, GSA VP of Internal Affairs

- Motion to adjourn: Rami Bata (SBA) and Alex Chubick (BSC)--Motion passed